

Chapter Title: Afterword

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So you read the whole thing . . . it was surely challenging and frustrating at times, but I hope the way was lightened by moments of clarity. Welcome to the cutting edge—you now have all the basic tools you need to pose, and answer, ecological questions in a quantitative way. There is more to learn, of course, but at this point you should be capable of picking your way through the primary literature to find new tools. New statistical ideas and new applications of statistics are appearing monthly in journals like *Ecology* and *Ecological Applications*, where they are generally phrased in “ecologist-friendly” terms, but you may also find yourself making your way to the pages of journals such as *Biometrika* and *Journal of the American Statistical Association* in search of new ideas. More important, however, you are now empowered to *make stuff up*—within the limits of common sense and the statistical tools you have learned, you can design and build your own models. Check them with simulations and ask statistically savvy colleagues to confirm that your methods are reasonable. You will be pleasantly surprised (I know I was the first time I brought a new statistical model to a statistician) when they say “gee, nobody’s done that before, but it seems to make sense.”

. . . many places you would like to see are just off the map and many things you want to know are just out of sight or a little beyond your reach. But someday you’ll reach them all, for what you learn today, for no reason at all, will help you discover all the wonderful secrets of tomorrow.

—Norton Juster
The Phantom Tollbooth