Preface

It is a privilege and a pleasure for the Department of Statistics, Stockholm University, and Statistics Sweden to present this monograph in honour of Professor Daniel Thorburn as we celebrate his 65th birthday.

Daniel Thorburn was born on May 17, 1945 in Uddevalla, Sweden, but the family soon moved to Tumba, just south of Stockholm. His academic birthplace however is Lund or more specifically, Lund University. Here he got his first academic employment in 1964 as a teaching assistant in mathematics and mathematical statistics. In 1968 he obtained a BSc, a BEcon in 1970 and his PhD in mathematical statistics in 1975, the latter for his thesis “Large sample properties of jackknife statistics”, Professor Gunnar Blom supervising.

After completing his education in Lund, Daniel Thorburn relocated back to Stockholm and signed on for a tour of duty at Statistics Sweden in 1975 where he was employed until 1980. In 1975 and 1977 he managed to find the time to act as associate professor in economic statistics at the Swedish School of Economics in Helsinki. He returned to his alma mater in 1980 and a position as lecturer for a short period where he also gained his docent title in mathematical statistics. Apart from spending a short time at Umeå University in 1983 as acting professor in mathematical statistics, Stockholm and the immediate surroundings has since 1982 at least, been his main base of academic operations. Here he has held positions in mathematical statistics at both Stockholm University (1982–1983) and at the Royal Institute of Technology (1983–1984). In 1984 he became a faculty member of and docent at the Department of Statistics, Stockholm University where he has remained ever since. In 1989 he was appointed Professor in Statistics with a special concern for the production of official statistics, thus taking over the chair of his predecessor Professor Tore Dalenius.

Daniel Thorburn’s contributions to the scientific community over the years have taken many forms. Many of us have had a firsthand experience of him as a teacher. To date he has supervised fourteen PhD students, several licentiate theses, and an unknown number of BSc and Master theses. A defining trait of Daniel Thorburn is his seemingly never-ending interest in whatever area of research his students have pursued. Always supportive and encouraging, often provoking, he has fostered a multitude of students and guided them toward their aspiring careers as statisticians and for the most part he has been able to pass on at least a bit of his vast knowledge.

Despite the special focus on official statistics production as his professorship entails, Daniel Thorburn himself might claim that he has many main fields of interest, which of course is true. His academic interests span over a wide spectrum and by his own testimony, probability theory, inference, survey theory and Bayesian methodology are up there at the top of the list. He has more than thirty published articles in refereed journals in statistics, economics, medicine, genetics, agriculture and environmental sciences, supplemented by an equal amount of articles in anthologies, proceedings and nonrefereed journals. He authored several entries on statistics for the Swedish National Encyclopaedia and has compiled compendia for students in statistics, mathematical statistics and financial statistics. An associate editor for the Journal of Official Statistics for more than 15 years, associate editor for the Scandinavian Journal of Statistics and twice guest editor for Statistics in Transition, he has contributed plenty to the scientific literature.
Daniel Thorburn has collaborated with several researchers nationally and internationally, especially in the Baltic-Nordic region. He has engaged himself in other ways as well. He was prefect of the Department of Statistics from 1995 to 2005; he has seated several boards and groups within the administration of the university as well as outside the university, of which we may mention the Research Council of Statistics Sweden, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the Swedish Research Council and the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. Daniel Thorburn has also played an active role in the societal community of statisticians in Sweden. In 1981 he was elected chairman of the Swedish Statistical Association, serving for two years, and in 1998 he founded the Survey Section of the Swedish Statistical Association, acting as the section’s chairman during its first two years, and was recently reelected in 2010. On several occasions he has demonstrated his interest in general societal issues, typically when statistics and the use of statistics have been in focus; he has contributed to the societal debate through many articles in the daily press and other media. With his professorship there has followed an obligation, or should we say opportunity, to work with the staff of Statistics Sweden. Whenever time has permitted, he has spent each Tuesday at the offices of Statistics Sweden where he has maintained and cultivated a network of interested statistical methodologists, aiding and inspire, and more than once provoking a scientific debate.

This book attempts to reflect Daniel Thorburn’s interests in the field of official statistics production. It comprises articles on the methodology and applications of official statistics written by some of the best scholars and methodologist in the Nordic-Baltic region. The book’s eighteen chapters span a wide spectrum of topics in official statistics, including its foundational aspects, sampling designs, survey methodology, index construction, and methods for registers and administrative data. We want to thank all of the authors for their time and effort. We are confident that the resulting chapters of this book will prove to be a source of inspiration to many.

Thanks are due also to those who have contributed in other ways in this clandestine endeavour. Early on, Professor Lars Lyberg, Statistics Sweden, provided valuable ideas and suggestions on how to proceed with this project. His vast network and experience as chief editor of the Journal of Official Statistics did indeed come in handy. This publication would not have seen the light of day had it not been for Gunilla Dahlén, Statistics Sweden. Her long experience as production manager for the Journal of Official Statistics proved to be an invaluable asset. She also managed to keep us, the editors, and the occasional contributor as well, in line and on time. Although one should not judge a book by its cover, thanks are certainly due also to Petra Villani who volunteered her time and artistic skills.

As Daniel Thorburn reaches his 65th birthday he will, as a civil servant employed by the Swedish government, be eligible for retirement. This will probably not happen immediately. The rules permit that he continue for at least two years and after that he will of course retain the title of professor and most likely continue as emeritus, holding on for while at least to his office at the department. He might also find the time to keep in touch with Statistics Sweden, providing ideas and sharing his views. Titles and offices aside, we will still count on him to be around as a mentor, teacher, colleague and friend.