

THE FIRST 20 YEARS OF RADIOCARBON DATING

An Annotated Bibliography, 1948-68; a pilot study

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ABSTRACT. A bibliography of the radiocarbon dating literature for the years 1948-68, which is in the process of compilation, is examined and a format is proposed. A survey of literature growth has also been undertaken. This enables projections of the numbers of publications referring to radiocarbon dating to be made. The estimated number of publications for the year 1978 is compared to literature retrieval obtained by interrogating eight relevant computer data bases. It is concluded that computer information retrieval is not satisfactory. Bibliographic control of radiocarbon dating literature would be best achieved by a bibliography dedicated to the subject and updated at regular intervals.

Purpose of the bibliography

Although the technique of radiocarbon dating has been established and used as a research tool in a wide variety of fields since the late 1940's and is still being developed, refined and expanded, very few efforts at compiling a comprehensive bibliography of the literature devoted to radiocarbon dating and its applications have been attempted. Indeed the few early efforts at bibliographic compilation were very selective or dealt with specific areas of application (eg, Levi, 1955; 1957; Johnson, 1959; Fagan, 1961-1966; Deacon, 1966). Johnson, whose bibliography appeared in the first issue of *Radiocarbon*, notes the difficulty of compiling such a listing because of the multi-disciplinary aspect of the subject. This crossing of scientific fields results in the dispersal of the literature in a very large number of periodicals, not counting the monographs, reports, proceedings, etc (table 1). Indexing of radiocarbon literature is, therefore, also scattered in a variety of indexing and abstracting services, each dealing with a particular field of science. This makes searching for literature on the subject very cumbersome, to say the least. The field is also not static. New applications are continuously proposed, old applications are checked and improved. The subject and, therefore, the literature covering it are in a dynamic state of growth. As a consequence, researchers are finding it increasingly difficult to select from the volume of information that which is relevant to their work, in particular when they are about to undertake new projects. A perusal of current literature shows that early works are still widely referred to, indicating their importance as a foundation and framework for new research.

Radiometric dating appears as an indexed subject only since about 1965 and the computer data bases offer retrospective searching only back to the early 1970's (INSPEC-PHYSICS, 1969; CA Search [Chemical Abstracts], 1970; Geoarchive, 1969; SCI Search, 1974). Thus the selected date range of this bibliography, 1948 (the beginning of usage of naturally produced ^{14}C as a scientific research tool) to 1968, fills the gap not covered by indexing services or computer information retrieval.

TABLE 1
Fields of research and application, types of publication in
which radiocarbon dating literature appears

Twenty years of radiocarbon dating 1948–1968

An annotated bibliography

Fields of Research and Applications

Electronics	Dendrochronology
Instrumentation	Physics
Geochronology	Oceanography
Glacial Geology	Geo-Cosmo-Physics
Atmospheric Circulation	Archaeology
Water Circulation	Meteorology
Paleoclimatology	Biology-Chemistry
Paleoecology	Astronomy
Paleozoology	Prehistory
Paleobotany	Quaternary Geology
Paleopedology	Geochemistry
Limnology	Geophysics
Palynology	Astrophysics

Monographs and Proceedings

Thesis
Monographs
University research papers
Museum research papers
U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Reports
Geological Survey papers
Conference – Great Lakes Research
Conference on Cosmic Rays
INQUA Congresses
International C-14 and H³ Dating Conferences
Royal Society Proceedings
International Conference on the Peaceful Use
of Atomic Energy
International Congress of Americanists
Nobel Symposium
Conference of Nuclear Processes in Geological
Settings
Oxford Radioisotope Conference
International Geological Congress
International Symposium on Arctic Geology
Symposium on the Use of Isotopes in
Hydrology
Pan-African Congress on Prehistory
Conference on Radioecology
Glaciological Conference
International American Congress
International Congress on Soil Science
Symposium on Arctic Geology
International Conference on Palynology
International Congress of Anthropological
and Ethnological Science

Periodicals in which the literature is published 400+

Arctic
Antiquity
British Journal of Applied Physics
Current Anthropology
Deep Sea Research
Ecology
Florida Anthropologist
Geochemica et Cosmochemica Acta
Helvetica Chimica Acta
International Journal of Applied Radiation
and Isotopes
Journal of Geophysical Research
Kansas Anthropological Association
Newsletter
Limnology and Oceanography
Man
Nature
Nucleonics
Oceania
Quaternaria
Review of Scientific Instruments
Science
South African Archaeological Bulletin
Tellus
United States Geological Survey Bulletin
Wisconsin Archaeologist
Yale Science Magazine
Zeitschrift für Naturforschung

