

Researching the Poles

This winter's recent "bomb cyclone," which froze much of the continental United States, makes this seem as good a time as any to look at sources for doing polar research. Polar research could, of course, include a wide range of topics—all of which would likely have some maritime connection—but here we'll look at a few that seem more emphatically maritime, such as scientific research and exploration.

Given the manner in which polar regions bring nations' borders together in often-confusing ways, it's not surprising that many different countries sponsor polar research programs. The Norwegian Polar Institute, at <http://www.npolar.no/en/>, for instance, focuses on both poles; this is not a surprise, given the proximity of the North Pole, and their history of exploration of the South Pole by Roald Amundsen and others. Norwegian polar exploration continues today, with a brand-new purpose-built icebreaker and research ship, RV *Kronprins Haakon*, that will serve as a valuable tool for continued access and research in the Antarctic and Arctic.

Like the Norwegians, the British have spent a good deal of time exploring both poles. The UK's **National Maritime Museum** has actively collected records and artifacts from many polar explorers, and most are recorded at <http://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/explore/exploration-endeavour/polar-exploration>. Cambridge University's **Scott Polar Research Institute** (<https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/library/>), part of the university's Department of Geography, contains extensive collections on polar research, from artifacts to manuscripts to online resources. Finally, the British government maintains two sites about polar discovery: **Discovering the Arctic** (<http://www.discoveringthearctic.org.uk/>) and **Discovering Antarctica** (<http://discoveringantarctica.org.uk/>), each with interesting public-facing information about the very different—but equally harsh—environments.

The National Maritime Museum recently hosted an impressive exhibit titled "Death in the Ice" about Sir John Franklin's explorations of the Arctic in the 1840s, and the loss of his two ships, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*. Both were rediscovered in the

last several years, in Canadian waters. That exhibit is now at the **Canadian Museum of History** through September 2018 (<http://www.historymuseum.ca/event/the-franklin-expedition/>), and then will be at **Mystic Seaport** after November 2018.

A fairly basic site at <http://www.south-pole.com/> describes many aspects of Antarctic exploration, with a particular focus on letters, telegrams, documents, and especially stamps, to tell these stories. Russell Potter maintains an overview of many Arctic expeditions and explorers at <http://visionsnorth.blogspot.com/p/arctic-exploration-brief-history-of.html>, and has a variety of interesting additional content about Arctic exploration and literature.

Myriad pages honor the memory of Sir Ernest Shackleton, particularly surrounding the epic struggle and eventual rescue of the crew of his ship *Endurance*. The Scott Polar Research Institute (mentioned above), has a set of pages called "Virtual Shackleton" at <https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/archives/shackleton/> that highlight each of his voyages. The same department also hosts a collection of nearly 25,000 polar images at <https://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/picturelibrary/>, in several different formats and interfaces. The Dundee-built **Royal Research Ship Discovery**, now on display in Dundee, Scotland, carried both Robert Scott and Shackleton to the Antarctic, and the website at <https://www.rrsdiscovery.com/> records a bit about them and the ship itself.

Most of the people who travel to the poles today do so for scientific research. The **Arctic Institute of North America**, based at the University of Calgary (<http://arctic.ucalgary.ca/>), publishes the **Arctic Science and Technology Information System** database (<http://www.aina.ucalgary.ca/astis/>), containing extensive research on Arctic science.

The **Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research** coordinates numerous scientific research projects taking place in Antarctica at <https://www.scar.org>. The **American Geosciences Institute** continues to make two bibliographic databases about polar regions available at <http://www.coldregions.org/>. The databases cover 1950 to 2011, so while you will not



find the most recent literature, they do have earlier content and they are still available online. The databases are bibliographies, so they just provide citations to existing articles; the articles and books are generally not available through this interface.

A major challenge in these regions is law and jurisdiction. Iceland's University of Akureyri offers a masters and law degree in the subject, and has been sponsoring the **Polar Law Symposia** for the last decade (<http://www.polarlaw.is/en/previous-symposiums>). Jurisdiction has been a concern since a 1970 case ("the T-3 case") in which an American citizen killed another American on a large iceberg that was floating in the Arctic—if the victim or perpetrator had been of another nationality, determining appropriate jurisdiction would have been a very difficult question. In the Antarctic, the situation is a bit different, since there's actual ground under the pole. The **Antarctic Treaty Secretariat** provides extensive information about the legal aspects of the continent, at http://www.ats.aq/index_e.htm, including a database of information about the Antarctic Treaty, a database of protected and historic sites, and plenty of other information about how the land is managed.

Suggestions for other sites worth mentioning are welcome at peter@shipindex.org. See <https://www.shipindex.org> for a free compilation of over 150,000 ship names from indexes to dozens of books and journals. ⚓