REVIEW

First 20 years of radiocarbon dating: an annotated bibliography 1948-1968; by DILETTE POLACH. P 104, 4 tables, 1 fig, index. Canberra, 1979 (Australian Natl Univ, Radiocarbon Dating Research Laboratory).—As Frederick Johnson, author of the first radiocarbon bibliography, published in *Radiocarbon* (1959, v 1, p 199-214) observed, the diversity of interests and application of natural radiocarbon measurements makes literature retrieval difficult, and continued proliferation of journals, conference proceedings, monographs, and reports, as well as indexing and abstracting services, compounds the problem.

Dilette Polach has compiled a valuable reference, focusing on early radiocarbon literature for the period 1948-1968, a period not covered by existing bibliographic resources. Even though this is a pilot project, restricted to about 1/3 of the English publications for the period covered, the 1000 entries present a broad and balanced array of radiometric topics. The bibliography is divided into 14 categories: bibliographical works, theory and theoretical research, techniques and instrumentation, general geology, glacial geology, ocean studies, pleistocene, archaeology-Africa, archaeology-America, archaeology-Asia, archaeology-Europe, archaeology-Oceania, conference symposia, date lists.

The study includes a survey of 8 computer data retrieval systems, using 1978 as a test year. Of 566 items retrieved, only 218 (<39 percent) were relevant or unique and 83 were duplicate retrievals. This implies a fairly high noise level in terms of retrieval time and effort, as well as a very low incidence (<15 percent) of multiple listing in separate data bases.

Computer data bases produced only about 50 percent of the projected total publications, ranging from 75 percent for date lists to 65 percent for geologic references to an unacceptable low of 16 percent for archaeologic titles. *Radiocarbon* was among the casualties, as neither date lists nor technical articles from this journal were recovered from the data bases tested.

The dispersion of radiocarbon citations among several data bases, as well as the obviously inadequate coverage shown by the test searches demonstrate both the relevance and utility of the bibliographic approach in Ms Polach's pilot study.

Searching of computer data bases is time-consuming and expensive and, at a projected 400+ publications per year by 1980, with a growth rate of 3 percent, the task of keeping up with one's field will increasingly require specialized bibliographies and computer-assisted retrieval.

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