

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE LITERATURE OF CLIMATE

In the library of the United States Weather Bureau, at Washington, which contains nearly fifty thousand books, fully ten thousand of these owe their presence on the shelves to the fact that they contain information about climate. The form in which the information is presented is extremely various. Some of the books consist entirely of climatic tables, text descriptions or charts, or all three of these things. Others contain the results of weather observations for single years, which, when combined with similar data for other years, furnish the material from which climatic statistics are deduced. Still others are devoted primarily to subjects other than climate, but contain incidental information on this subject.

Naturally this literature, which relates to the climates of all parts of the globe, is in many languages, and the process of extracting information from it is further hampered by the fact that the scientific world has not yet agreed upon a uniform system of units for measuring the various meteorological elements. It is a paradox that diversity in this matter is greater today than it was a generation ago, because while new units have been introduced for certain elements -- e.g., millibars for barometric pressure and the absolute scale for temperature -- none of the older units have been wholly discarded during the same period.

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