

The Oceans and Climate, Second Edition

The oceans are an integral and important part of the climate system. *The Oceans and Climate* introduces the multi-disciplinary controls on air–sea interaction – physical, chemical and biological – and shows how these interact. It demonstrates how the ocean contributes to, and is affected by, climate processes on timescales from seasonal to millennial and longer. Past, present and future relationships between the ocean and climate are discussed.

The new edition of this successful textbook has been completely updated throughout, with extensive new material on thermohaline processes in the ocean and their link to both abrupt climate change and longer term climate change.

This comprehensive textbook on the ocean–climate system will prove an ideal course and reference book for undergraduate and graduate students studying earth and environmental sciences, oceanography, meteorology and climatology. The book will also be useful for students and teachers of geography, physics, chemistry and biology.

Grant R. Bigg is Professor of Earth System Science at the Department of Geography, University of Sheffield. He was Editor of the Royal Meteorological Society's magazine *Weather* from 1998 to 2003, and has served on the Council of the Society. He has published over seventy peer-reviewed papers and contributed to popular science magazines such as *The Geographical Magazine*.

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Contents

<i>Preface to the first edition</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 The climate system	1
1.1 Solar radiation	2
1.1.1 <i>The effective temperature of the Earth</i>	4
1.2 The atmosphere	4
1.2.1 <i>The greenhouse effect</i>	7
1.2.2 <i>Reflected radiation</i>	12
1.3 The oceans	12
1.3.1 <i>Chemical composition of the oceans</i>	13
1.3.2 <i>Ocean circulation</i>	16
1.4 The cryosphere	19
1.5 The biosphere	21
1.6 The geosphere	22
1.7 Timescales and feedbacks	24
1.8 Variation of the climate system over time	26
1.9 Numerical modelling of the ocean and climate system	31
Further reading	34
2 Physical interaction between the ocean and atmosphere	35
2.1 Radiation	36
2.1.1 <i>Solar radiation</i>	36
2.1.2 <i>Long-wave radiation</i>	39
2.2 Heat exchange through latent and sensible heat	41
2.2.1 <i>Latent heat</i>	41
2.2.2 <i>Sensible heat</i>	43
2.3 The oceanic heat balance	45
2.4 Oceanic forcing by air–sea exchange of moisture and heat	48
2.4.1 <i>Moisture exchange</i>	48
2.4.2 <i>Heat exchange</i>	48
2.5 Temperature, salinity and density	51
2.6 Basic forces within the atmosphere and ocean	53
2.6.1 <i>Hydrostatic balance</i>	54
2.6.2 <i>The Coriolis force</i>	54
2.6.3 <i>Geostrophy</i>	57
2.7 Tidal forces and their influence	58
2.8 Momentum transfer and drag	60

2.9	Waves, the production of aerosols and condensation nuclei	62
2.9.1	<i>Wave formation and characteristics</i>	63
2.9.2	<i>Breaking waves and marine aerosols</i>	65
2.9.3	<i>Condensation nuclei</i>	66
2.10	The Ekman spiral and Langmuir circulation	67
2.10.1	<i>The Ekman spiral</i>	67
2.10.2	<i>Langmuir circulation</i>	69
2.11	Wind-driven circulation of the ocean	71
2.11.1	<i>The ocean gyres</i>	71
2.11.2	<i>Coastal upwelling</i>	74
2.11.3	<i>The tropical surface circulation</i>	75
2.11.4	<i>The Indian Ocean monsoonal circulation</i>	78
2.11.5	<i>The polar regions</i>	80
2.11.6	<i>Oceanic eddies</i>	81
2.12	The thermohaline circulation	82
2.13	Oceanic impact on the marine atmospheric circulation	85
2.13.1	<i>Hurricanes</i>	86
2.13.2	<i>Mesocyclones</i>	89
	Further reading	90
3	Chemical interaction of the atmosphere and ocean	91
3.1	Solubility of gases	91
3.2	Gas exchange across the air–sea interface	94
3.3	The carbon cycle	97
3.3.1	<i>The carbon cycle</i>	97
3.3.2	<i>Oceanic control of carbon dioxide – principal processes</i>	98
3.3.3	<i>Oceanic control of carbon dioxide – geographical variations</i>	101
3.4	Oxygen in the ocean	103
3.5	The transfer of particles	106
3.5.1	<i>Aerosols, plankton, and climate</i>	106
3.5.2	<i>Sea spray, clouds, and climate</i>	108
3.5.3	<i>Mechanisms for precipitation formation</i>	114
3.6	Photochemical reactions in sea water	116
3.7	Chemical tracers	117
	Further reading	120
4	Biogeochemical interaction of the atmosphere and ocean	122
4.1	Phytoplankton	122
4.1.1	<i>Phytoplankton growth</i>	122
4.1.2	<i>Geographical variation</i>	125
4.1.3	<i>Vertical variation and ocean colour</i>	128
4.1.4	<i>Iron from aerosols</i>	129
4.2	Climatically active products of marine biological processes	130
4.2.1	<i>Carbon compounds other than CO₂</i>	130
4.2.2	<i>Nitrogenous compounds</i>	131
4.2.3	<i>Sulphureous compounds</i>	132
4.2.4	<i>Iodic compounds</i>	133

