



## 23rd Polar Libraries Colloquy: Cool Libraries in a Melting World June 13–18, 2010, Bremerhaven, Germany

*Willkommen in Bremerhaven!* Bremerhaven, Germany, is the site of the 23rd Polar Libraries Colloquy to be held June 13–18, 2010, hosted by the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research. The theme, *Cool Libraries in a Melting World*, touches all aspects of life in the Polar Regions, from communities living in melting permafrost regions and the problems they face, to the current financial crisis, which is melting away funding for libraries.

The year 2010 also celebrates the centenary of Scott's and Amundsen's departure for the race to the South Pole. Watch for programs and presentations highlighting the heroic age of polar exploration, with perhaps a session or two about polar explorations in the present day.

Complete information about the 2010 Colloquy, including information about early full-conference registration (**through Wednesday, March 31**) and the Call for Proposals (**deadline Friday, March 19**) can be found at <http://www.awi.de/en/go/PLC23>.

Information about the Hubert Wenger Award that provides financial assistance to one or more individuals who might otherwise be unable to attend the PLC can be found at <http://arcticcentre.ulapland.fi/polarweb/plc/wenger.asp>.

For questions about the conference, please send an email to [plc23@awi.de](mailto:plc23@awi.de).

See you in Bremerhaven!

**Marcel Brannemann**, Conference Convener  
Head Librarian, Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research



Havenwelten, Bremerhaven. (Photo from PLC23 website)

## A Note from the PLC Chair

I've been thinking rather a lot about systems just recently, and library systems in particular, and I was reminded of E.F. Schumacher's observation, 'Any fool can make things complicated, it requires a genius to make things simple.' Though I would make no claim to genius, it struck me that this tenet should be ingrained in the way we approach the delivery of systems and services. The end user—whether library patron, researcher, or member of the library staff—benefits if we keep things simple. This holds true for inductions, catalogues, electronic services, and the whole host of ways in which we communicate, both face-to-face and remotely.

I was therefore delighted to see how simple it is to register for the PLC in Bremerhaven. The underlying system may be complex, and the amount of work entailed for Marcel Brannemann and his team at AWI is not to be underestimated, but the end result shows how technology can, and should, be made to work to our advantage. If you haven't already registered, I urge you to do so—this promises to be a fascinating and stimulating Colloquy. Following straight on from the IPY Science Conference in Oslo, we'll have an opportunity to reflect on *Cool Libraries in a Melting World*—how we go about conveying complex messages in simple ways to promote public understanding of the Polar Regions. See you there!

Best wishes,  
*Heather Lane*, PLC Chair

## Report from the University of the Arctic Council Meeting Kiruna, Sweden August 11–14, 2009

Submitted by *Sandy Campbell*, Science and Technology Library, University of Alberta, Edmonton

As PLC's representative to the University of the Arctic (UARctic), I attended the UARctic Council Meeting in Kiruna, Sweden, which was held August 11–14, 2009, and hosted jointly by the Abisko Scientific Research Station and Umeå University.

The following two items were of significance to PLC.

### **1. Session III. Governance Issues, Item 15: Membership Fee**

At the request of the Board, the Council discussed the need to charge an annual membership fee for UARctic members and considered various fee models. Council voted to support establishing a fee, and as PLC's representative, I supported that motion. The fee was set at 500 Euros annually. In the discussion, I made it clear that PLC would be

unable to pay this annual fee. I was assured that Executive recognized that, by selecting a flat-fee structure, exemptions would have to be made for very small organizations, of which there are about 15, including PLC. As part of the annual UARctic membership update, members supply their annual budget figures; these numbers inform Executive as to which members qualify for receiving the exemption.

As your Secretary, I have written to the UARctic Secretariat formally requesting that PLC be exempted from this annual membership fee.

### **2. Session IV. Breakout Session 6: UARctic Digital Library**

Following our discussions at the 2008 Colloquy in Edmonton, PLC created a UARctic Digital Library Committee, composed of both PLC and UARctic



## University of the Arctic Council Meeting *continued*

members, to begin work on preparing a proposal for a digital library for UArctic. This Committee, which I chair, worked throughout the year to complete the proposal. When finalized, it was forwarded to the UArctic Executive.

At Council meetings, one of the ways new concepts are introduced to UArctic is through breakout sessions, where interested members get together to discuss the concept and then report back to the Council as a whole. The report to Council is restricted to five minutes.

Thanks to the work of the Committee, a breakout session on the UArctic Digital Library was on the schedule for this meeting. Eight members attended, representing Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Russia, Sweden, and USA. Several other members expressed interest in the topic, but were unable to attend because of time conflicts with other breakout sessions.