Scope and limitations of the bibliographical pilot study

All efforts have been made to be as comprehensive as is practically possible. Included are not only theoretical literature, dating techniques and research aimed at improving accuracy, enlarging the fields of application and extending the date range further into the past, but also literature of the many low-level (natural) radiocarbon fields of application. Such applications include, for example: climatology, glaciology, oceanography, soil and earth sciences, geochemistry, palaeobotany, palaeomagnetism, palynology, anthropology, and archaeology-prehistory, to name but a few (table 1).

The bibliography does not include high count-rate ^{14}C tracer studies in their applications to such fields as biology, medicine, and industry. The language is restricted to English, though a few significant works in German and French have been included when they are original and relate to methods and basic research.

Method of compilation

The method of compilation is based mainly on search of cited references. The initial source was the extensive reprint collection of the Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory of the Australian National University, Canberra. From this, all relevant references were indexed and checked. The major monographs dealing with the subject were also examined for references and indexed in depth. The main periodicals in which the literature appears were determined and comprehensively indexed. Each reference was then sighted in order to extract a pertinent annotation which is not a copy of the given abstract, but stresses the use and applications of radiocarbon dating.

Structure of the bibliography

The bibliography is divided into 14 chapters as shown in table 2. Within each chapter, the arrangement is in alphabetical order by title. The selection of titles for inclusion within a chapter was done by assigning each title entry a number of descriptors (key words). The compiler then grouped the most appropriate entries into relevant chapters. Each entry is listed only once.

Three indexes offer access to the material by author, subject and place (where relevant). This arrangement was chosen because it offers access at two levels: 1) browsing level, arranged by chapters which enable the user to go directly to the area required, scanning clearly set out titles which convey the desired information, 2) specific retrieval level through the subject and author indexes.

The format of the entries has been chosen for clarity (table 2), the bibliographic description is provided in full without abbreviations of journal names. The annotations (which are not abstracts) are informative and refer to that part of the article which makes specific use of radiocarbon. The bibliography as presented at this Conference is a pilot study containing approximately 1000 entries, which represents less than a third of the material so far located. The basis for selection for inclu-

sion in this pilot bibliography is quite arbitrary, omissions or inclusions are not a judgment of quality but depended entirely on accessibility of reference material to the compiler. The author index is a straight alphabetical listing of authors' and co-authors' names without cross-references (table 2). The subject index is also a plain alphabetical listing with no attempt at structuring and cross-referencing. It is intended that the subject index for the complete bibliography will include 'see' and 'see also' references for more complete access. A place index will be included should this work be extended.

Survey of literature growth and literature retrieval

During this compilation, a survey of literature growth has also been made. Using the actual number of items cited, a projection of publica-

TABLE 2
Structure of the bibliography, author index and format
of individual entry

