

THE SIPRE BIBLIOGRAPHY

BY

JOHN SHERROD, Jr.

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

# A REVIEW OF THE FIRST 15,000 ABSTRACTS PREPARED BY THE SIPRE BIBLIOGRAPHY PROJECT

by JOHN SHERROD

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Approximately two years ago, the author was privileged to report to the Western Snow Conference on the progress of the SIPRE Bibliography Project which is conducted at the Library of Congress through the support of the Snow Ice and Permafrost Research Establishment (SIPRE), Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army. Since that time, an additional five thousand abstracts have been incorporated into the Bibliography, and other bibliographical aids have been prepared. It is the purpose here to report on the progress made to date and to describe the new materials which are now available to researchers in this subject field.

In the paper mentioned, an attempt was made to analyze the distribution by language and date of publication of the original items abstracted for the Bibliography. For the first 10,000 abstracts, 51% of the items abstracted were originally published in English, 23% in Russian, and 16% in German. Altogether, material has been abstracted from more than 20 different languages.

The language distribution for literature currently published in this subject field is not significantly different from the values cited above. About one-half of the material is in English, slightly less than one-third in Russian. The remaining significant contribution, in order of numbers of items, consists of German, French, Japanese, and Italian.

With respect to the time of publication of the original, material abstracted at the present time is divided approximately as follows: material published prior to 1900, 18%; material published between 1900 and 1950, 22%; the remaining 60% was published after 1950.

The amount of published material in this field, as in all of science, shows continuing growth. At the time the Bibliography began in 1951, approximately 500 items per year were being published in this subject field. Today this has increased to a value exceeding 800. An annual increase of approximately 100 items over the next few years is anticipated.

In two more years, the Project expects to have controlled practically all of the world's scientific and technical literature published to date on the subjects of snow, ice, and frozen ground. Approximately 20,000 items will have been included by that time.

The increase in the published literature noted above is even greater if one does not allow for the repeated publication that commonly occurs of essentially the same information. Part of this can be attributed to the researcher. Perhaps a more important contributor to this growing problem is the tendency for the publication of results of a given research problem to proceed through a regular life cycle. The information is born in the form of a technical report, either progress or final. The essential facts are gleaned and published in a professional journal.

Maturity is reached sometime later when the undisputed facts become part of a science monograph.

As a result of this tendency for repeated publication in different languages, different form, or just at a different time, the Bibliography has become more selective in choosing material for abstracting. An effort is made to exclude material which is essentially a repeat performance of something presented earlier.

Toward the end of 1956, the first cumulative author and subject index to the Bibliography was published. This cumulative index covers abstracts 1 to 14,000 that appear in the first 10 bound volumes of the Bibliography. The subject part of the index also serves as a current list of subject headings used by the Project. A patent index is included in which patent literature abstracted is indexed by subject.

In addition to the published index, current card catalogs arranged by author, subject, and journal are maintained in the Library of Congress and at the SIPRE Library in Wilmette, Illinois. These catalogs are available to researchers for consultation.

The Project initiated a small monthly publication called the SIPRE Technical Information Bulletin in 1955, designed to bring to the attention of SIPRE personnel, published materials related to the subject field or not considered sufficiently "technical" for inclusion in the Bibliography. Each issue now lists approximately 50 titles along with a brief annotation.

The Project also provides a wide variety of reference services. Inquiries are received daily by phone, mail, and from readers in person concerning sources of information on various topics in the subject field.

The publications of the Project are quite readily available to the public. Individual items prepared for the Bibliography are printed on standard catalog cards which together with the abstract, include a full bibliographical citation and subject headings. These cards are published in groups of 50 approximately once each week. The cards are available from the Project at a cost of three cents each.

The abstract cards are cumulated semi-annually and published as SIPRE Report 12, Bibliography on Snow Ice and Permafrost, with Abstracts. Photocopies of this report are sold by the Office of Technical Services, Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C.

Project publications are available on request to government agencies and their contractors working in this field. Such requests should be addressed to the Snow Ice and Permafrost Research Establishment, 1215 Washington Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois.

Further information on publications or reference service can be obtained from the SIPRE Bibliography Project, Science Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.