

A Science Service Feature

Released upon receipt
but intended for use
September 2, 1932

? WHY THE WEATHER ; Mailed August 26, 1932

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THE RECORDS OF WEATHER

The observing and recording of weather has been described as "the biggest scientific job." It is performed at the present time by an army of more than 35,000 men and women, and the observations at any one place are taken once, twice or oftener every day. There are many places in Europe and a few in North America where weather records have been kept continuously for more than a century. In recent times the number of individual observations has amounted to upwards of ten million a year, and the total number taken since systematic weather observing began runs far up into the hundreds of millions.

The results of these millions of observations have been published only in a fragmentary way. It is the general rule that the details of the observations taken from day to day are preserved only in manuscript, though in a majority of cases brief abstracts or digests of them eventually appear in print. In relatively few cases the data of observations are published "in extenso." Nevertheless, the published results of meteorological observations throughout the world fill thousands of different books. Rare indeed is the library that possesses more than a small fraction of them.

Some of these books are of formidable size. One of the startling sights to be seen in a big meteorological library is a file of volumes containing the results of daily rainfall measurements in British India. Each volume, presenting the figures for a single year, is as large as an unabridged dictionary and weighs about twelve pounds!

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21st and Constitution Ave.,
Washington, D.C.