

## Into the Next Forty Years

Long-term readers of *Arctic* know that the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) has completed 40 years of existence, and as *Arctic* enters its 39th volume it is undergoing a facelift that we hope will be reassuring to our readers. There are other more subtle changes that we hope will make a good journal better. Some of these are in response to suggestions from readers, suggestions for which we are always grateful.

The North is changing, and we will try to keep up! But it will take a good deal more than cosmetic changes. AINA was founded in the aftermath of the last world war to serve as a repository of northern data collected during wartime, and more importantly to serve as a vehicle for peacetime research and scholarship in the North.

Wartime science was principally data gathering in the hard sciences and technologies. During much of the first 40 years the tradition of hard science prevailed, although the original purposes of AINA in Canada included social and political matters in the North. Nevertheless the funding for research and study during those 40 years lay largely in the physical and life sciences. The editorial content of *Arctic* reflected this focus.

Clearly, profound changes are occurring in the North, and the reality of these changes is penetrating the academic community as never before. But it takes a while for the funding of northern research to recognize the new realities. To maintain some element of currency in the pages of *Arctic*, we are trying to shift the editorial focus to include significant numbers of research papers on sovereignty, native government, renewable resource management, communications, international militarism, housing, linguistics, government, and all those other topics of prime concern at this time in the Arctic both in Canada and beyond.

These topics are on the front page of every publication coming out of the Arctic, and while *Arctic* (and *Information North*) are not newspapers, we still have a responsibility to be as current as we can in our particular mode of publication. One of our problems is that we have a backlog of excellent manuscripts still waiting in line for publication, and the bottom-line constraint is always limited funding.

We must take care to keep up with the times in all ways. In these days of staggering new possibilities in electronic communications, we must not overlook uniquely important new technologies. For example, it seemed incongruous to this new editor that a manuscript written today may spend the next 12 to 18 months in review and revision and, finally, the physical process of publication. True, some make it through the system more quickly, but why should it take even six months? Why not six weeks, six days, six hours or even six minutes?

Such questions raise the more fundamental question of the purpose of publishing research results. *Arctic* is proud to be a member of a distinguished population of scholarly journals. Scholarly journals have been around since the beginning of time — even before the establishment of the Arctic Institute — and they serve their authors and readers well in completing the

process of discovery and learning. The printed word is a durable vehicle of communication, and it will be with us forever.

But we must not stop there! If we agree that discovery and learning extend into the publication process and that new technologies may speed up the steps in publication, *Arctic* should be exploring means by which the new technologies may be applied in the coming decade. We can follow the obvious approaches of using electronic data transmission for manuscripts between author, editorial offices, typesetter and printer. Then we can develop on-line full-text availability for readers as well as on-line abstracting.

The biggest delays, however, lie in review and revision, and it is here that the greatest innovation may be practiced. The processes of review and revision are more complex and much more positive than commonly recognized. They include not only those steps taken after receipt by *Arctic* but a whole variety of steps before that: many manuscripts are direct condensations of theses that have been written, rewritten, defended and revised under abundant authoritative criticism. Some were presented at conferences and revised as a result. Some manuscripts are condensed consultants' reports that too were extensively revised. Other manuscripts come from professional work in regular institutional research. Still others come from excited bootlegged research!

Perhaps there is a role for *Arctic* to play in facilitating a total review and revision process by promoting an innovative system in which evolving manuscripts are presented in an electronic network. The principles of teleconferencing and electronic bulletin-boarding appear to be applicable. We can assume that everyone involved in arctic scholarship has access to telephones and personal computers, and therefore is able to access such an arctic network of discovery and learning.

In most parts of the world academic work is largely isolated from the "real world," but this is not true in the Canadian North. Here, because the numbers of people are very small and the issues are so sweeping, the compartmentalization of other societies is not appropriate and does not occur. Thus, in the North the connection between classic research and the real world is much closer, and the more the focus of scholarship moves from traditional science toward issues of people — native government, communications, sovereignty and militarization — the more the academic information system overlaps with the real-world systems. Indeed, in a number of areas the conduct of research itself is carried out by native and local people.

It would seem to follow that *Arctic* could assist in establishing a new dimension in information management in the North by promoting an arctic network of discovery and learning, focusing on innovative processes of communication, exploration, criticism, revision and publication.

— Gordon W. Hodgson, Editor