Foreword

We published a book entitled *Software Ecosystems* in 2003 with the goal of stimulating more research into software business. Coming from our perspective as technologists, we sought to explain how software adopts the characteristics of other goods and services, but in a unique combination. One of its most unique characteristics is the extreme importance of complementarities, as opposed to competition, and as a result we adopted the term “software ecosystems” as the title. We hoped to attract the attention of economists, lawyers, policy makers, business researchers, and others to the fascinating subject of software. It is a pleasure to see this happening.

As technologists, we believe that a deeper understanding of the economics, intellectual property, and business of software is needed, and that this knowledge should infuse marketing and development groups within software firms. Firms will be more successful as these considerations become more influential. This book contributes many new ways of analyzing software ecosystems, as well as thoughts on how to grow them. One aspect of this is the interplay of proprietary and open software – another form of complementarity.

Another characteristic of software is its unusual flexibility, which makes it a unique target of opportunity for new approaches and ideas. Software finds itself somewhere in the midst of digital media with negligible replication costs, services with pay-as-you-go opportunities, and appliances that deliver value repeatedly in varying settings.

In some respects, we are still only seeing the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Software is embedded in all aspects of modern life, leaving much room for future research into the interactions of software ecosystems and the world at large. We hope, therefore, that software business research, such as that represented in this book, will continue to build on real-world experience, both positive and negative, and will continue to reach out to those deeply immersed in software development and engage them in the research. Working together, across disciplines, let’s enhance the overall success and impact of software!

David Messerschmitt, Berkeley, California
Clemens Szyperski, Redmond, Washington