

Guest editorial

Antarctic Science—5th BIG year!

As *Antarctic Science* enters its fifth year, it is time to assess progress and review the opportunities for Antarctic research in the coming years. The journal appears to have filled a useful niche, established a range of regular (and irregular!) contributors, and is taken by the majority of major polar libraries world-wide. Quality of production has improved with new equipment but rate of publication has fallen with increasing numbers of acceptable contributions. Cross-disciplinary papers have been few — but perhaps that is because few Antarctic scientists have undertaken the challenge of cross-disciplinary studies? Glaciology and most aspects of atmospheric sciences are still under-represented.

Our first special issue on the palynology of James Ross Island has been well received and a second, on a Southern Ocean cephalopod symposium, is planned for 1994. These special issues are a bonus to subscribers who get the extra pages free. The editors are keen to receive proposals for other special issues with offers of appropriate funding.

What are the new opportunities for Antarctic science over the remainder of this decade? At the largest scale the IGBP initiative has produced a welcome research focus for a wide range of natural and physical scientists, and provides many opportunities for cross-disciplinary research. However, it is only concerned with the last hundred thousand years whereas Antarctica's present glaciation stems from a long-term climatic decline that began in the Cretaceous. The message is clear: in our enthusiasm to address problems of the moment, it is essential that we do not forget the longer view.

Until recently, obtaining funds for geoscience research in Antarctica virtually required the mention of mineral resource potential. The Madrid Protocol has changed this and now new scientific initiatives, such as ANTOSTRAT with its open international database of seismic data can help to send out important political signals that scientists have no hidden resource agenda, and help to restore their slightly tarnished image.

In the marine field, the SCAR initiative on the sea ice zone offers exciting new possibilities whilst the synthesis of the WOCE and JGOFS data will certainly change our understanding of Southern Ocean oceanography. International opportunities for co-operative on-land research through BIOTAS have never been better and the increasing concern with environmental damage will require a more comprehensive understanding of ecosystems if effective management is to be undertaken.

However, whatever the big international programmes may do some of the most important advances in Antarctic science will come from individuals with good ideas. International planning and objectives should never be seen as more valuable than individual initiatives.

Antarctica continues to be news, and research articles in *Antarctic Science* are being picked up by the media internationally. Citations continue to grow as, we hope, do the value and utility of the journal. *Antarctic Science* is being widely read but too many people are reading someone else's copy. The health of a journal depends on on three things: high quality contributions, an appreciative readership and, not least, an adequate income. It is not an expensive journal either for individuals or libraries. The more subscribers the easier it becomes to expedite publication and to promote new initiatives. Your support is essential to the continuity and success of *Antarctic Science* in the next five years.

D.W.H. WALTON, M.R.A THOMSON & S.D. MOBBS