



Status and challenges of the IPY 2007-2008 programme

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The International Polar Year 2007-2008 was launched on March 1, 2007 and a two year field programme in both polar regions has now been initiated. The programme comprises a total of 228 projects involving participation from 63 countries and represents the largest programme of its kind assembled in the past 50 years. A uniquely broad diversity of research is being undertaken in 170 science projects, including a substantial number of social science studies. The objective of the programme is to obtain a comprehensive snapshot of the current state of both the Arctic and Antarctic and to develop a legacy of both enhanced observing systems and of increased research commitment to the polar regions. This step function increase was observed after the IGY of 1957-58 but this time the Polar Year has been structured from the outset to hopefully deliver this result. The programme has been brought to the launch date successfully and this presentation will outline the shape and scale of projects now involved in the IPY. It will also address some of the significant challenges that face the programme, including establishing greater communications between projects and developing a more structured view of what the legacy of the IPY could or should be.