Reference

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Radiocarbon datin

Main article: Radiocarbon dating

Radiocarbon dating is a radiometric dating method that uses (^{14}C) to determine the age of carbonaceous materials up to about 60,000 years old. The technique was developed by Willard Libby and his colleagues in 1949[9] during his tenure as a professor at the University of Chicago. Libby estimated that the radioactivity of exchangeable carbon-14 would be about 14 disintegrations per minute (dpm) per gram of pure carbon, and this is still used as the activity of the *modern radiocarbon standard*.[10][11] In 1960, Libby was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry for this work.

One of the frequent uses of the technique is to date organic remains from archaeological sites. Plants fix atmospheric carbon during photosynthesis, so the level of ^{14}C in plants and animals when they die approximately equals the level of ^{14}C in the atmosphere at that time. However, it decreases thereafter from radioactive decay, allowing the date of death or fixation to be estimated. The initial ^{14}C level for the calculation can either be estimated, or else directly compared with known year-by-year data from tree-ring data (dendrochronology) up to 10,000 years ago (using overlapping data from live and dead trees in a given area), or else from cave deposits (speleothems), back to about 45,000 years before the present. A calculation or (more accurately) a direct comparison of carbon-14 levels in a sample, with tree ring or cave-deposit carbon-14 levels of a known age, then gives the wood or animal sample age-since-formation.

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