WP3: Awareness of the Scene – usability and usefulness of Networks
The problem:

During scanning 150+ websites, it was difficult to obtain fundamental information.

We wanted to identify best practices for presenting fundamental information on websites, and recommend general guidelines for website presentation.

What did we do?

1) Network selection

A TSU team of master students, young researchers and teachers, all together 6 people, analyzed 40 networks selecting 10 random representatives from each of 4 categories. The categories were:

0= Long-term scientific networks
1= Arctic Council initiatives
2= Databases, Assessments
3= regional networks/organisations
What did we do? (contnd.)

2) Network analysis

The team asked the fundamental question: can relevant information (10 pieces of information e.g. main purpose, how many members in the network, contact details etc.) be retrieved? Scores we gave: 0 = no, 1 = partly, 2 = yes

The team then developed a template with a number of indicators that should be general for everyone, independently of age, educational level and experience.

A) number of clicks. “clicks” – 1 click = good, 2=average, 3=bad

B) time spent for searching for the relevant pieces of information
   “time” – 5 min = good, 10 min = bad

C) how many pages should be opened to retrieve each relevant piece of information. Number of pages

D) How up-to-date is the site?
   Last revision less than 1 year ago, last revision more than 1 year ago

(We did not take into account databases and the scientific data on the websites.)
What did we find from 30 networks?

Relevant information (%)
0 = no, 1 = partly, 2 = yes
13.3 46.7 40

Number of clicks (% out of 300 data points)
1 click = good, 2=average, 3=bad
44.4 33.3 22.2

time spent for searching (% out of 300 data points)
5 min = good, 10 min = bad
50 50

How many pages should be opened
Average number of pages
To be confirmed

Up-to-date sites: last revision (number of sites)
Less than 1 year more than 1 year
83.3 16.7
Example of a good web site
Example of a bad web site - NASA
What we can recommend

Purposes of sites can be different from one type of network to another, so specific suggestions for improvement also vary. But, in general:

1. Each web site should have basic information immediately accessible (first page or one click). This should be: goal of the network, contact details, geographical coverage, membership possibilities.

2. The design should be very concise, and navigation should be very convenient—the less pages needed to be opened in searching, the better.

3. A search string is needed particularly if the design makes the site heavy (pages load for a long time)

4. Networks should cater for outreach and education as well as for other “nerds”

Note: Working in the Arctic is often associated with a poor internet signal, and this needs to be remembered when developing sites. We have not seen mobile phone applications anywhere. Such applications can help to work offline in the absence of the Internet.
Overall conclusion and way forward

We can be arrogant and publish recommendations for general improvements to web sites