

Interactive comment on “A century of ice retreat on Kilimanjaro: the mapping reloaded” by N. J. Cullen et al.

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Received and published: 7 November 2012

I've seen the material in this paper presented at the New Zealand Snow and Ice Group in 2012 and again at Fairbanks, Alaska. It is fascinating to see this topic unfold, because it represents one of the longest records of scientifically addressable (meaning where you can go back and detect errors and make adjustments) observations of glacier advance/retreat. The work deserves praise for its outstanding science.

In addition to the outstanding science, I believe that this particular study represents an important "fiducial point" that serves the wider purpose of educating the general public on snow and ice issues. Living in Chicago, near the childhood home of American novelist Ernest Hemingway, I am only slightly self-serving to say that the novel "Snows of Kilimanjaro" has put this particular feature into the mind and imagination of

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people worldwide. Regardless of how the specific causes of "the retreating snows" of Kilimanjaro actually play out, and regardless of how much these causes may involve interrelationships between human impacts on climate and human impacts on other aspects of environment (e.g., land use), the story is of great interest to "regular people" simply because they are familiar with the novel.

I conclude by saying it adds to the prestige of good glaciological science for us to get this "iconic symbol" of snow and ice portrayed as clearly and as carefully as possible (i.e., the fascinating story of glaciers that exist right on the equator and in a place where humankind came from should be put together as best we can). I commend the authors for doing a great job with this.

P.S., I'm hoping to use their "raw data" (or a slightly lower level product than what is printed in the lower figure on page 15, showing the extent of ice at various years) for a teaching laboratory for undergraduate students who are not science majors on "global warming". I think that the materials in this paper will be great for setting up such a lab experience.

Interactive comment on The Cryosphere Discuss., 6, 4233, 2012.