<i>Contents</i>	vii
4.3 Bio-geochemical cycles	134
4.3.1 <i>The carbon cycle</i>	134
4.3.2 <i>The nitrogen cycle</i>	135
4.3.3 <i>The phosphorus cycle</i>	136
4.3.4 <i>The oxygen cycle</i>	136
4.3.5 <i>The sulphur cycle</i>	136
4.4 DMS and climate	136
Further reading	140
5 Large-scale air–sea interaction	141
5.1 Tropospheric pressure systems and the ocean	141
5.1.1 <i>The physics of large-scale extra-tropical interaction</i>	143
5.1.2 <i>Maritime climates</i>	146
5.1.3 <i>Interannual variability in the atmosphere and ocean</i>	150
5.1.4 <i>Oceanic influence on extra-tropical cyclogenesis</i>	157
5.2 ENSO: Ocean–atmosphere interaction in the tropics	159
5.2.1 <i>Characteristics of ENSO</i>	161
5.2.2 <i>ENSO and air–sea coupling</i>	167
5.2.3 <i>The ENSO cycle</i>	170
5.2.4 <i>The impact of ENSO in the tropics beyond the Pacific basin</i>	174
5.2.5 <i>The impact of ENSO in the extra-tropics</i>	176
5.2.6 <i>ENSO and the Indian Monsoon</i>	177
5.2.7 <i>Seasonal forecasting of El Niño</i>	179
5.2.8 <i>Other tropical air–sea interactions</i>	179
5.2.9 <i>The extra-tropics</i>	181
5.3 Abrupt change in the thermohaline circulation	182
5.3.1 <i>Freshwater moderators of North Atlantic overturning</i>	182
5.3.2 <i>Thermohaline catastrophes</i>	183
5.3.3 <i>The potential impact of the Mediterranean Outflow on climate</i>	184
Further reading	186
6 The ocean and natural climatic variability	187
6.1 The oceanic role in the geological evolution of climate	187
6.1.1 <i>The Palaeozoic and early Mesozoic</i>	187
6.1.2 <i>The Cretaceous: a case study</i>	190
6.1.3 <i>Tertiary climates</i>	191
6.2 The ocean and Quaternary glaciation	194
6.2.1 <i>Interglacial termination</i>	197
6.2.2 <i>Glacial termination</i>	199
6.3 The ocean and Holocene climate	205
6.3.1 <i>The Climatic Optimum</i>	205
6.3.2 <i>The last 5000 years</i>	207
6.4 Marine climate change during the twentieth century	209
6.4.1 <i>The instrumental record</i>	212
6.4.2 <i>Global trends in marine climate</i>	214
6.4.3 <i>Marine climate change over the Pacific Ocean</i>	216

6.4.4	<i>Marine climate change over the Indian Ocean</i>	216
6.4.5	<i>Marine climate change over the Atlantic Ocean</i>	217
	Further reading	219
7	The ocean and climatic change	221
7.1	Natural variability	221
7.1.1	<i>Solar variability</i>	221
7.1.2	<i>Orbital changes</i>	223
7.1.3	<i>Volcanic impact on climate</i>	223
7.1.4	<i>Cometary impact</i>	224
7.1.5	<i>Internal climatic instability</i>	226
7.2	Anthropogenic forcing of climate	226
7.2.1	<i>Trace gases</i>	227
7.2.2	<i>Aerosols</i>	231
7.2.3	<i>Land surface albedo changes</i>	234
7.2.4	<i>Climatic feedbacks</i>	234
7.3	The climate of the future	240
7.3.1	<i>Climate evolution over the twenty-first century</i>	241
7.3.2	<i>Detection of climatic change</i>	244
	Further reading	246
	Appendices	247
A	Useful constants and the electromagnetic spectrum	247
B	Periodic Table and electron orbital configuration	249
C	Stability, potential temperature and density	254
D	Rossby waves in the atmosphere and ocean	256
	<i>Glossary</i>	257
	<i>Bibliography</i>	263
	<i>Index</i>	269

Preface to the first edition

In 1827 Jean-Baptiste Fourier, otherwise known for his contributions to mathematics, speculated that human activities had the capacity to affect the Earth's climate. In 1990 the International Panel on Climate Change produced a report detailing our current understanding of these activities, and speculated on what impact they might have on climate. In 160 years of great human endeavour much has been learnt but definitive evidence for climatic change driven by mankind remains elusive.