PLC was fortunate to have among the attendees three UArctic members who have been actively involved in the UArctic Digital Library Committee over the past year: Scott Forrest (UArctic Special Projects), Kati Dana (UArctic Instructor), and Amanda Graham (UArctic Instructor/Yukon College). PLC members will remember Kati and Amanda from the UArctic Instructors Panel at the 2008 Colloquy.

We began the breakout session by asking each member to describe the UArctic-related information challenges that they experienced and to talk about their interest in establishing a UArctic Digital Library. Kati Dana ably kept notes on flip-charts and by the end of the discussion a number of themes had emerged. Key among these was a general agreement that UArctic needed some sort of library. The group also recommended that the word “digital” not be used so that print media could be included in the scope of the work.

The group identified several principles important in framing the library services. It also identified two information issues, which it recommended be brought to Council’s attention: these are 1) the

need for information literacy to be incorporated into UArctic course offerings, and 2) the need for UArctic materials to be published in open access formats, so that members can draw upon the work of others.

Several in the the group volunteered to work together to move forward the plan for a UArctic Library. These individuals will be added to the now renamed UArctic Library Committee (formerly the UArctic Digital Library Committee) that has been working for the past year.

Following the breakout session, Amanda Graham and Kati Dana worked with me to craft a five-minute presentation for the Council. Because this proposal is a service initiative to UArctic that reports through the Secretariat, it did not require a vote of the Council. The Breakout Session Report was presented for Council’s information.

The expanded UArctic Library Committee is now free to begin framing its work to make the UArctic Library a reality.



Reindeer at Jukkasjärvi. (Photo by Sandy Campbell)

### **Venue and Local Culture**

Like PLC, one of the goals of UArctic’s meetings is to expand members’ understanding of various places in the Arctic. The town of Kiruna, Sweden, is a mining town about 200 km north of the Arctic Circle. It was founded about 100 years ago, when mining of a large body of iron ore began.



## University of the Arctic Council Meeting *continued*

The mine is to the west of the townsite and the body of ore slopes downward at about 60 degrees to the east, under Kiruna itself. Because of this, the town is now being destabilized so that historically and culturally significant buildings will have to be moved. These include a large wooden church and bell tower, along with the City Hall, which won architectural awards when it was built in the 1960s. The City Hall contains a large-scale model of the town, showing the areas that must be relocated.

About 40 km west of Kiruna is the Abisko Scientific Research Station, which was founded about 100 years ago by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Our hosts from the Research Station described some of the climatic changes that are being observed. Abisko's location was originally chosen because the mean annual temperature was 0° C. Since 1998 the mean annual temperature has risen to above 0° C. This increase in temperature is causing the ancient permafrost beneath the mines to melt away, resulting in many changes to the ecosystem. There are also many more winter thawing events, which result in a die-off of vegetation.

Kiruna is located in the traditional Sami grazing areas. The Sami Parliament buildings are also located here. Our primary cultural excursion was to Jukkasjärvi, which is an historic gathering place for the Sami. This is also where the famous ice hotel is constructed each October. We visited the Raidu Reindeer Centre, where we were treated to reindeer

delicacies and lingonberry "lemonade" and heard a speech from the Speaker of the Sami Parliament. We also watched a film depicting a year in the life of a reindeer herd, and then entered a small paddock where we could wander among the reindeer. These reindeer are part of a much larger herd, but are kept here to be trained to pull sleds for the visitors to the ice hotel. We learned that it is impolite to ask a Sami herder how many reindeer he has, because it is similar to asking someone how wealthy they are.

At the Jukkasjärvi Church adjacent to the Reindeer Centre, our guide sang joiks (a traditional Sami form of song) for us and introduced us to Laestadianism, a radical movement within the Church of Sweden named for Lars Levi Laestadius, a Lutheran minister who was born in Northern Sweden and married a Sami woman. Forceful in his preaching, Laestadius demanded abstinence from alcohol and eschewed adornment, both on clothing and in homes. For example, homes were not to have curtains at the windows. While this austerity might seem extreme, it was in some ways a validation of the normal lives of the Sami people at the time. Living in tents, following the herds, there was no need for extraneous possessions. Laestadianism has many adherents among the Sami today.

Through the information given us by the local speakers, the walking tour of Kiruna, the excursion to Jukkasjärvi, and just being in the landscape, we came away with a fairly well-rounded sense of this region of northern Sweden.



