

## Foreword

As scientists around the globe gear up for the upcoming International Polar Year (2007–2008), it might be good to take a look back. The First IPY took place as early as 1882–1883, at a time when activity in the Arctic and Antarctic was focused mainly on exploration. But all that was about to change. Indeed, one of the guiding principles for the First IPY was that in polar regions, scientific research rather than exploration should be foremost. Among the achievements of that year was the establishment of several research stations, some of which are still in use.

The Second IPY (1932–1933) was centred around meteorology, magnetism, aurora and radio science. Because of the Depression, the Second IPY did not achieve quite as much as had originally been hoped.

The Third IPY (1957–1958) included research not just at the poles, but all over the globe and, importantly, in space. New powerful research tools such as rockets and the first computers had become available, and the International Geophysical Year (as it came to be known), was a tremendous success. Much work was carried out in the Antarctic. This provided new knowledge about the Earth's total ice content, the behaviour of glaciers, the seismology of the southern hemisphere, and how to predict the weather. The Antarctic Treaty was another important outcome.

What will we learn from the Fourth IPY? Will it live up to its goal of fostering interdisciplinary research and bipolar issues? I hope so, because that is precisely what *Polar Research* wants to publish. It is still too early to tell how fruitful the Fourth IPY will be, but I look forward to seeing some exciting results on the pages of this journal in the next few years.

Meanwhile, we can turn to the current issue of *Polar Research* for some interesting papers. The six articles included here deal with topics ranging from large animals (muskoxen) to microorganisms (bacteria), from hard things (rocks) to fluids (seawater). As usual, the articles span the globe from north to south.

This issue also contains reviews of two books. One of them, *Marine mammals of Svalbard*, by Kovacs et al., has been reviewed by two people: Olle Melander serves as naturalist on-board the MS *Origo* and has long experience as a lecturer and guide on cruises in and around Svalbard; William F. Perrin is a marine biologist, currently senior scientist at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center in La Jolla, California. Two different reviewers with two very different perspectives. What do they think of the book? Do they recommend it? Do they agree or disagree? Find out for yourself on page 209.

Janet Holmén, Editor