The oceans play a significant role in this tardiness of the climate system's response to our species. They store immense amounts of energy for months, decades or even centuries, depending on the region, depth and the nature of the interaction between the atmosphere and ocean. This storage capacity acts as a giant flywheel to the climate system, moderating change but prolonging it once change commences. The ocean also stores vast amounts of carbon dioxide.

In 1897 Svante Arrhenius discovered that the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere affected the global temperature through the greenhouse effect. In 1938 G. S. Callendar showed that atmospheric carbon dioxide was increasing due to human activities. However, it has only been since the late 1960s that a rough estimate of the magnitude of the potential climatic effect has been possible. Even today the likely impact of a doubling of atmospheric carbon dioxide on raising global temperature is not known to within 3°C; the global temperature at the height of the last Ice Age was only 4°C less than today.

A significant element in this uncertainty is the ocean. How is carbon dioxide and heat stored in the ocean? Are these mechanisms sensitive to climatic change? Could they interact with climatic change itself to accentuate, or lessen, such change? The exploration of these, among other, questions underlies this book.

The oceanic links to climate are complex and multi-faceted. The sciences of physics, chemistry and biology are interwoven in this tapestry. Therefore, after an introductory chapter on the climate system I devote chapters to the oceanic roles of each of these sciences, before examining some detailed ocean–atmosphere interactions affecting climate, and the role of the ocean in the past, and its potential role in the future climate.

My own introduction to this fascinating subject came through its physics, but I have aimed to make each science, and its links to the general problem of climate and air–sea interaction, understandable to readers coming from one of the other fields. English 'A' level standard physics, chemistry or mathematics would assist a reader but such a standard in only one of these subjects should not be a handicap. The book does not, therefore, contain many references – the

climate literature is, in any case, vast and growing at an exponential rate – but does have a commented bibliography of the books and research papers that I have found most useful during its writing. This should provide the inquisitive reader with the tools to begin a more in-depth exploration of the subject. There is also a glossary of terms that are used repeatedly. The first use of each term is *italicized* in the main text.

The writing of such a book as this necessarily involves help from many sources. I would like to collectively thank the various publishers and authors who gave permission for diagrams to be used (individual identification is found in the appropriate figure legend). The Internet has been an invaluable tool for tracking down data sets, and even for producing diagrams; the climate data site at Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory merits particular thanks. I would also like to thank Fred Vine and Peter Liss for encouraging me to persevere with the book during its darkest days, and my editor, Conrad Guettler, for his keeping the literary ship on course. Phil Judge drew many of the diagrams and Sheila Davies photographed them. Most of all, my wife, Jane, put up with three years of writing angst and made the extremely valuable contribution of an arts graduate’s criticism of the clarity of the science!

It is appropriate to end this preface with the following extracts from Shelley’s *Ode to the West Wind* that encapsulate the tumultuous interaction between air and sea that this book explores:

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.
...
Thou on whose streams, mid the steep sky’s commotion,
Loose clouds like earth’s decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
..... Thou
For whose path the Atlantic’s level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy weeds which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

Preface to the second edition

In the six years since the first edition of this book was published the interaction between the ocean and climate has remained at the centre of climate investigation. New emphasis on abrupt climate change triggered by freshwater changes to the ocean’s surface, and the interaction between the ocean’s thermohaline circulation and climate on millennial timescales has arisen. Hence this edition, as well as updating the science generally, has added significant new sections in Chapters 2 and 5 to reflect this enhanced importance of thermohaline processes. Modelling is becoming increasingly important, and hence treatment of this tool has been moved forward to Chapter 1. Nevertheless, the basic science on which the first edition was built has been supplemented rather than overturned during

Preface

xi

these last active years. Thus readers will find the basic structure of the book similar to before, but brought up-to-date where necessary.

In the last edition I was unfortunate in the timing of publication relative to the IPCC series of reports, completing the writing of the book prior to the issue of the 1995 report. This time I benefit from the recent publication of the 2001 reports, enabling me to give timely revisions of the international community’s views on climate change and the ocean’s role in this. I therefore thank my editor, Matt Lloyd for prompting the second edition at the right time. Once again, I also have to thank Phil Judge for drawing many new diagrams or revising old ones, and Sheila Davies for supplying the photographic versions. The continuing rise of the web as a medium for science communication and education leads me to provide a web-page for the book with relevant links to many valuable sites concerned with the science, and provision of data, for climate study. I hope readers find this edition even more stimulating than the last!