# Preface ICT Iceland

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## Kullerud, Lars; Ferguson, A. Stewart; Parker, Walter B.; Uldal, Siri Birgitte

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Preface /Foreword

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool for development in the Arctic is one of the key priorities of Iceland as the Chair of the Arctic Council. To address this issue Iceland is organising an Arctic ICT Conference on October 20-21, 2003 in Akureyri, Iceland. The conference has three focus areas: infrastructure, distance education, and telemedicine.

The organisers contacted the University of the Arctic (UArctic) to assist with the preparation of a short background paper on the status of ICT in the Arctic. UArctic approached this task as a series of independent processes for each of the fields (infrastructure, education and telemedicine), as they require expert input in quite different areas. This report contains the summary recommendations for each of the three areas.

The Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force (CITF) agreed to work with UArctic to develop a background paper on ICT infrastructure in the Arctic. The CITF and the Institute of the North sponsored a workshop on September 3-5, 2003 in Alaska, gathering 10 experts who developed the enclosed report and recommendations.

To address ICT in higher education, UArctic and SCOPE (South-African Finnish Co-Operation in the Education Sector) organized a workshop on "Bridging the Digital Divide: Sharing Best Practices for Developing ICT in the Rural Areas of the North and South". This workshop clearly demonstrated that the populations of remote areas worldwide share many problems related to ICT and higher education. The report of the workshop is available at the ICT conference. A comprehensive book containing a collection of invited papers on ICT in higher education in the Arctic will build on the workshop report. The book includes information on ICT use in northern higher education institutions and an overview of ICT-based learning strategies in the Arctic countries. Early drafts of the papers that will be included in this book are also available at the ICT conference.

The Telemedicine Project report, completed for the Arctic Council in 2000, gave a thorough overview of ICT in Arctic medicine. A survey of the authors and other experts demonstrated that the report is generally still relevant, even if details on activities are somewhat outdated. As a follow-up, the University of the Arctic organised a small workshop in Tromsø, Norway, where authors of the Telemedicine report from 2000 and selected other experts were invited to participate. The purpose of this meeting was to assess the current relevance of the recommendations in the Arctic Telemedicine report, and to identify immediate and concrete actions for future Arctic cooperation in the field of telemedicine. The outcome of this meeting is summarized in this report.

We would like to thank the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Icelandic organizers for supporting this work, and wish the participants of the ICT workshop in Akureyri a successful meeting. We expect that the workshop will generate concrete recommendations that will elicit responses from the Arctic Council and its governments.


Lars Kullerud                                        A. Stewart Ferguson, Ph.D.
Director, University of the Arctic                    Director, Alaska Federal Health Care Access Network


Walter B. Parker                                     Siri Birgitte Uldal, siv.ing (MSc),
Chair, Arctic Council and Northern Forum             President of the Nordic Telemedicine Association
Circumpolar Infrastructure Task Force                Norwegian Centre for Telemedicine, Tromsø