A yellow train carries iron ore pellets to Norway. Wind turbines dot the hills adjacent to the mine at Kiruna. (Photo by Sandy Campbell)





## Danish Arctic Research Centre Survives!

To all who signed the protest against the closing of the Arctic Centre in Strandgade in Copenhagen:

The letter of petition forwarded to the Danish Minister of Science and the Parliament Committee on Greenland on 22 September 2009 had its effect. The Polar Library will continue under the wings of the University of Copenhagen. This outcome is extremely important for all of us with an interest in research in the Arctic. The library, the university department of Eskimology and Arctic Studies and the Arctic Institute, along with other institutions related to the Arctic and the North Atlantic region will still be present at the Arctic House, Strandgade 102, in Copenhagen.

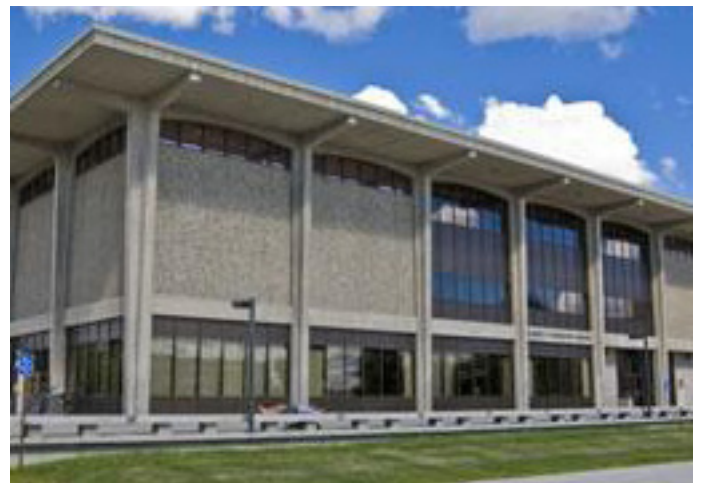
The three of us circulating the letter wish also to express our sincere thanks for your support. More than 100 signatures on such short notice is impressive. Some of the interventions were cited in the Danish media, and this obviously made an impact. We hope that the decision will be the start of a new pro-active Danish policy in relation to Arctic research in general and to Arctic research within the humanities and social science areas in particular.

Once again we want to express our sincere thanks to you.

*Susanne Dybbroe, Hans Christian Gulløv, and Jens Dahl*  
Danish Arctic Research Centre

## Announcing...

Bridget Burke is the new Head of the Alaska & Polar Regions Collection in the Rasmuson Library of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Bridget has worked in special collections in research libraries for 20 years, holding curatorial and administrative positions in organizations including the Colorado Historical Society, the Yale Collection of Western Americana, and the American Alpine Club Library. She can be reached at [bjburke@alaska.edu](mailto:bjburke@alaska.edu).



Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.  
(Photo by Allison Blanchard, UAF Marketing and Communications)



## Book Reviews

**Billington, Keith.** *House Calls by Dogsled: Six Years in an Arctic Medical Outpost.* Madeira Park, B.C.: Lost Moose, 2008.

Review by **Sandy Campbell**

Science and Technology Library, University of Alberta, Edmonton

In 1963, English nurses Keith and Muriel Billington took up the Government of Canada's invitation to staff the nursing station at Fort MacPherson in the Northwest Territories. They became the only health services for "thousands of square miles" and lived in the community for six years.

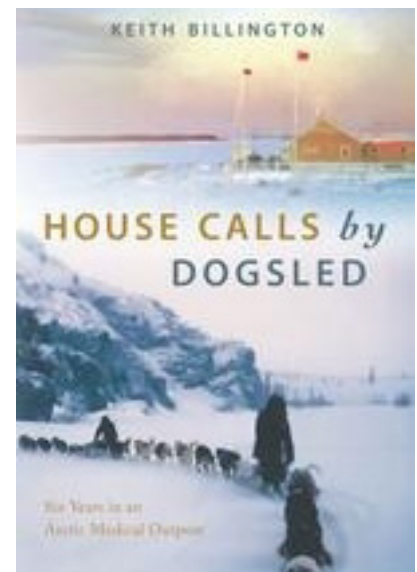
This book is a series of anecdotes and first person accounts from the couple's years at the station. It opens with the horrifying situation of a young man coming to the station at night, with a stick embedded in his eye. Billington does a good job of capturing not only the sights and sounds of this and other events, but also his own reactions. His voice is authentic with occasional repetitions from chapter to chapter that give the reader the sense that the stories have not been heavily edited. One of the shortcomings of the book, however, is that these are his stories, rather than their stories—Muriel Billington's voice is very much absent in the telling.

