

Spencer Acadia

Arctic research

Environment, health, and culture of the circumpolar north

Stretching across the northernmost areas of Earth, the Arctic can be defined in several ways. Most commonly, the Arctic Circle (66° 33' N) is referred to as the starting point of the Arctic, though more liberal definitions include all areas north of 60°N. Other definitions rely on an isotherm, the point where the average temperature for the warmest month is 10°C, and the Arctic tree line, the point past which the environment does not support tree growth. Arctic countries include Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, United States (the State of Alaska), Canada, Denmark (Greenland and the Faroe Islands), and Iceland. Comprised of land, sea, and ice, the Arctic is a vast area—as large as 25 million mi², or 40 million km²—and average winter temperatures can range from 32°F (0°C) to -40°F (-40°C).

Arctic research is interdisciplinary and international. Areas of Arctic research include the environment and ecosystem, weather, climate, nature and wildlife, culture and society, human health, and indigenous study. As it becomes integrated into the globalized world system, the Arctic is of increasing importance to many governments, scientists, industries, businesses, and other internal and external interests. Contemporary problems in the Arctic such as climate change, pollution and contamination, geopolitical territorial claims, and the concerns of rural indigenous communities have provided many opportunities for researchers in both the physical and social sciences to learn more about the roles and relationships between the Arctic, its people, and the rest of the world.

What follows is an annotated list of Internet resources compiled to assist students,

librarians, and novice researchers interested in myriad Arctic topics. This list is not exhaustive, but is meant to be a beginner's guide to high-quality, academic Arctic resources. Many of these resources are general and overarch the entire Arctic spectrum of study, though some are tailored to specific audiences. Although country-specific Web sites are indeed significant sources of Arctic information, these sites have been excluded from this list to allow more space for key Web sites that contain essential information and research about the Arctic as a complete system.

General Arctic information

- **Arctic Portal.** The Arctic Portal serves as a comprehensive Internet gateway to Arctic information. Featured areas such as “Science,” “People,” “Business,” “Projects,” and more are grouped into categories for easy access. An alphabetic list of acronyms commonly used in the Arctic literature is given, and an interactive map allows users to choose different Arctic variables and attributes for simple geographic analysis. Current weather conditions across the Arctic can be accessed by the map, and Arctic Webcams are available for viewing. Other features include several Arctic news feeds, a mailing list, and a calendar of upcoming Arctic events. Includes Facebook, Twitter, and RSS. *Access:* <http://arcticportal.org>.

- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Arctic (NOAA) Theme Page.** The Arctic Theme Page of NOAA hosts

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an abundance of Arctic links organized into two main headings. Under the “Scientific” heading are links to Arctic data, data centers, research programs, and technical information. Under “General Interest” are links of more casual appeal containing facts, news, and teaching tools about Arctic history, native peoples, exploration, and current events. An extensive gallery of Arctic photographs and imagery, streaming Webcams, informative essays in full-text, and an Arctic FAQ are showcased. Includes YouTube. *Access:* <http://www.arctic.noaa.gov>.

- **Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI).**

A part of the University of Cambridge, SPRI actively engages in Arctic physical and social science research. Information sources on the SPRI Web site include links to International Polar Year publications and the SPRI’s polar archives and picture library. SPRILIB, a polar and glaciological bibliographic database featuring approximately 120,000 Arctic and Antarctic records, can be accessed from the site. An exhaustive list of quality resources for Arctic research and information is provided, along with a short list of charities conducting work in Arctic and Antarctic areas. Additionally, the SPRI Web site includes a directory of polar libraries by country, a fun section for kids, and information about their Polar Museum. SPRILIB is planning to be expanded in the near future. *Access:* <http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk>.

Organized cooperatives

- **Arctic Council.** The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental organization comprised of all eight nations having Arctic geographic presence, plus a number of representative groups supporting the causes of Arctic indigenous peoples. The “Working Groups” section contains information about and documents written by six Arctic Council groups charged with scientific assessment and reporting of Arctic matters. Under the “Meetings” section are kept archives of documents related to all past events held by the council from its inaugural meeting since 1998 to the present. The “Arctic News” section includes press reports

and articles relating to the agendas of the council and other Arctic assemblies. Abundant links are provided for information about Arctic government, agriculture, economy, culture, research, and more. Includes RSS. *Access:* <http://www.arctic-council.org>.

- **University of the Arctic.** UArctic is not a single campus in a single location; it is a network of higher education institutions, research centers, and other organizations with Arctic interests. Through this network, students of UArctic member institutions—as well as the public—can register for courses in the Circumpolar Studies program. An extensive Arctic news archive and access to UArctic’s *Arctic Views* online magazine provides abundant knowledge about Arctic culture, events, nature, and more. Plus, the “Atlas” section contains Arctic maps grouped by various themes. Includes RSS. *Access:* <http://www.uarctic.org>.

Scientific research and information

- **Arctic Centre.** From the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland, the Arctic Centre is a hub for Arctic information. Common research themes and projects (e.g., sustainable development, environmental issues, indigenous peoples, etc.) are discussed extensively in the “Research” and “Arctic Region” sections.



The university’s Arctic museum and library center, The Arktikum (www.arktikum.fi/), focuses on Arctic science, history, and culture. The “Education” section provides details on Arktis, the university’s graduate school in Arctic sciences. “Links” and “News” sections complete this highly recommended Web site for access to a breadth of Arctic knowledge. Includes Facebook. *Access:* <http://www.arcticcentre.org>.

- **Arctic Institute of North America (AINA).** A part of the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada, AINA promotes research in the physical and social Arctic sciences.