Structure

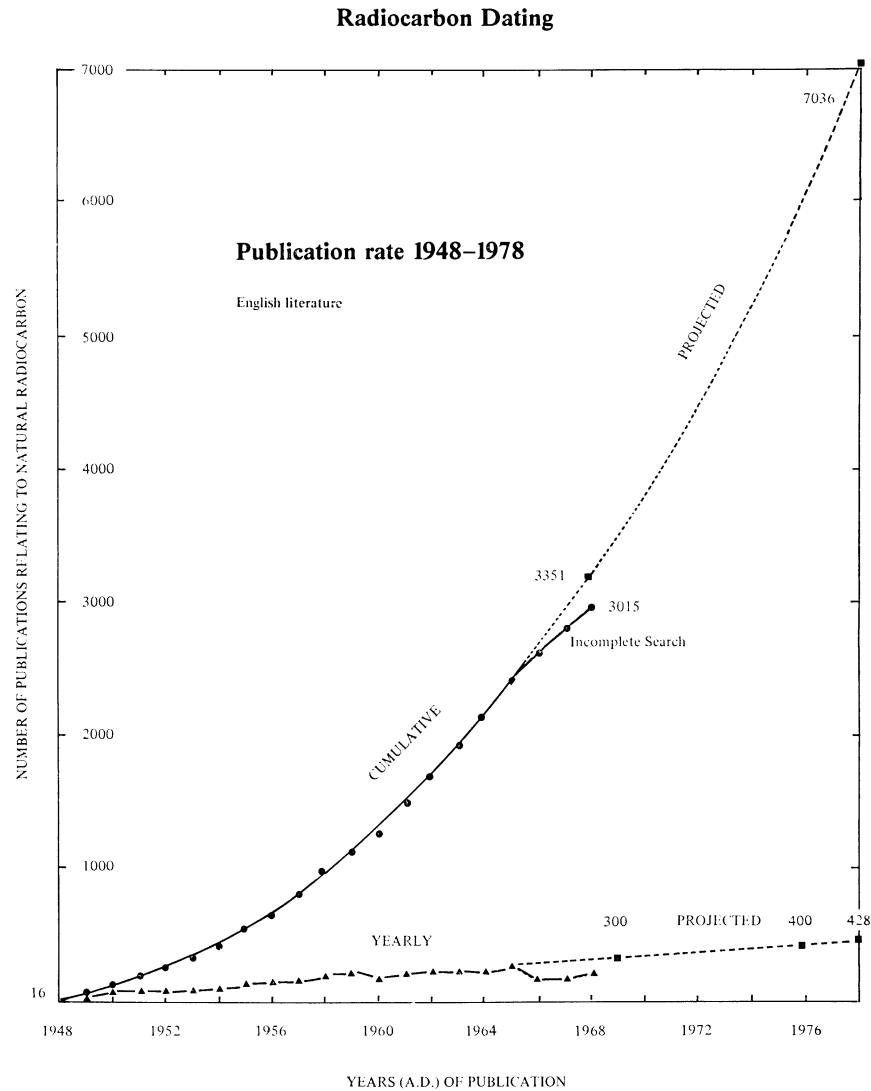
- 01. Bibliographical Works
- 02. Theory and Theoretical Research
- 03. Techniques and Instrumentation
- 04. General Geology
- 05. Glacial Geology
- 06. Ocean Studies
- 07. Pleistocene
- 08. Archaeology - Africa
- 09. Archaeology - America
- 10. Archaeology - Asia
- 11. Archaeology - Europe
- 12. Archaeology - Oceania
- 13. Conference and Symposia
- 14. Date Lists

Format of individual entry

Chapter heading	
Chapter No.	02. THEORY AND THEORETICAL RESEARCH
Item No.	02.002
Title	ACCURACY OF RADIOCARBON DATES
Author	Libby, Willard F.
Bibliographical description	Science, v.109, n.2827, 4 Mar. 1959: 227-228
Annotation	The world-wide uniformity of the radio-carbon assay in the present time re-sults in the logical assumption that this would have been true in ancient times. This leads to dating of the half-life of C-14. A verification test was conducted on wood samples from ancient Egyptian tombs.

Author index

Labeyrie, Jean 03.042, 043; 04.032, 053
Laborel, Jacques 05.118
Lagomarsino, E.J. 02.116
Laird, W.M. 07.042
Lal, D. 02.010; 03.167; 06.022
La Marche, V.C. 05.006
Lamb, H.H. 04.126
Langford-Smith, Trevor 04.104
Langway, Chester C. 03.144, 162
Lansen, James A. 04.077
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Lee, Hubert 05.049; 07.030
Leger, Concele 03.037
Leighton, Morris M. 05.014, 025, 042, 044, 103, 07.049
Lembe, R.W. 07.042
Leonard, J. Byron 07.043
Leopold, Estelle B. 04.069; 07.040
Levi, Hilde 01.004, 005
Libby, Willard F. 02.002, 003, 005, 038, 061, 081, 084, 088, 091, 093, 100, 106; 03.002, 065, 080, 089, 092, 127, 128, 142; 04.004, 024, 118
Long, Austin 02.055; 03.062, 174; 07.006
Smith, W.G. 04.101
Snell, William G. 04.050; 06.002
Sobering, S. 03.164
Spaulding, A.C. 03.165
Stager, John K. 05.125
Stenborg, Allan 02.103, 126
Stevens, N.P. 04.040
Stipp, Jerry J. 03.032, 070
Stuckenrath, Robert 03.024, 105
Stuiver, Minze 02.024, 074, 122, 123; 03.041, 103, 139; 04.005, 029, 058, 082, 100, 102, 120; 07.012; 08.015
Suess, Hans E. 02.017, 018, 025, 052, 057, 062, 064, 082, 087, 097, 101, 109, 113; 03.017, 066, 093; 04.078; 05.001; 06.009, 013, 014, 018, 024
Takashima, Y. 03.008
Tamers, Murray A. 02.118; 03.027, 037, 070, 077, 159; 04.038, 075
Tamm, O.C. 05.109
Tauber, Henrik 02.066, 078, 124; 03.049; 05.116
Taylor, Dwight D. 02.083; 04.117
Taylor, R.E. 02.088, 089; 03.055, 146
Terasmae, Jaan 05.037, 068; 07.020, 038



