Clim. Past Discuss., 7, C1250–C1253, 2011
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Climate of the Past Discussions

Interactive comment on "Content analysis for *Agricultural Records* of the United Kingdom, AD 200 to 1977: a study of frequency in human records concerning climate phenomenon" *by* D. H. Holt

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Received and published: 17 August 2011

Thank you for your review of my article. I do, however, feel obligated to disagree with you take on this article. I have added comments in response to your review below with all due respect for your evaluation of my document.

The author seems to be a social scientist or a graduate of classical studies in search of a text relating to climate to which he can apply the method of content analysis. >As a scientist, I think you should not be making presumptions. If you must know, I am a

trained dendroclimatologist greatly interested in evaluating tree-ring reconstruction and written documentation. This is the start of this project. I am attempting to see if there are patterns in the documentation that may bias the research. The only method that can be used is a content analysis of a compilation of sources to see if there is favoritism between recording extremes or or just "bad" climate. This study shows that that does not exist.

He applies it to a "text from the United Kingdom" named "Agricultural Records". He does not know that this is a compilation, because he is not at all familiar with Historical Climatology. >Page 2558 line 22 "It was initially compiled by Thomas H. Baker in 1883" >Page 2568 lines 22-24 "This text was chosen with the knowledge that [not knowing if the editor or document is correct] is a limitation but it does illustrate a change in focus. It is important to emphasize that this document uses many sources to compile the record" >I do acknowledge that this is a compilation. There are serious limitations to this document – this is the reason I am not claiming to reconstruct the historical climate of the UK based on this one document. I can, however, show the patterns of record internally to this document. I have used a valid scientific approach to this study.

Just 4 of 14 the papers he quotes deal with Historical Climatology. All of them were written before 1990. > In bibliography there are many from 2010 and 2011. > I will freely admit that my reference section is not a comprehensive listing of all Historical Climatological research as that is not the focus of this paper. > It is important to acknowledge the work done in the field before, so, I would consider revising my citations. However, the paper is about the content analysis over the reconstruction.

Dealing with UK data, Holt does not even refer to the work of Hubert Lamb, who was one of the most prominent early historical climatologist. > I have read HH Lamb and several of his works at that. I did not feel it necessary to rewrite the history of historical climatology in this manuscript. HH Lamb has several important papers/books and I agree I should cite him in my paper. Perhaps we should include Bradley as well. I will make this correction for final edit.

Compilations –Holt ignores the term – contain a mishmash of reliable and unreliable information, as we know since Bell and Ogilvie (1978) which the author does not know either. > Bell and Ogilvie have an interesting paper – it should be included as it is important to note the unreliability of historical documents. That is the nature of historical documents. Techniques have changed, instrumentation has become standardized, and further scrutiny will be necessary to use this document to reconstruct the historical record of climate. Using "Agricultural Records" is aggravating as it does not cite all original source data. This lack of citation forces the researcher to rely upon an editor to decide what information is in the document. This is less than ideal. > Again, I am fully aware that it is a compilation and limited as such. My paper is about building a content analysis that can be applied to many documents and built using this method. The text I am reviewing and the paper I am writing are not trying to build a comprehensive historical analysis. This would be quite improbable to do with one text!

He claims that his text “provides excellent insight into the past climates of England”. > It does provide insight – I cannot vouch for each reference included and include as section on the success and failures of the document by showing how well it captures "known" climate events in the paper.

Such an argumentation reveals a lack of basic understanding for the nature of historical sources and for history in general. The author is not aware of the fact that the terms he analyses were translated from Latin before the fourteenth or fifteenth century nor that the meaning of words changes over time. The conclusions drawn from the quantification are shallow. > Not all were in Latin, but I understand the translation issue. This is especially problematic as English was a purely spoken language for centuries and has developed nuances in its translation of other languages. I do address the reliance upon the editor in the problems section. Again, how can I draw deep meaning from a source that cannot be fully substantiated and source-checked. Ultimately, the quantification has to be shallow or I will force to make unsubstantiated inferences! I refuse to do this. This fact may make the paper weaker or not as revolutionary, but it still serves

its purpose.

Neither of the reviewers was a Historical Climatologist, which is somewhat strange, as this paper deals with Historical Climatology. >How do we know the reviewers? I have no influence on the reviewers and cannot comment to this issue.

In my opinion, this article has no scientific value and should be rejected. >I appreciate your opinion, but I respectfully disagree. I am unaware of this approach being attempted on any capacity in historical climatology – that in itself is adding scientific value. I presume your comments are based on the quality of historic reconstruction from a single compilation, and with that I would wholeheartedly agree. But this paper does not pretend or purport to reconstruct the climate history of the UK from 220 to 1977 (that is just the subtitle of the document evaluated). I believe the value of this document to the literature is the content analysis coding scheme and the evidence that there is no apparent biasing of opinion when it comes to recording climate. As for the accuracy of what is being written down, I cannot comment on that without a time machine or corroborating documentation.

>I thank you for the effort you placed in your review and appreciate the necessity of the discourse.

Interactive comment on Clim. Past Discuss., 7, 2555, 2011.