The Third International Polar Year (1957–58) launched the modern era of polar research. Many new research bases were built, aircraft and ice-breaking ships opened up remote areas for study, and the international community set aside Antarctica for peaceful use. At Dartmouth, Vighajmur Stefannsson’s influence as Arctic Consultant spread throughout the College, inspiring new programs in Northern Studies, undergraduate research opportunities on land and at sea, and the development of a new generation of prepared scholars in the sciences and social sciences. Dartmouth President John Sloane Dickey lent his support by playing an instrumental role in bringing the U.S. Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Lab (CRREL) to Hanover in 1961. Today, the combined expertise of Dartmouth and CRREL make Hanover, N.H., a world center for polar research.

As the heroic era of polar exploration gave way to new collaborative research to understand the ecosystems and peoples of the North, many Dartmouth faculty and students became participants, and important new careers in polar studies were born. Among these faculty mentors and students were David C. Nutt ’61, Professor Elmer Hare, Jr., John E. Hooke ’57 and William W. Milhouse ’64.

Dartmouth researchers working in the polar regions today see their success in part to the pioneering and enduring efforts of the many Dartmouth faculty and students who traced their roots to the Third International Polar Year era.

The Third International Polar Year, later renamed the International Geophysical Year, was proposed in 1952 by the International Council of Scientific Unions. The Third IGY was the first global scientific program that included research outside of the polar areas. Thirty-seven nations conducted research during the Third IGY, with 12 nations maintaining bases in Antarctica.

The IGY’s research, discoveries, and high profile of national observatory rendezvous, or “powerful” many nations about the Earth’s geophysical, led to a new, unprecedented level of research on Antarctica. The scientific conclusions from the IGY’s first observations were launched. A notable political result produced on the IGY was ratification of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. The scientific, national, and political significance of the IGY and the Antarctic Treaty, to this day.

The Dartmouth, a member of the Northern Scientific Technological Series, is the nation’s first and only research vessel. This 100-foot vessel was specially designed and built for near-shore research in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. It has had many fascinating adventures, such as the quest for the entrance to the North Pole and the discovery of new icebergs. The Dartmouth is a valuable asset for Dartmouth and the scientific community, and it continues to make valuable contributions to polar research.

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