

Science in the Snow; Fifty Years of International Collaboration through the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

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SCIENCE IN THE SNOW; FIFTY YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION THROUGH THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON ANTARCTIC RESEARCH. By David W. H. Walton and Peter Clarkson, with additional material by Colin Summerhayes. Cambridge: Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, 2011. 258 pp. £24. (softcover). ISBN: 978-0-948277-25-2.

This very informative book describes the history of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) over the past half century. I have been working on Antarctic research since 1956 myself, so I feel as if it is telling a story I have lived. Starting with the International Geophysical Year (IGY, 1957–1959), the white continent, Antarctica, has continuously been occupied by modern scientists. This book begins its story when SCAR held its first meeting in 1958, during the IGY. This was a year prior to the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959, which entered into force when ratified in 1961. The 12 countries that participated in the IGY (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States, and USSR) comprised the initial membership of SCAR. There are now 31 full-member countries. The increase in membership and concomitant increase in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties started with the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic in 1978 as the world turned its attention to the question of exploitation of possible mineral resources, specifically offshore petroleum in Antarctica. The Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resources Activities (CRAMRA), 1981–1988, was signed but never ratified. CRAMRA was essentially rewritten into the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, which was signed and adopted by participants in Madrid in 1991. The Protocol prohibits mineral resource activities, other than for scientific research, in Antarctica. Despite what this book tells us, there is no 50-year termination of this prohibition, but there is instead a cleverly negotiated agreement such that the issue can be revisited by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties after 50 years. SCAR scientists participated in all of these negotiations as members of their national delegations. However, SCAR was admitted to the confidential Treaty Meetings starting in 1991 in Bonn, and is continuing.

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There is an interesting discussion of the evolution in 1986 from the SCAR Working Group on Logistics to the Council on Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), and the part played by Peter Wilkniss, Director of the Division of Polar Programs at the U.S. National Science Foundation. I attended some of the SCAR meetings in San Diego in 1986 and recall some discontent on Wilkniss' part that he was not included as a member of the U.S. SCAR delegation because he was a U.S. government employee. In contrast, the heads of delegations of a number of other countries were also heads of their respective national programs. This is an idiosyncrasy of the U.S. science establishment whereby the National Academy of Sciences and its Polar Research Board defines the SCAR delegation.

SCAR was reorganized in 1998–2003 under the somewhat redundantly named SCAR *ad hoc* Committee on SCAR Organization. The book takes more than 25 pages to discuss this, and although not mentioning names, the authors indicate that a number of toes were stepped on in the process. As before, U.K. appears to be the dominant country in SCAR (*viz* the authors of this book).

Science in the Snow is rather dry reading as it lists the many committees, scientific meetings, etc. extending over the past 50 years. This is not meant as a criticism, because I assume the book is intended to make a publically available record of these names and dates. It is slow going, however. The absence of women in the early years is quite noticeable from a 21st century perspective. I know the authors, and the differences in their writing styles is apparent. A good editor might have smoothed the text, but I suspect there was no money for this. The appendices should prove quite useful to scholars. There is an index of the names of people, but unfortunately no subject matter or other names are included. There are also a number of nicely reproduced color photographs of various Antarctic activities.

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