



SCAR XXXII Delegates' Meeting

Portland, USA, 13-25 July 2012

Agenda Item: 5.4.4

Person Responsible: Cornelia Lüdecke

History Expert Group

2011-2012

Executive Summary

Title: History Expert Group

Author: Cornelia Lüdecke

Introduction/ Background:

The Expert Group was founded as an Action Group in 2004 [??], with 24 individuals present at the first meeting in Germany in 2005. Since then the Group has flourished and membership of the Expert Group has steadily increased, as has the geographical and disciplinary diversity of the participants. The Group's meetings continue to serve as a valuable discussion space for junior and senior members alike. Meetings have been held across four continents, permitting the core group of academic historians to be joined by local researchers who would likely not otherwise have joined the Group. The forthcoming meeting in Portland will be the largest and most diverse yet – a sign of our ongoing vitality. The SCAR Expert Group provides a unique and irreplaceable site for scholars to exchange ideas and develop historical research related to the Antarctic, rather than just passively sharing their findings, evidenced by collaborative research projects undertaken by group members.

Important Issues or Factors:

Previously rare early published sources are becoming globally available, and members of the Expert Group are contributing to their publication through forums such as the South African National Antarctic Program's online database;

More and more documents held in restricted archives are being released, including in the former Soviet Union, but also from national archives elsewhere;

New methods of social and archaeological investigation are being developed and resources created;

Opportunities for collaboration between historians and scientists are increasing.

Recommendations/Actions and Justification.

We wish to continue the SCAR History Expert Group in its current form.

Expected Benefits/Outcomes

The current high level of publication by Group members will continue, both individually and through collective forums such as special journal issues and a planned edited volume.

Partners

The SCAR Social Science Action Group, other research programs specified in the main text, as well as the history group of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC).

Budget Implications: (What funds are requested or other commitments by SCAR?)

US\$3000 to support the annual workshop of the Group.

History Expert Group

1. Chief Officer

Cornelia Lüdecke

2. Major Future Initiatives and Actions

A workshop will take place in 2013, at a venue to be decided, with a separate meeting planned as a step toward producing an edited volume showcasing the state of the field in historical research concerning the Antarctic. Group members will continue to work on original research projects, in addition to being enlarging the pool of source material through oral history collection, the digitization of archival documents, and archaeological fieldwork.

3. Major Activities and Significant Progress

7th SCAR History Workshop in Stellenbosch (South Africa) 2011

The SCAR History Expert Group held its annual workshop in Stellenbosch from July 26 to 29, 2011, hosted by the Centre for Invasion Biology at Stellenbosch University with the generous support of the South African National Research Foundation, the German Research Foundation, and SCAR. At this occasion – the first Group meeting on the African continent – twenty-three participants from five continents shared their research. In keeping with the workshop's theme of 'probing the unknown,' presentations showcased new methodological perspectives, especially in archaeology and anthropology, in addition to unearthing fresh information on the history of polar research.

The workshop was timed to coincide with the launch of two major projects that promise to greatly assist polar history for years to come. The Antarctic Legacy Project, based at Stellenbosch University, has collected and digitized photographs, personal diaries, and oral history interviews related to South African Antarctic research. The University of Cape Town has digitized and indexed over seventy thousand primary documents related to the Antarctic from South African government archives, material that promises to be of great relevance to scholars around the world. Both projects have been sponsored by the South African National Research Foundation.

Two plenary lectures were given. Peder Roberts presented work conducted with Lize-Marie van der Watt, arguing that Bouvet Island was a means of exploring wider issues in polar history and politics. This remote and nearly inaccessible island was nevertheless at the centre of wider debates concerning British imperial power, South African meteorological ambitions, and Norwegian Antarctic plans during the Cold War. Maria Ximena Senatore challenged the master narratives of Antarctic history by showing that archeological evidence can illuminate nineteenth-century sealing or whaling for which documentary records are extremely scarce, showing that these activities were connected to global commercial networks and demonstrating the relevance of material culture to historical scholarship even in the Antarctic.

Workshop presentations embraced both local and international perspectives. Archeological research on the lives of sealers and whalers, and anthropological research on the lives of scientists, provided particularly stimulating. Papers brought to light new information on South African Antarctic monuments, archeological research on Marion Island, the careers of early Antarctic scientists, and aviation in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic. One particularly important contribution challenged white-dominated narratives of

South African Antarctic history while locating recent counter-narratives in the contemporary political context. Studies focused on new sources for polar history embraced both the opportunities of working with newly-collected materials from the Legacy Project, and the opportunities of disseminating historical material to the public through internet portals. Other papers demonstrated how research on the Crozet Islands sealing trade could profitably draw upon a broad range of material, from statistical records to legal documents, and how more traditional (but hitherto unavailable) documentary records could shed new light on even well-studied episodes.