True to its title, the book contains many detailed descriptions of travel by dogsled. Billington much admires the sled dogs and many times praises their intelligence and ability to find their way, their desire to pull the sled, and their ability to work with minimal food. In one incident, having been lost all night and had one sled dog die, Billington finally retraces his steps and tells us:

I turned the dogs onto the trail just at the point where my lead dog had tried to take me the night before and where, in my ignorance, I had made him go the wrong way. They pulled slowly and steadily over the unbroken trail, probably feeling the old trail under the fresh snow. Their enthusiasm

surprised me, but I am sure that these uncanny dogs could sense that we were now headed for a comfortable bed and some good food! (p.149)

Billington also admires and respects the Gwich'in people, who make up the population that he and his wife serve. He was clearly an "outsider," and one often has the sense that he is an observer of the community, rather than a part of it. He tells many



stories about his experiences treating these people as well as travelling, hunting, and celebrating with them.

Occasionally Billington retells other people's stories, as in this example, where he quotes an historical anecdote told to him by local resident, William Firth:

Money was plentiful in Fort McPherson at that time [1920s] and people gambled their houses, their schooners and—some even said—their wives at the throw of a dice. (Whenever William told us about the wives, he would throw back his head, slap his thigh and covering his mouth with his hand, laugh as though this was the biggest joke.) (p. 37)



## Book Reviews *continued*

*House Calls* is sparsely illustrated with good quality black-and-white images that are mainly snapshots of Billington's family and local Gwich'in people, all in keeping with his informal style of storytelling.

**Pollack, Henry N.** *A World Without Ice.* Forward by Al Gore. NY: Avery/Penguin Books, 2009.

Review by **Ronald W. Brosemer**

Professor of Biochemistry, School of Molecular Biosciences, Washington State University, PO Box 647520, Pullman, WA 99164-7520, [xaire@wsu.edu](mailto:xaire@wsu.edu).

*A World Without Ice* is a masterful presentation of an alarming scenario but without the histrionics we have come to expect. Geophysicist and Nobel Laureate Henry Pollack has calmly, logically, and clearly described the role of ice and cold in maintaining a small sphere where we humans can survive.

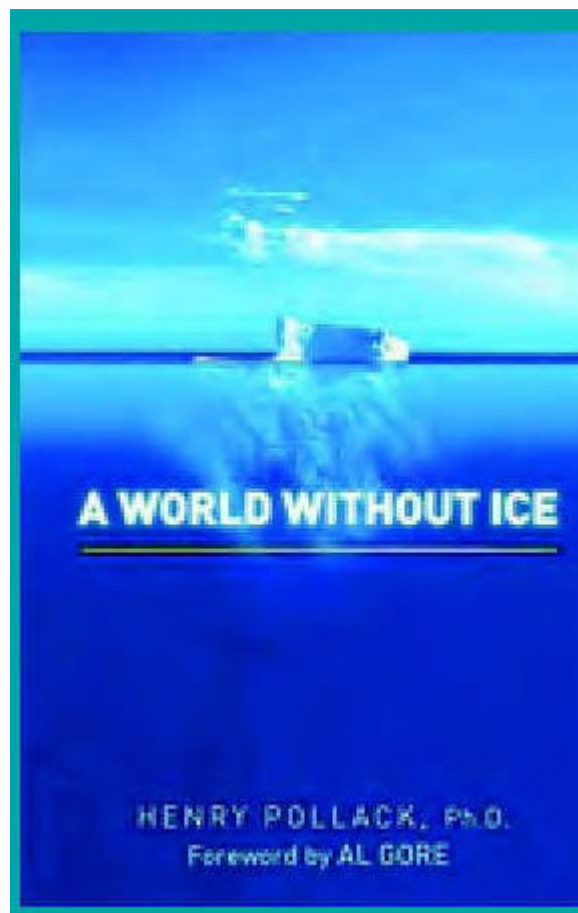
Past geologic history is used to illustrate Earth when it was a bit warmer or a bit colder than what has been experienced over the past several millennia. Descriptions are both vivid and comprehensible to a curious audience that does not have a deep scientific background. Pollack has the knack of converting 'scientific-ese' into plain English. For example, since every homeowner understands a mortgage, Pollack uses the ever-decreasing amount of interest leading to the day the home is owned outright to illustrate the tipping point when Earth could enter an irreversible and drastic change in its climate.

The importance of refereed publications (as opposed to opinions in blogs) is explained for an audience who, for the most part, has no concept that "what is written may in fact be inaccurate." Arguments by those wanting to continue the status quo are presented objectively, and just as objectively shown to be deceptive. The difference

Overall, this is an interesting and readable memoir and a useful snapshot of the Fort MacPherson area in the 1960s. Recommended for general nonfiction reading as well as for public and academic libraries collecting Canadian polar history.

between "opinion" and "fact" is illustrated time and time again.

