

THE PERMAFROST YOUNG RESEARCHERS NETWORK

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Permafrost Young Researchers Network (PYRN) is an international organization officially created in the end of 2005, during the International Conference on Arctic Planning.

Established under the patronage of the International Permafrost Association (IPA) and acting as one of its activities for the International Polar Year (IPY), the importance of this network has been rapidly increasing and, in mid 2007, there were more than 500 members from 43 different countries all over the world.

The main objective of this network is to create a space where all the information regarding permafrost can be gathered and where young researchers, with multi-disciplinary talents, can establish contact among them, promoting the creation of new collaborations and ideas. It is also a matter of creating a future generation of permafrost researchers, directed to the knowledge and response of permafrost-related challenges in a changing climate, as well as gaining the public's attention to the importance of permafrost research and its relation with some environmental outstanding issues.

PYRN's management is led by an Executive Committee which consists on a coordinator, a newsletter officer, a financial and fundraising officer, a project coordinator and a communication officer. The network is organized in National Committees led by National Representatives, who are the point of reference in their own country and serve as a link between the Executive Committee and the PYRN members.

The accomplishment of these goals started with the PYRN's website, recently improved with resources and activities, in collaboration with the World Association of Young Scientists (WAYS). At PYRN's website the information is organized by themes, field-sites and countries.

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II. PYRN ACTIVITIES

There are several activities conducted by PYRN. The first one to be developed, connected to the network implementation, is the newsletter. This newsletter is monthly distributed to all PYRN members and it's an important source of information, reporting all the recent events in the field of permafrost, the upcoming conferences and deadlines, and the latest jobs positions and grants. That information can also be found at the website. The contribution of all National Representatives and PYRN members is extremely important to fulfill this newsletter, through its reports regarding events from their own countries. The newsletter officer is the responsible for the preparation, writing and mailing the reports. The website also provides a members listing. This list includes the information about each PYRN member, such as the name, the country, the institution and the research interests.

PYRN organizes every year the PYRN Award, which is granted to an outstanding presenter during permafrost conferences. The first annual "Outstanding Presentation Awards" occurred at the Asian Conference on Permafrost in Lanzhou, China (August 7-9, 2006) and it was sponsored by the IPA, the Climate and Cryosphere (CliC) programme and the International Quaternary Association (INQUA).

This competition drew applications from approximately two dozen young scientists from seven different countries and the three winners received each one a certificate and a \$200 cash prize. The review panel consisted of three eminent permafrost researchers who judged each of these competitors based on scientific merit and the quality of the presentation. The 2007 PYRN Awards were granted during the international conference "Cryogenic processes of polar regions" and were sponsored by IPA and District (Gubernskaya) Academy, one of the conference organizers. The review panel selected three winners through the same judgment procedures.

Other activity initiated and maintained by PYRN is an international bibliographical database named PYRN-Bib, which is also available online. The objective of PYRN-Bib is to generate a comprehensive database that includes all degree-earning thesis, coming from any country and any scientific field, as long as they are strongly related to research on permafrost or periglacial processes. The PYRN-Bib is regularly updated and has now more than 500 entries.

PYRN organizes workshops which intent to increase contacts between specialties within the permafrost science and to encourage transdisciplinarity at an early stage and also organizes executive meetings, every year, to coordinate the project and bring forward new leaders and new projects. The first meeting occurred at the Abisko Scientific Research Station, Sweden (22-24 of February, 2007), due the success of the first phase of the PYRN project.

The objective of this meeting, which gathers 11 National Representatives, was to review the PYRN process and set directions for the years to come.

From the 29 November until the 2 December in the Otto Schmidt Laboratory for Polar and Marine Sciences, at the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute, in St. Petersburg, Russia, took place the IMPETUS 2007 – OSL-APECS-PYRN Training Workshop on Permafrost Research Methods. This workshop, an official event for the IPY, hosted 50 young researchers from 13 countries.

The principal purpose was to learn about the latest techniques and methods used in permafrost research and engineering and to discuss future plans to address climate change issues in permafrost areas. The presentations held during this workshop can be found in the PYRN's website.

Another activity initiated by PYRN was the creation of a global list of senior researchers involved in permafrost research. This list is available on the website and reports the name, the country, the institution and the research interests of each senior scientist.

PYRN has recently initiated the PYRN-TSP (The PYRN drilling project). This is a major effort to provide young investigators with the means to revisit abandoned boreholes, and drill new ones to increase the spatial coverage of monitoring and provide new data to the IPY project "Thermal State of Permafrost". The main objectives of this project are based on learning more about the extent and thermal state of permafrost by establishing monitoring sites and recording permafrost temperatures, and also facilitate the development of a new generation of permafrost scientists and engineers that collaborate and work within a wider international context.

III. THE NEAR FUTURE

More activities and initiatives are expected within PYRN in a near future. In the Ninth International Conference on Permafrost (NICOP) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (June 29-July 3, 2008), besides the third annual PYRN Award, there will also take place the next PYRN meeting, where activities will be reviewed and the direction for the next five years will be set.

A meta-database for the PYRN-TSP project is expected to be implemented and the information received from the monitoring will be made freely available.

By the year 2009, a PYRN's multidisciplinary special issue for Permafrost and Periglacial Processes will be released.

Finally, PYRN intends to help in the process of making important Russian literature more easily available, by creating a meta-database with the full reference, the link to the publication, how to access it and the contact of the author if the publication is not available online.

Website: <http://pyrn.ways.org/>