

## Chapter 10

# Epilogue

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From its beginnings in the post-IGY enthusiasm for Antarctica, SCAR has come a long way in the last sixty years. Its early activities were more like a men's club, with a small number of people meeting in a rather informal manner to exchange ideas and plans. Involving just the 12 IGY countries for many years, SCAR at that time encompassed logistics as well as science, in theory making for a single forum for the linked development of science and its support. Despite valiant efforts by many national operators, there was always a tension between the objectives for science, driven by untrammelled academic curiosity, and the limitations that government and logistics placed on what support was delivered and by whom. The parting of the ways when COMNAP was formed in 1988 was seen by many as a step in the wrong direction and bound to be detrimental to SCAR. It has proved to be quite the reverse with a strong co-operative link between the two organizations perhaps best evidenced by the joint scheduling of meetings, the SCAR Horizon Scan activities closely followed by the COMNAP Roadmap development, and the joint SCAR/COMNAP fellowships.

Right from the start SCAR was seen as a source of science advice to the Treaty, but opposition from several governments in 1958 denied SCAR the right to actually attend meetings or present papers directly until after 1985 when SCAR was finally invited to become an Observer. Throughout its sixty years SCAR has been careful to guard its independence and avoid direct involvement in

politics, yet has tried at the same time to be responsive to the needs of the Treaty for evidence-based policy-making. At times this has proved a difficult feat given SCAR's limited resources and the complete lack of financial support from the ATCM, however complex the task requested, but the robust and extensive environmental legislation that now protects the Antarctic is testimony to how well SCAR succeeded.

Looking back over sixty years it is clear that the qualities of the various presidents have had a major impact on SCAR's activities. There have been many different styles of presidential direction and, as the membership of the organization has grown, new countries such as Germany, Brazil and Spain have provided presidents to sit alongside those from the original founding countries. Moreover, this has proved true for the more recent Vice-Presidents with representatives from India, Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Germany, Italy and China. Whilst not all Treaty Parties are members of SCAR, for any Party with serious intentions to undertake research on and around the continent SCAR provides an unequalled forum for developing the necessary skills and for building collaborations.

Over the years, it proved easy for SCAR to fall into a business as usual scenario when all was going well, leading to limited forward planning and a lack of drive for expansion and innovation. So a major turning point in SCAR history was the SCAR meeting in Concepción, Chile, in

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1998 when Chris Rapley and Jörn Thiede made it clear that all was not well, that SCAR was perceptibly lagging behind the other ICSU bodies and that a review of the way SCAR functioned and an overhaul of its objectives was long overdue. The discussions this set in train revitalized the whole organization, giving a new impetus to everything from organizing major international programmes to recognizing individuals for their contributions to SCAR and Antarctic science.

Most recently the attempt to look forward through the Horizon Scan, the development of mentoring schemes to help less advantaged countries improve their skills base, the addition of efforts put into education and outreach, the recognition that the Humanities need to be connected to the science in an active and meaningful way, and the inclusion of the links between science and policy as an important field of activities, are all indicators of an organization filled with enthusiastic and active people. Above all, SCAR's concentration of effort on major scientific questions through Scientific Research Programmes with clearly defined goals and limited lifetimes, commonly operating in an increasingly interdisciplinary way, has revitalized the organization's scientific impact.

Throughout this period, a series of remarkable people from around the world

has freely given the time and expertise to ensure that SCAR remained an effective organization and that Antarctic science flourished. SCAR's budget has always been very limited so that the Secretariat has always worked under pressure with minimal staffing. Recognition also needs to be given to the Chief Officers and others who have laboured long and hard, largely in their own time, to support SCAR and its initiatives and to pass on their expertise to each new generation. Without them, SCAR would never have reached its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The future for SCAR looks exciting as the importance of Antarctic science grows in our understanding of global systems. Major steps forward have been the recognition of the importance of gender equality in all of its activities and the need to focus on the development of the next generation through organizations such as APECS. Its links with many other international bodies have widened the network of Antarctic science and scientists, so Antarctica is no longer seen as a quiet backwater with limited science opportunities but more a key element in global modelling, in solving global problems and in searching for answers to some of the world's most difficult scientific questions. Antarctic science has truly come in from the cold!