Rating	80-100	items retrieved	5*
	60-79	" "	4*
	40-59	" "	3*
	20-39	" "	2*
	0-19	" "	1*

— a fairly high percentage of noise (46.8). The best retrieval was from the multi-disciplinary SCI data base and the second best was from Geomatrix, although this was understandably slanted towards geosciences. The only data base to retrieve a significant number of archaeological items was SSCI. There was, however, a fair amount of duplication (83 duplicates), which brings the total number of unique items to 218 (38.5% of the total retrieval). Three of the data bases, NTIS, Meteorological and Geophysical abstracts and SPIN retrieved only five new items between them and could easily be omitted.

In order to compare the result of these searches with expected publication production, an actual count was made of the numbers of publications for the years 1963, 1964, and 1965, distributed under four major headings (Theory and Technique, Date Lists, Archaeology, and Geology). Calculation of the percentage of total for three years gives the distribution of the items between the four main headings (table 4A). This distribution was then applied (table 4B) to the number of publications projected for 1978 (fig 1) and compared to the numbers retrieved by computer searches (table 3). Three observations can be made: 1) total retrieval is only half of the expected (projected) number of items, 2) retrieval for the areas of technique/theory, date lists and geology is quite acceptable, approximately 2/3 to 3/4 of the expected number, 3) retrieval of archaeological material is very poor, less than 1/6 of the expected numbers. A closer look at the items retrieved also reveals that conference proceedings are not covered by the data bases used. Other data bases, such as INIS Atomindex and Conference Papers Index, would have to

TABLE 4
A. Evaluation of % distribution within major disciplines
based on average of 1963-1965 data

B. Comparison of projected and computer retrieved
no. of publications for 1978

A — Year	Theory & technique		Date lists		Archaeology		Geology		Total No. for year
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1963	48	22.7	20	9.5	81	38.4	62	29.4	211
1964	32	16.6	29	15	73	37.8	59	30.6	193
1965	67	25.5	34	12.5	72	27.4	90	34.3	263
Average % Distribution \pm SD for 1963-1965	21.6 \pm 4.5		12.3 \pm 2.8		34.5 \pm 6.2		31.4 \pm 2.6		
B — 1978									
No. projected (1)	98		55		151		140		445
No. retrieved (2) (computer search)	60		41		23		86		218
% retrieved	61%		74.5%		15.2%		61.4%		49%

(1) No. of expected publications for 1978 read from graph — fig 1

(2) No. of publications retrieved by computer for year 1978 — table 3

be searched for this type of material. The result of this exercise suggests that computer information retrieval for radiocarbon literature is not adequate. Neither is it easy, as many data bases have to be searched and, consequently, it is expensive.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study was undertaken to point out the need for bibliographical control specifically adapted to the literature of radiocarbon dating. It is the opinion of the author that a well researched bibliography, updated at regular intervals, is required to serve this vast interdisciplinary field. The greatest need appears to be in the field of archaeology, where retrieval is poor.

The pilot study of 1000 entries, 40 copies of which were presented at the Xth International Radiocarbon Conference, shows what a bibliography can offer. It is the result of over three years of spare time effort by the author. Its aims are to canvas opinion as to its general usefulness and attract comments on how it could be improved. Should there be a general feeling that this bibliographical study ought to be completed (*ie*, include in excess of 3000 entries collected so far), then support to do so must be found.

Errata

Some errors have crept in during manual compilation. These can be eliminated through computer processing should the completion of the bibliography be undertaken.

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