



Predicting the Weather: Victorians and the Science of Meteorology

By Katharine Anderson



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Victorian Britain, with its maritime economy and strong links between government and scientific enterprises, founded an office to collect meteorological statistics in 1854 in an effort to foster a modern science of the weather. But as the office turned to prediction rather than data collection, the fragile science became a public spectacle, with its forecasts open to daily scrutiny in the newspapers. And meteorology came to assume a pivotal role in debates about the responsibility of scientists and the authority of science.

Studying meteorology as a means to examine the historical identity of prediction, Katharine Anderson offers here an engrossing account of forecasting that analyzes scientific practice and ideas about evidence, the organization of science in public life, and the articulation of scientific values in Victorian culture. In *Predicting the Weather*, Anderson grapples with fundamental questions about the function, intelligibility, and boundaries of scientific work while exposing the public expectations that shaped the practice of science during this period.

A cogent analysis of the remarkable history of weather forecasting in Victorian Britain, *Predicting the Weather* will be essential reading for scholars interested in the public dimensions of science.



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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2477663 in Books
- Published on: 2005-05-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.00" w x 6.00" l, 1.30 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 376 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Engaging and enlightening. . . . Anderson's portrait of Victorian meteorology is delicately and deftly drawn, enlivened by well-chosen examples and illustrations. As one might expect of a study of the British and their weather, it penetrates into the oddest crannies of the culture, from insurance companies to Hardy's novels." (Lorraine Daston *London Review of Books* 2005-11-03)

"This is an excellent book, written in an accessible fashion with many interesting stories surrounding the trials and tribulations of pioneering scientists. These stories are also richly sourced, providing factual and historical significance. . . . Weather enthusiasts at all levels will benefit from reading this book.—Mace Bentley, *Weatherwise*
(Mace Bentley *Weatherwise*)

"By showing how much culture went into the making of Victorian meteorology, Anderson has made a major contribution to our understanding of how the Victorians themselves understood the cultural place of their science." (Iwan Rhys Morus *Nuncius*)

"Anderson provides a fuller portrait of the period when meteorology became institutionalized than has previously been available. . . . An engaging and convincing portrait of the lively Victorian debates over the weather." (Sarah Dry *Historical Studies in the Physical and Biological Sciences*)

"Anderson has written an innovative and impressively wide-ranging cultural history of studies of the British weather." (Robert W. Smith *Victorian Studies*)

About the Author

Katharine Anderson is associate professor in the science and society program at York University.

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