

1. Record Nr.	UNISALENT0991000727769707536
Autore	Musmarra, Alfio
Titolo	Dizionario di botanica / Alfio Musmarra
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Bologna : Edagricole, 1996
ISBN	8820634805
Edizione	[2. ed.]
Descrizione fisica	viii, 1290 p. : ill. ; 22 cm
Disciplina	580.3
Soggetti	Botany - Dictionaries - Italian
Lingua di pubblicazione	Italiano
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
2. Record Nr.	UNINA9910807063203321
Autore	Basile Salvatore
Titolo	Cool : how air conditioning changed everything / / Salvatore Basile
Pubbl/distr/stampa	New York : , : Fordham University Press, , 2014 ©2014
ISBN	0-8232-6177-8 0-8232-7178-1 0-8232-6178-6 0-8232-6179-4
Edizione	[First edition.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (288 p.)
Classificazione	ZI 8700
Disciplina	697
Soggetti	Air conditioning - Efficiency
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Includes index.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (pages 257-265) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction -- 1.

[Ice, Air, and Crowd Poison](#) -- [2. The Wondrous Comfort of Ammonia](#) -- [3. For Paper, Not People](#) -- [4. Coolth: Everybody's Doing It](#) -- [5. Big Ideas. Bold Concepts. Bad Timing.](#) -- [6. From Home Front to Each Home](#) -- [7. The Unnecessary, Unhealthy Luxury \(That No One Would Give Up\)](#) -- [Conclusion](#) -- [Notes](#) -- [Bibliography](#) -- [Index](#)

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## Sommario/riassunto

It's a contraption that makes the lists of "Greatest Inventions Ever"; at the same time, it's accused of causing global disaster. It has changed everything from architecture to people's food habits to their voting patterns, to even the way big business washes its windows. It has saved countless lives . . . while causing countless deaths. Most of us are glad it's there. But we don't know how, or when, it got there. It's air conditioning. For thousands of years, humankind attempted to do something about the slow torture of hot weather. Everything was tried: water power, slave power, electric power, ice made from steam engines and cold air made from deadly chemicals, "zephyrifiers," refrigerated beds, ventilation amateurs and professional air-sniffers. It wasn't until 1902 when an engineer barely out of college developed the "Apparatus for Treating Air"—a machine that could actually cool the indoors—and everyone assumed it would instantly change the world. That wasn't the case. There was a time when people "ignored" hot weather while reading each day's list of heat-related deaths, women wore furs in the summertime, heatstroke victims were treated with bloodletting . . . and the notion of a machine to cool the air was considered preposterous, even sinful. The story of air conditioning is actually two stories: the struggle to perfect a cooling device, and the effort to convince people that they actually needed such a thing. With a cast of characters ranging from Leonardo da Vinci and Richard Nixon to Felix the Cat, Cool showcases the myriad reactions to air conditioning—some of them dramatic, many others comical and wonderfully inconsistent—as it was developed and presented to the world. Here is a unique perspective on air conditioning's fascinating history: how we rely so completely on it today, and how it might change radically tomorrow.

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