This was the first meeting of the Action Group after its reincorporation as a SCAR Expert Group, a reflection of the Group's continued growth under the leadership of Cornelia Lüdecke. The mix of senior and early-career scholars, in addition to veterans of Antarctic research and key figures from the South African Antarctic program, led to a series of highly energetic conversations that confirmed the continuing importance of the human element to SCAR's activities.

The workshop at Stellenbosch University in 2011 received considerable media coverage, including several radio interviews and reports online and in print.

Three papers resulting from the workshop were accepted for *The Polar Journal* contingent on revisions.

Bidlingmaier & Bernacchi: *The Antarctic Research of Two Pioneer Physicists* by Andrew Atkin, New Zealand.

Investigation of the Unknown – The Flight Programme of the German "Schwabenland" Expedition 1938/39 by Cornelia Lüdecke, Germany.

Ghost Hunting in the Chilean Antarctic, by Consuelo León Wöppke, Chile.

Additionally, the research Roberts and van der Watt presented at the workshop is part of an edited volume prepared by the Rachel Carson Center in Munich, currently in review.

Group members have published extensively in other forums, including the following monographs:

Lüdecke, C. and C. Summerhayes. *The Third Reich in Antarctica: The Story of the German Antarctic Expedition 1938-39*. Bluntisham: Bluntisham Books and Eccles: Erskine Press, 2012,

Roberts, P. *The European Antarctic: Science and Strategy in Scandinavia and the British Empire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

During group discussions at the Stellenbosch workshop, numerous members suggested that the time was ripe for an edited volume presenting the diversity and breadth of historical research connected to the Antarctic. The proposed volume would demonstrate that just as natural scientific research in the Antarctic has illuminated questions of global relevance – not least those related to climate change – historical research based on Antarctic material is increasingly relevant to broader historical narratives. Preliminary discussions in Stellenbosch have since been augmented by continued discussion among group members, with agreement to formally decide upon a timeline for completion and a framework for publication at the business meeting in Portland. This project would serve as a capstone to the Expert Group's work thus far – demonstrating the work members have done across a breadth of historical disciplines – while suggesting profitable directions for future research.

"Lewander Lecture"

The SCAR History Expert Group has established the annual Lewander Lecture in memory of Lisbeth Lewander, a founding member of the Action Group and constant presence at its meetings until her untimely passing in January 2012. The lecture is chosen by the chair of the SCAR History Expert Group and the co-convenors from the abstracts submitted to the sessions of the SCAR History Group.

In honor of Lisbeth Lewander's commitment to bringing new methodological perspectives to bear upon Antarctic history, the memorial lecture exemplifies the value of dealing with polar history from diverse points of view, as well as the importance of sharing ideas and experiences with the next generation of scholars in order to widen involvement in the field. In addition to serving as a showcase for historical research at forums such as the Open Science Conference through its status as the Expert Group's plenary lecture, the Lewander Lecture will be published in a forum such as the Polar Journal. It is hoped that the Lecture will provide both a flagship event for the Expert Group and a means of keeping alive the values that Lisbeth Lewander embodied, not least her tireless commitment to assisting junior scholars and encouraging their research both within the Group and through her position at the University of Gothenburg. The inaugural Lewander Lecture will be presented by Heidi Prozesky (Stellenbosch University).

4. Budgetary Implications

The annual budget of US\$3000 will primarily be used to subsidize travel to the Expert Group's annual meeting, thus enabling the broadest possible participation from junior scholars and those outside the United States and Western Europe.

Appendices

Business meeting 2012

The forthcoming business meeting will focus on three issues:

- 1) Selecting a venue and dates for the next meeting of the Expert Group.
- 2) Planning an edited volume that will showcase the breadth and diversity of current historical research on the Antarctic, and potentially organizing a workshop where papers will be circulated and discussed. It is hoped to prepare a timeline and identify a preferred publisher at the business meeting, in addition to identifying group members willing to serve as editors.
- 3) Relations with cognate groups and research programs. The possibility of joint meetings with the SCAR Social Sciences Action group will be discussed, along with connections to research programs such as the Arctic Futures group (based at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm), the history of Norwegian polar politics project (based at the University of Tromsø, Norway), and the Rachel Carson Center in Munich. A further opportunity is collaboration with IASC to understand inter-polar cultural transfers in both knowledge and technology.

Terms of Reference

The Expert Group will continue to act as a meeting place for scholars working on the history of the Antarctic from diverse perspectives, with an overt focus on involving junior scholars and fostering collaboration among Group members. The Expert Group's meetings will also help facilitate the sharing of research materials, including newly-collected oral histories and newly-released archival sources. The geographical diversity of the Group's membership will permit material from around the globe to be accessed, from North and South America to Africa, Australasia, Europe (eastern and western) and Russia.