he squirrel monkey is a small South American primate that is recognized as an important animal model in biomedical research. The 1968 volume *The Squirrel Monkey* was the first text devoted to this primate as a research animal. The editors provided the following rationale for studies using the squirrel monkey:

Among the primates which recently have become major foci of research interest, none has exceeded the common South American squirrel monkey, *Saimiri sciureus*, in terms of widespread acceptance and use. Their status near the middle of the primate evolutionary scale makes relatively complex behavioral tasks well within their repertoire and places their physiological functioning on a level at which significant comparative work may be carried out (Rosenblum and Cooper 1968, p vii).

This concept is the basis for the development of the squirrel monkey as a biomedical research model. In the years after publication of this first text, scientists continued to add much new information about the biology and behavior of this genus. The work of these dedicated scientists continues to reveal similarities in diseases, endocrine function, and physiologic responses between human beings and squirrel monkeys.

In 1985, a second text was published that provides a synthesis of the vast amount of information about the squirrel monkey published after 1968. The *Handbook of Squirrel Monkey Research* (Rosenblum and Coe 1985) serves as a companion volume to *The Squirrel Monkey* (Rosenblum and Cooper 1968) and comprises an outstanding review of important research areas in which squirrel monkey research has contributed to biomedicine. This second volume also provides a review of current knowledge of the squirrel monkey’s natural biology. By the mid-1980s, the squirrel monkey had clearly become an established model within multiple disciplines in biomedical research.

It has been 15 yr since publication of the last text devoted to the squirrel monkey, and the literature citing the squirrel monkey continues to grow steadily (Abee 1999). Although a comprehensive review of the literature since 1985 is beyond the scope of this issue of *ILAR Journal*, contributors have attempted to provide selected reviews of research areas, squirrel monkey resources, and research methods in which significant new information has emerged. Inherent in this selection process has been the authors’ recognition that some research areas (e.g., neurosciences, reproductive biology, behavioral pharmacology) could not be addressed in detail. Readers of this *Journal* issue are asked to forgive its limitations and recognize the need for a more comprehensive review of research in which squirrel monkeys continue to provide important insights into human disease and biologic function.

The editors of *ILAR Journal* thank the authors for their hard work and insightful reviews of squirrel monkey research. The areas selected represent those that have not been reviewed previously. Thus, this issue of *ILAR Journal* complements previously published texts about the squirrel monkey. Gale Galland’s article (Galland 2000) describing the role of the squirrel monkey in parasitic disease research is the first such review. Jonathan Scammell’s article (Scammell 2000) on glucocorticoid resistance in the squirrel monkey is a review of the most recent discoveries concerning this unusual biologic phenomenon of neotropical primates. Alan Brady (Brady 2000) and Lawrence Williams and Martha Glasgow (Williams and Glasgow 2000) review current methods in clinical medicine and behavioral science available to scientists using squirrel monkeys in their research. In the review of squirrel monkey research and resources (Abee 2000), current information on availability of squirrel monkeys, research areas in which squirrel monkeys are used, and general principles of squirrel monkey biology that can influence research results are discussed. Each of the authors is a recognized authority on the use of squirrel monkeys in their respective disciplines.

It is our hope that this issue of *ILAR Journal* will serve to increase the value of the squirrel monkey in biomedical research and provide guidance to scientists who use squirrel monkeys to address important questions in biomedicine.

References