

Foreword: With a Sensitive View to the Future

Forty years is a long time in the fragile institutions of humankind, but only a flash in the illumination of history as one looks back over the lifetime of the arctic regions and the people who have occupied them for many thousands of years.

It is therefore with a good deal of self-consciousness that we draw attention to our 40 years of publication, being all too aware of the transient nature of human initiative, yet wanting to celebrate an event that to us seems important — 40 years of continuous publication of northern research.

Very few of our people have been around for those 40 years, and that in itself is relevant because it indicates that there was something very important, even compelling, in the foresight of our predecessors who set about to create and nurture a journal of northern scholarship 40 years ago. They set in motion a vehicle for serious publication of scholarly treatment of northern topics, and it has continued to roll for these 40 years.

The direction that *Arctic* has taken was more or less predictable. Set as it was in the aftermath of World War II, *Arctic* found itself publishing residual material from the time of that international conflict, but it went far beyond those immediate concerns. As was the nature of the times, the research community of the day set about to systematically catalogue everything in sight under the domination of the natural sciences — physical and biological. It was driven by curiosity at that time. Several decades were to elapse before the dominance of problem solving in northern research, as elsewhere.

Northern people were known to exist in those days, and to a large degree were treated like the ice, rocks and wildlife, to be catalogued and described, along the lines of the apocryphal story of every native northern family consisting of a father, mother, three children and a southern anthropologist.

Northern research changed over the years, but not as much as the northern regions themselves. Imagine what the response of an editor would have been to the use of the term “native self-government” if it had been attempted in an *Arctic* paper in the late forties! What natives? What self-government? What are you talking about!

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of *Arctic* we solicited a number of papers. Some were papers of reminiscences; others were scholarly research/review papers. Thus we were fortunate to acquire reminiscences by a number of designers and leaders of the Arctic Institute over the years. A few invitations to contribute were regretfully declined by old friends who for one reason or another were unable to participate. From the stories that we have, we learn the way that the Arctic Institute came together through the determined initiative of a core of dedicated people. The excitement of the times, the seizing of an opportunity (we would call it a window of opportunity these days), the intensity of their belief that the Arctic Institute was needed and the immense effort that went into creating the institute and its journal are apparent in those stories.

An element of mystery surrounds the creation of the journal itself, though. It seems, simply, that it was the obvious thing to do, to put together a scholarly journal. All serious (learned) membership societies did so at the time, so also, the Arctic

Institute, and *Arctic: The Journal of the Arctic Institute of North America* was born in 1947.

In addition to the reminiscent papers, we invited a number of scholars to prepare papers entitled “Forty years of . . .” to present reflections on a variety of northern topics. These papers were treated as regular manuscripts offered for publication in *Arctic*, with peer review, revision and acceptance in the regular way. These papers make up the bulk of this anniversary issue.

The “forty-year” papers were designed to look back over the past four decades with a view of examining developments over those 40 years, and it was understood that many authors, if not all, would want to look ahead a little, since the world will not stop when *Arctic* finishes its first 40 years. Accordingly, the topics were selected to view the North, not as it existed 40 years ago, but rather how it looks to us at the present time, after developing over those 40 years. While it was not possible, for a variety of reasons, to cover all areas of northern scholarship, this collection of seven papers gives an overview from the late 1980s. Care was taken not to be limited by disciplinary boundaries when it was obvious that topics were much larger than their central discipline. As a result, we have papers that are enriching in their depth (but align somewhat unconformably with one another), that cover the northern subject matter in a variety of ways, yet unfortunately leave regrettable gaps, but together give a multidimensional picture of northern research and the pressures that drive the people who conceive of, and conduct, research.

It was with some deliberation that some of the invited authors were selected from the early days of research, some from a decade or two ago and some from very contemporary times, so that we would have the benefit of a wide range of perspectives. Some writers chose to write classical review papers, while others wrote papers that are both analytical and reflective. We are grateful for them all.

Few of us will be around at the end of another 40 years, but *Arctic* will continue to publish results of northern research, as the Arctic Institute prospers and flourishes after having come through some kind of identity crisis in the seventies and eighties. In the next 40 years we will see many papers in *Arctic* written by native researchers; this trend began late in the first 40. It will blossom in the next. We will also see a substantial number of the total authorship resident in the North. This is as it should be.

We will see research conducted in much more holistic ways in the coming 40 years. Much of the cataloguing has been completed; now it needs to be all put together in a framework that is comprehensively perceptive and meaningful. Scholars will spend more time understanding, commenting on and describing processes involved in the northern reality in all its facets. Frantic frontier-driven research will give way to more thoughtfully designed evaluations and projections, with a sensitive view to the future, exhibiting caring and concern not normally associated with classical scientific research.

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