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## Preface

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Not long ago, international business was predominantly the domain of large firms, with smaller firms tending to remain local or regional; internationalization was an expansion option of interest to some enterprises, but seldom was it a competitive necessity. Many owner-managers opted to avoid the uncertainties of competing in foreign markets, and simply kept their firms small and local. Traditional internationalization theories, therefore, focused mainly on large multinational corporations, and were less pertinent to entrepreneurs and their smaller firms. Large multinational corporations were the primary unit of interest in international business studies, and international business journals rightly focused on research about multinational corporations. Meanwhile, other journals focused on entrepreneurs and their relatively small enterprises. Entrepreneurship studies tended to examine decision makers in one environment – a domestic setting for mainstream entrepreneurs or a host society for immigrants; entrepreneurial behaviour was often explained as a function of the entrepreneur's personality, rather than as a function of the environment.

Nowadays, technology facilitates internationalization. International business includes the activities of smaller-scale entrepreneurs, and this is not limited to exporting. While there are opportunities for entrepreneurs who internationalize, serious threats face those who ignore the international arena: with the liberalization of trade and improved telecommunications, international competitors threaten domestic firms in formerly protected markets.

Globalization is thus transforming the competitive environment of small and large players alike. As a result, internationalization issues will continue to be increasingly important to business. There is a growing need to understand internationalization in the context of entrepreneurship, as well as large multinationals; knowledge of how, when and why firms internationalize has become an important topic for research. This has given rise to a new field of research, International Entrepreneurship.

The first McGill conference on International Entrepreneurship took place at McGill University, on 25–8 September, 1998; Zoltan Acs and I were keynote speakers. Out of the conference came several journal articles, as well as Richard W. Wright's reference volume, *International Entrepreneurship: Globalization of Emerging Businesses*, published in 1999 by JAI Press. The success of the first conference led to interest in a follow-up. I therefore took it upon myself to organize the second conference, focusing on the internationalization issues of entrepreneurship. This con-

ference was held at the legendary Goodwood Park Hotel, in Singapore, on 15–18 August 1999; keynote speakers were Zoltan Acs and Richard Wright. Some papers were selected for inclusion in a special issue of the *Journal of Euromarketing*, simultaneously published as a book, for which I served as editor. Also, the March 2001 issue of *Small Business Economics* was dedicated to internationalization; this included the prize-winning papers of the conference that I had hosted in Singapore. In April 2001, I first proposed the idea of creating a dedicated journal, and this led to the launch of the *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*.

In September 2001, I was keynote speaker at the McGill Conference on International Entrepreneurship, at Strathclyde; it was there that Francine Sullivan, commissioning editor for Edward Elgar, kindly approached me to edit this *Handbook of Research on International Entrepreneurship*. Shortly thereafter, international entrepreneur Mr Edward Elgar came to New Zealand, and we discussed this project, which – thanks to the support of academic leaders – is now a reality.

It has been an honour to serve as editor for this volume. As institutions of higher learning, around the world, introduce courses about international entrepreneurship, and as relevant research is on the rise, this reference book is indeed very timely.

*Léo-Paul Dana*