This book has had a long gestation. It began by chance when I was working as a historian for the Division of Cancer Prevention at the US National Cancer Institute (NCI). One day in the early 2000s, Nancy Brun, then chief of the Information Resources Branch of the NCI's Office of Cancer Communications, came into my office to show me a scrapbook about a publicity campaign for a film that the NCI had released in 1950 called Challenge: Science Against Cancer. Neither of us knew much about this film, but the scrapbook documented a significant effort to promote it, with a wealth of primary sources between its covers: publicity pamphlets, press releases, clippings, photos, correspondence, invitation cards, plans for the campaign, and even the seating arrangements for one of the premieres of the film, along with other documentation such as the film script and narration. Nancy and I spent time leafing through the pages, and it seemed to me that it might one day be the basis for a journal article. It was not a priority, however, and I filed the scrapbook away.

A few years later, I disinterred the scrapbook when I was working for the History of Medicine Division (HMD) of the National Library of Medicine (NLM). Paul Theerman, Mike Sappol, and I had persuaded HMD to develop a series of DVDs on historical medical and health films in the NLM's collection. My DVD was to be a selection of the historical cancer films in the NLM's collection (along with an introductory essay and notes on the individual films) and was to include Challenge. The DVD series never came about, and eventually mutated into the NLM website Medical Movies on the Web, now Medicine on Screen, but it revived my interest in Challenge. Paul, then HMD's head of Images and Archives, agreed, with the blessing of Elizabeth Fee (then chief of HMD), to fund a visit to the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), which had produced the film, and the Library and Archives Canada to get some background material. It was then that my research life changed.

The NFB had kept almost everything on the film so that it was possible to know, sometimes on a day-to-day basis, how the film came about and how it was sponsored, made, and promoted. It was clear to me that this offered the opportunity for much more than a single academic paper or the liner notes for a DVD,
Acknowledgments

and that a book on the making of cancer educational films was possible. The Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa confirmed this impression. It contained rich documentation on the history of cancer educational film in Canada and Challenge in particular, and on the perspectives of the Department of Health and Welfare, the Canadian Cancer Society, and National Cancer Institute of Canada on these developments. Paul also sanctioned a trip to interview Colin Low, one of the two animators of the film, and to visit York University, outside Toronto, where the composer Louis Applebaum’s papers are held.

When I moved to the History Office of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2007 my new boss, Robert Martensen, agreed to fund a further research trip to New York to visit the UN archives and to interview Morten Parker, the director of the film. Now, rather than being part of a proposed DVD series, the film was to be a gateway into the history of the NCI, part of the NIH, the focus of the office’s mandate.

So this book is indebted to Nancy for starting the whole thing off; to Paul, Elizabeth, and Robert for financing key research trips; and to Michael Gottesman, Deputy Director for Intramural Research at the NIH, for giving me space to make a start on writing following Robert’s untimely death. It is also indebted to the many archivists who helped me locate records. At the NFB, Bernard Lutz transformed my research direction by opening the door to the board’s extensive collection and allowing me to photocopy virtually everything, and after his retirement André D’Ulisse continued my research transformation. Suzanne Dubeau, then Assistant Head, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, helped me review the Louis Applebaum papers, which include the score for Challenge. Judy Grosberg of the NCI’s Office of Cancer Communications unlocked the NCI’s archival collections during the period when these documents were being scanned into the LION database, where the scrapbook now resides. Paul Theerman, Nancy Dosch, Stephen Greenberg, and John Rees at the NLM helped me with access to its film and manuscript collections. Other archivists and librarians across the US and Canada answered my many email queries and are acknowledged in the endnotes.

