

THE IPY AND ITS PROBABLE IMPACTS ON POLAR SCIENCE AND GLOBAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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The ICSU – WMO International Polar Year 2007 – 2008 has drawn extraordinary interest from scientists of many specialties and many nationalities. A cautious assessment prior to the IPY start shows nearly 200 projects, each with at least 10 and often 50 or more scientists from at least three different nations, addressing a wide range of physical, biological and social research topics in both polar regions. Adding students, engineers, technicians and all manner of talented support crew so essential to polar research, and accepting some limitations due to logistics and funding, it seems likely that IPY will involve several 10's of thousands of individuals from at least 60 nations. Much of the IPY research will represent redirection and new collaboration on the basis of existing funds, but several nations will implement substantial new research funding and enhanced logistical support during IPY.

All SCAR scientific research programmes have proposed new or enhanced activities during the IPY period. A similar pulse of new and renewed activity will occur in the Arctic. One of IPY's strongest scientific contributions will arise from a substantial effort to understand geophysical, biological, and even social linkages between northern and southern polar regions – these linkages will highlight the importance of polar science to global processes and issues. IPY will offer unprecedented data and communication challenges and opportunities, internally among so broad a range of scientific disciplines and externally to science education systems at all levels and to the general public. Against a background of prominent and largely commercial events, including films, television series, and museum exhibitions, many SCAR institutions and individuals will consider local events, new educational materials, and new engagement strategies that can have an enormous impact on public perception of science. In its total science and outreach effort, IPY will provide a large step forward in polar activity and attention that SCAR and other pre-eminent polar organizations can use and should plan to sustain.