Photography and Atmospheric Science: A Symbiotic and Historical Relationship

Born of science and nurtured by art, photography has exposed the invisible. From X-ray diffraction photographs of DNA to the faint light at the far reaches of the universe, photography has enabled science to record and document for later analysis a wide range of natural phenomena. Indeed, photography and science have formed an immutable bond, where photography has relied on science for its technological developments, and science has utilized photography as an essential tool for probing and documenting the natural world. In atmospheric science, photographic imagery has evolved from simple ground-based documentation of local weather phenomena in the nineteenth century to the global depiction of circulations and radiation using space-based platforms today. In this presentation, the symbiotic and historical relationship that has existed between photography and atmospheric science for 180 years will be discussed within the context of such phenomena as lightning, clouds, precipitation, severe weather, and climate change.



