Preface and acknowledgements

The origins of this book can be traced back to 1990, when the first Conference on Postal and Delivery Economics was held at Coton House, Rugby, England, July 22–25, 1990, in honor of the 150th anniversary of the Penny Post and the contributions of Sir Rowland Hill. Since then there have been 15 conferences, three workshops, and now 14 edited volumes as part of the CRRRI's program on Postal and Delivery Economics. In 1990 it was unclear whether the economics of the postal sector would prove a fruitful ground for research. Indeed, few participants then, including the sponsors, Royal Mail and the International Express Carriers Conference (now the Global Express Association), could have envisaged that research in the postal and delivery sector would take off to the extent that it did, or anticipate the wave of postal reform that followed.

The present volume offers an overview of the multi-faceted international postal reform movement that has been gathering definition and force for two decades (see Chapter 1). The book aims to acquaint the reader with some of the background of postal reform and to impart a basic understanding of the nature of the postal and delivery sector and why fundamental reform has been introduced despite strong opposition. The book is also forward looking, offering insights into the future direction of reform and identifying principles that will guide forthcoming policy and regulation of the postal sector.

The editors have a long history of collaboration and an abiding interest in regulatory reform. Michael Crew and Paul Kleindorfer have worked together since 1969. Their work on the postal sector has been supported by the Postal Conferences, starting in 1990. Jim Campbell has been a regular presenter at these conferences over the years and, as the representative of the express companies, was especially important in helping to organize the first ones. His first experience with regulatory reform dates from the mid-1970s when he was a young lawyer working for Senator Edward Kennedy in a series of Senate hearings that ultimately led to deregulation of the US aviation system in 1978.

The editors owe a debt of gratitude to sponsors of the Postal Conferences, which is acknowledged elsewhere in books resulting from the conferences. However, there are some individuals without whom this book would not have been possible. First and foremost the book would not have been possible without the cooperation of the authors of this volume. Second, the contribution of Paul Richards and Roger Tabor, formerly of Royal Mail, in taking the risk in sponsoring the first conference must not be underestimated. It marked the beginning of the significant interest and research that have developed in the area. Others were of assistance along the road, including Marc Smith, of the United States Postal Service. Marc was instrumental in providing powerful encouragement to Crew and Kleindorfer to work in the area of postal economics and coauthored two papers with them.

Finally, we express our gratitude to the numerous participants in the Postal

Conferences that have shaped our own thinking over the years on postal economics and who have in the process given energy and direction to the postal reform efforts that are the focus of this volume.

Michael A. Crew, Paul R. Kleindorfer and James I. Campbell Jr.