

ARCTIC DISCOVERY (HISTORIC BOOKS ON CD-ROM)

- Volume 1:** *Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the years 1819, 20, 21 and 22*, John Franklin (\$69.95)
Volume 2: *Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the years 1825, 26 and 27*, John Franklin (\$59.95)
Volume 3: *Narrative of the Arctic land expedition to the mouth of the Great Fish River and along the shores of the Arctic Ocean in the years 1833, 1834, and 1835*, George Back (\$39.95)
Volume 4: *Narrative of an expedition in H.M.S. Terror, undertaken with a view to geographical discoveries on the Arctic shores, in the years 1836-7*, George Back (\$39.95)

CD-Academia Book Co., Suite 302 – 780 Windmill Rd., Dartmouth, NS, B3B 1T3; phone (902) 468-3392.

Reviewed by: Sandy Richardson

CD-Academia, a new publishing company from Dartmouth, has begun issuing CD-ROM versions of hard-to-find nineteenth century books by Arctic explorers in their *Arctic Discoveries* series. Volumes 1 to 4, Franklin's two successful expeditions and Back's expeditions are now available. Two more, Volume 5: John Ross' *Narrative of a second voyage in search of a North-west passage, and of a residence in the Arctic regions during the years 1829 – 1883*, and Volume 6: *The private journal of Captain G.F. Lyon, H.M.S. Hecla, during the recent voyage of discovery under Captain Parry* (published in 1824), are in production and should be out in the fall. The publishers aim to publish three to four volumes a year.

These CD-ROM books are produced using high-resolution scans that reproduce the text, illustrations and maps exactly as they appeared in the original editions. The PDF files that make up the book are then viewed using Acrobat Reader software (included on the CD), with which you can browse the book from the table of contents, read through the book page by page, or of interest especially to researchers, search the text for key words or phrases. Each page is displayed in full screen format using modern computer fonts for ease of reading and is linked to an image of the original book's page if you want to experience the authentic charm of the old fonts. Pages where illustrations appear in the original are also linked to the appropriate illustration, so one can view figures while reading the text.

Generally the pages are quite readable as they appear, but it is possible to zoom in if one wants a larger image. However, reading from a screen and "turning pages" with a keyboard and mouse is somehow not as satisfying, to me at least, as sitting in an easy chair with your feet up flipping through a "real" book.

The illustrations are very high quality, and come in both low resolution and high resolution versions. The low resolution pictures are for screen display. The high resolution ones load more slowly, but enable you to zoom in and inspect the fine engraving details and to print high quality copies. Both sets are accessible from the book's home page.

The maps that accompanied the original books often had large physical dimensions that don't fit well on a computer screen. (One map in Franklin's second journal is about 4 ft. by 2 ft.) These maps are dealt with in most volumes by setting up an Index of Maps from which you can select a Base Map to view. Each Base Map is divided into a number of (overlapping) segments for viewing detail. The selected segment appears as a high-resolution map (with an index in the corner showing the relation of the selected section to the whole map) that can be printed or enlarged to look at the detail (at which point you need to scroll around). This works well, since one usually studies maps by looking only at the relevant section, not the overall map. (Unfortunately, the map in Volume 1 has not been dealt with this way.)

Finally, a 58 page User's Manual is included with each book, explaining how to use the software.

Overall, the *Arctic Discovery* CD-ROM books are very well done, and happily make these rare books of arctic exploration readily available again. Original editions of these journals now are prohibitively expensive, and the wonderful Hurtig facsimile editions that came out in the seventies can cost well into the hundreds when you can find them. These new CD-ROM versions, while not cheap, make them affordable for most people. And they certainly beat the other option of viewing these journals on microfilm in a library. Academic researchers, who are probably the intended audience rather than bibliophiles, will certainly appreciate the search feature, as will paddlers looking for specific details while planning a trip.

Anyone interested in these *Arctic Discovery* CD-ROMs can view samples, obtain more information or purchase copies at CD-Academia's web-site: <http://www.cd-books.com>.