A major highlight of this Web site is the full-text online archive (1967–2009) of the *Arctic* journal, an academic interdisciplinary publication dedicated to Arctic research. Two other significant features are the Photographic Archives and Research Project database, where users can view digitized Arctic documents and photos, and the Arctic Science and Technology Information System database of more than 70,000 bibliographic records in Arctic sciences. Also, a list of current AINA research projects, upcoming conferences, and a “News” section are provided. Includes Facebook and RSS. *Access:* <http://www.arctic.ucalgary.ca>.

- **ArcticStat.** Developed and maintained by Université Laval in Quebec, Canada, ArcticStat is a database of socioeconomic datasets and statistical tables from the circumpolar region. Many of



the datasets come directly from the official statistical agencies of each individual Arctic country. Statistics and tables are organized by country/region, year, and statistical indicator (e.g., education, health, population, etc.). Data output is often linked to the original location on the individual statistical agency's site and/or provided from ArcticStat directly in PDF format. The “Metadata” section contains information to help define statistical terms and data characteristics, while the “Links” section provides access to national statistics agencies and related organizations. This Web site is recommended for users interested in Arctic social and health research who have some familiarity with statistics. *Access:* <http://www.arcticstat.org>.

- **National Science Foundation (NSF) Office of Polar Programs.** Promoting Arctic and Antarctic science, NSF's OPP provides funding opportunities for physical and social scientists interested in cold regions research. Links to NSF-supported projects are given under the “Related Polar Links” and “Discoveries” sections. A searchable NSF publications database in the “OPP Publications List” section allows users to locate Arctic newsletters,

journals, reports, statistics, and more. “OPP News” includes RSS. *Access:* <http://www.nsf.gov/dir/index.jsp?org=OPP>.

- **National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC).** A part of the University of Colorado, NSIDC's Web site contains highly scientific and analytical data on cold climate topics and research across the world's polar regions. Databases, publications, reports, news, and projects on ice and snow research are provided and recommended for scientists in the physical sciences. For those seeking general, more casual knowledge, the NSIDC Web site features an “Education Center” with informative entries about polar ice, snow, weather, climate, and the cryosphere generally in easy-to-read, lay terminology. Plus, the site hosts an extensive “Photo and Image Gallery” of more than 1,000 images of Earth's polar areas. *Access:* <http://nsidc.org>.



Arctic health

- **Arctic Health.** Created by the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the Alaska Medical Library at the University of Alaska-Anchorage, this Web site acts as a subject guide on health, illness, and healing in the Arctic. The “Publications” section features a compilation of links to databases, journals, special collections, and more with a focus on Arctic health, including the Arctic Health Publications Database of nearly 100,000 bibliographic records. The “Research” section provides a listing of projects, activities, organizations, and funding sources related to Arctic health research. Other sections include information concerning traditional healing, environmental health, and telemedicine in the Arctic. Plus, a list of Arctic agencies and organizations are given, along with an extensive selection of links about the recent International Polar Year. *Access:* <http://www.arctichealth.org>.

- **International Journal of Circumpolar Health (IJCH).** From Oulu, Finland,

comes *IJCH*, the leading academic journal in Arctic health research. All journal issues and supplements from 2002 to the present are available full-text online, while tables



of content are available from the journal's first issue in 1972. *IJCH* is indexed in many major vendor databases and has a 2009 impact factor of 1.05. The "Links"

section contains links to other international and regional publishers of scholarly Arctic work. *IJCH* is a highly recommended read for researchers interested in any facet of health and social sciences in the polar regions. *Access:* <http://www.ijch.fi>.

• **International Network for Circumpolar Health Research (INCHR).** INCHR is a network of individuals, groups, and organizations that support health initiatives in the polar regions. Of particular interest is the "Ethical Principles" section, a compilation of links about health research involving indigenous peoples. In the "Library Resources" section are links to the Aboriginal Health Collection and Information Services site at the University of Manitoba and the Circumpolar Health Bibliographic Database, two great resources for Arctic health information. Other lists are those of research centers and regional authorities that provide access to a wealth of Arctic health knowledge. *Access:* <http://inchr.com>.

• **International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH).** Composed of organizations having interests in health matters of the Arctic and Antarctic, the IUCH has provided a non-governmental forum for polar health research collaboration since 1981. The "Circumpolar Health Resources" section contains a link to the Native Health Database at the University of New Mexico, which contains bibliographic information on health topics concerning Native Americans, including Alaska Natives and First Nations in Canada. Also, links are included for many international health programs and institutes. *Access:* <http://iuch.net>.

Arctic culture and indigenous peoples

• Indigenous Peoples Secretariat (IPS).

Supporting the indigenous groups of the Arctic, IPS fosters communication and coordination between and among indigenous groups, national entities, and international cooperatives. Six permanent participant groups of the Arctic Council are represented in IPS—Arctic Athabaskan Council, Aleut International Association, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Sami Council—with official Web site links provided. Current and archived Arctic news as well as previous IPS newsletters since 2001 are accessible. Includes Facebook and other social applications. *Access:* <http://www.arcticpeoples.org>.

• **Smithsonian National Museum of History Arctic Studies Center (ASC).** The ASC of the Smithsonian provides a selected anthropological history of circumpolar peoples by offering a number of



interesting online exhibits under the "Exhibition" and "Features" sections. Topics include Viking history, images of Yup'ik masks, descriptions of Arctic wildlife, images and video about Alutiiq dance, and more. Access to newsletters, field reports, catalogs, a FAQ, glossary, and teaching tools is located under the "Publications" and "Resources" sections. Also, links are included to Web sites of anthropological, archaeological, museum, and native interests. *Access:* <http://www.mnh.si.edu/arctic>. *z*

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