



From International Polar Years to the International Geophysical Year and beyond - How it Shaped Geophysics in Austria

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Shortly after *Karl Weyprecht* (1838-1881) returned with his crew from the Austrian-Hungarian North Polar Expedition (July 1872 to September 1874) he reflected quite critically about his and ambitions of others to reach for the most northern latitudes. In 1875 he put forward the idea to undertake an internationally coordinated measurement campaign in the polar regions. His proposal was discussed and finally agreed on at three “polar conferences” from 1879 to 1881. The measurement timeframe was fixed to August 1882 to August 1883. Weyprecht himself did not live to see his ideas implemented for he died already in March 1881. Twelve countries in the frame of fifteen projects participated in this “First International Polar Year” with the main focus on meteorology, geomagnetism, aurora observations and oceanography. Austria-Hungary maintained a research station at Jan Mayen Island east of Greenland. The results of the measurement campaigns were discussed in a “polar conference” in Vienna 1884.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary the “Second International Polar Year” was organized in 1932/33, where Austria was represented, due to the economic hardship of the time, only by a small group of researchers again at Jan Mayen Island.

Beginning of the fifties the idea to organize a “Third International Polar Year” was disseminated and following the suggestion of *Sidney Chapman* the project originally concentrating on the polar regions was transformed to a global project, also reflected in renaming it to “International Geophysical Year (IGY)”. It took place between August 1957 and December 1958 with the participation of 67 countries and approximately 8000 researchers and engineers worldwide. In Austria several institutions took an active part in the IGY.