I was lucky enough to meet some of those involved in the film. Colin Low (Challenge’s co-animator) and Morten Parker (director) both generously invited me to their homes, talked about their careers and involvement with the movie and watched it with me, patiently explaining to this film tyro how it was put together. Low identified many of the animation techniques used in the film, how the work was divided between him and his co-animator, Evelyn Lambart, and how they imagined the audience they wanted to reach; and he sketched
some of Challenge’s animation images for me to show how they were made and the technical issues involved. Parker identified many of the actors in the film, helped me understand how he and Guy Glover (producer) divided their tasks, provided much other information on the making of the film, especially the live action, and loaned me his documentary records on its making. Parker identified the man in Figure 3.1 as Maurice Constant, a point confirmed by Constant’s sons John and David. Dallas Johnson Read (formerly Helen Dallas and Dallas Johnson), the information officer who started the whole thing off at the NCI, graciously allowed me to interview her. At the time she was all but forgotten at the NCI, even though she had lived close by in Bethesda for many years. I would also like to thank Randy Bazilauskas, who shared memories of the life of his father, Vito, and his involvement in the film.

Many colleagues and friends have helped with this book. I had many conversations with my NLM colleague Mike Sappol, and he and Eva Åhrén watched the movie with me and helped me identify some of the iconographic references in the animation. Michael O’Brien, Bonnie Cohen, and Maurice Saylor helped me understand more about the role of music in film, and all three listened to and read the score, which Maurice also played for me on the piano. Anja Laukötter and Christian Bonah probably heard far more about this book than they wished to while we were ostensibly working on our jointly edited health education film book. Their invitations to several scholarly meetings in Strasbourg provided me with opportunities to buttonhole other historians interested in visual culture and film.

The book has benefited from the comments of participants at various seminars and conferences. I thank Thomas Söderqvist, who was the first to invite me to present on this film at a mini-symposium: “Perspectives on Cancer Research, 1950–2000,” Forum for Tvaarvidenskabelig Medicinhistorie, Medicinsk Museion, Copenhagen University, Denmark, February 10, 2005; and Zoë Druick, who invited me to participate in a workshop on “Canada’s National Film Board and the World: Proposals for a Research Agenda,” Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Annual Meeting, Montreal, March 25–29, 2015. Papers based on this project were also given at the National Library of Medicine’s History of Medicine Seminar, March 16, 2005; the Association of American Medical Colleges, Washington, DC, June 29, 2005; and the 2008 Biennial Film and History Conference, “Film and Science: Fictions, Documentaries, and Beyond,” Chicago, October 30–November 2, 2008. Finally, I also discussed this film at a film presentation and lunchtime session I organized—“Canadian Persuasion: The National Film Board of Canada and the Post-Second World War Development
of the Health Education Movie”—at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the History of Medicine, Montreal, Quebec, May 3–6, 2007.

The series editors of Rochester Studies in Medical History, Ted Brown and later Chris Crenner, were unfailingly enthusiastic about the book through its long gestation. At the University of Rochester Press, Sonia Kane and Tracey Engel shepherded the manuscript through the review and production process. Sonia not only commissioned the book, but also arranged for the open access edition through the Sustainable History Monograph Pilot funded by the Mellon Foundation and administered by Longleaf Services. At Longleaf Services, I must thank Ihsan Taylor and Lisa Stallings. Finally, thanks are due to my copyeditor, Elsa Dixler, who ruthlessly cut my over-wordy prose, and significantly improved the text.

In regard to the website that accompanies this book, I must thank Sarah Eilers, who approved the idea very quickly, ensured that the NLM’s copy of Challenge was re-digitized to a better quality than the existing one on the NLM’s website, and that the other versions of the film and the filmstrip were incorporated into the new website. Sarah, Beth Mullen, and Oliver Gaycken at the University of Maryland, College Park, ensured that the website came together in time for publication of the book.

Several personal votes of thanks. My wife, Judith Freidenberg, has heard far too much about this seemingly never-ending project, and must have despaired of it ever reaching publication. It has been with us in one way or another since we met and has taken too much time away from our lives together. I cannot thank her enough for her love and support during its gestation and look forward to making up for lost time. Finally, I wish my parents, John and Elizabeth, could have seen the book into print. Unfortunately, both retired into dementia during its writing and died long before its completion. The book is dedicated to them.