The book ends with recommendations that are modest but crucial. Whether we wish to listen or not, Pollack has warned us with an entertaining but serious style. This is a must read.





## Wanted! Nominations by March 31, 2010

### for William Mills Prize for Nonfiction Polar Books

Submitted by *Deborah Hicks*, University of Alberta, Edmonton

The William Mills Prize for Nonfiction Polar Books is seeking nominations for 2010. The prize, first awarded in 2006, was established in memory of William Mills, consummate polar librarian, author, and a core member of Colloquy during its formative years.

The prize honors the best Arctic or Antarctic nonfiction books published throughout the world. It consists of \$300 US, certificates for the author and publisher, and the right to use the William Mills Prize logo when advertising the winning book. Winning titles are announced via pollib-L, the PLC website, the *Polar Libraries Bulletin*, and elsewhere.

More information about the award, including past nominees and winners, is available on the PLC website at <http://arcticcentre.ulapland.fi/polarweb/plc/mills.asp>.

To qualify, the book:

- Must be nonfiction, about the Arctic or Antarctic.
- May be any type of substantive work of nonfiction or a reference resource. Textbooks, anthologies, edited works, and other small-scale efforts will not be considered unless they are truly outstanding contributions to the polar literature.
- Must have been published for the first time between the dates of the last Colloquy and the December 31st before the next Colloquy. Re-releases, translations of older materials, and updated editions are not eligible. The publication time frame for the 2010 award is July 2008 to December 2009.
- Must be published in an English-language version.

Submissions should include the book title, author(s)/corporate author(s), place of publication, publisher, date of publication (between July 2008 and December 2009), and name and contact information of person nominating the book.

Additional information such as a book summary, statement of the book's impact, book reviews, etc., would be very welcome but is not mandatory.

Please send nominations to Deborah Hicks at [Deborah.R.Hicks@gmail.com](mailto:Deborah.R.Hicks@gmail.com) or P.O. Box 4556, Edmonton, AB, T6E 5G4 Canada.

**ALSO WANTED!** Electronic copies of historic film clips on Polar Expeditions, etc. Please contact Marcel Brannemann, PLC23 Conference Convener, at [Marcel.Brannemann@awi.de](mailto:Marcel.Brannemann@awi.de).





## Proceedings Available from NICOP 2008



Proceedings from the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Permafrost, held at the University of Alaska Fairbanks during summer 2008, are now available for purchase. The result is a two-volume, 2200-page proceedings with more than 360 peer-reviewed papers on state-of-the-art research in permafrost and seasonally frozen regions of the earth.

Order soon, as supplies are limited.

To order online, visit the U.S. Permafrost Association's website at [www.uspermafrost.org](http://www.uspermafrost.org).

To order by mail, download the order form at [www.uspermafrost.org/docs/proceedings-order-form.pdf](http://www.uspermafrost.org/docs/proceedings-order-form.pdf).

All nine of the proceedings can be downloaded at [http://research.iarc.uaf.edu/presentations/NICOP/NICOP-DVD-ftp-files/NICOP-files-1023am-6\\_20/](http://research.iarc.uaf.edu/presentations/NICOP/NICOP-DVD-ftp-files/NICOP-files-1023am-6_20/).

Questions may be directed to Doug Kane, senior editor, via email at [ffdlk@uaf.edu](mailto:ffdlk@uaf.edu) or by phone at 907-474-7808.

The International Permafrost Association's annual publication, *Frozen Ground*, can be accessed at [ipa.arcticportal.org/](http://ipa.arcticportal.org/).

**Apologies to Our Readers:** Publication of the Fall 2009 *Bulletin* has been delayed until now, March 2010. The Spring 2010 issue will appear in May.



**Polar Libraries Bulletin**  
**Fall 2009**  
**Issue 63**

Formerly entitled *Northern Libraries Bulletin*, this *Bulletin* reflects the name change of the Northern Libraries Colloquy to the Polar Libraries Colloquy, as approved at the June 1988 biennial meeting.

The *Bulletin* is published twice yearly in the Fall and Spring. Members of the Polar Libraries Colloquy receive the *Bulletin* as part of their membership. Personal dues are £20 or US \$35 for a two-year period. Institutional dues are the same. Please send dues to David Walton, Emeritus Fellow, Environment and Information Division, British Antarctic Survey, High Cross, Madingley Road, Cambridge CB3 0ET, United Kingdom.

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Layout: Juli Braund-Allen

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PLC Homepage: <http://arcticcentre.ulapland.fi/polarweb/plc/default.asp>  
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