

Acknowledgments

This is my third book, but it never seems to get easier. As anyone who has done this knows, there are periods of intense enthusiasm interspersed with nagging feelings of doubt. But here it is, so enthusiasm must win out in the end.

I am indebted to many excellent mathematicians from whom I have learned so much over the years. These include Peter Fletcher, Richard Hain, John Harer, Herbert Edelsbrunner, Henry King, Neža Mramor, Ulrich Bauer, Robert Ghrist, Peter Bubenik, Chuck Weibel, Gunnar Carlsson, Andrei Suslin, Eric Friedlander, Mark Walker, Nick Scoville, Vidit Nanda, and on and on. My apologies to anyone I may have omitted.

Many thanks are due to the fine folks at De Gruyter, especially to Steve Elliot for recruiting me to do this, and to Ms. Ute Skambraks for her excellent editorial assistance. I am also grateful to a pair of anonymous referees for their comments on a draft of this text. Any errors or omissions are entirely my responsibility, not theirs.

Finally, I am always grateful for the love and support of my wife Ellen and our son Gus, the best people I know.

