


## **Module 6**

# **Making Measurements in the Ocean**

## Overview



Making Measurements  
in Ocean


- Sensor physical characteristics and response time
- Coordinating measurements in space and time
- Resolution and Sampling theory
- Comparing measurement protocols for different model instruments

In this section we will take a close look at how measurements are made, in the environment in general and in the ocean specifically. We will discuss what to expect from measurements in terms of resolution and how to judge if we can make the measurements needed for our scientific purpose with the equipment at hand. Many common oceanographic parameters, such as salinity or density, require measuring multiple physical parameters, such as temperature and conductivity, to calculate the single new parameter. We will consider how measurement techniques impact the accuracy of these parameters.

At the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Determine what resolution your data will have, based on instrument sampling rate and descent rate in the ocean.
- Describe what a sensor is and how it operates.
- Explain the importance of correlating temperature, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and pressure measurements in time and space.

## Sensors Revealed



### Sensor Components

- Device that allows a physical characteristic of environment to be converted into an electrical signal
- Composed of:
  - Active element having a property that changes in response to physical characteristic, and
  - Circuit that converts this change into a signal that may be measured by normal methods
- Normal methods mean frequency measurement or analog-to-digital conversion

Sensors convert a physical property of the environment into an electrical signal.

Variations in the physical property are followed by variations in the signal. Consider a telephone, which converts the pressure wave that is sound into an electrical signal that can be transmitted through a wire. In similar fashion, oceanographic sensors convert pressure, temperature, conductivity, or some other physical parameter into varying electrical signals that are proportional to the value of the physical parameter. Typically, a sensor is composed of two parts:

- Active element


The active element converts the physical parameter of interest into an electrical signal. To operate, the active element generates an electrical current or modifies an electrical current in response to changes in the value of the physical parameter.

- Conditioning circuitry

The conditioning circuitry provides any electronics required for the active element to work. The circuit might use changes in a property of the active element. For example, oceanographic thermometers often use a thermistor to measure temperature. A thermistor changes its resistance to current flow as its temperature changes.

The circuit might also convert the active element's output into an electrical signal type and range that is more easily converted to digital format. For example, the dissolved oxygen active element has a cathode that reacts with O<sub>2</sub> to produce a weak electrical current; the conditioning circuit converts that current into a 0 to 5V sensor output.

## Sensors Revealed (*continued*)



### Contemplating a Sensor

- Perfection:
  - Reacts to only one physical characteristic of environment
  - Has a response to physical characteristic that is easily modeled mathematically
- Reality:
  - May react to more than one physical characteristic of environment
  - Response of sensor may be non-linear or may be parametric, with terms that reflect its reaction to physical characteristics other than one of interest

The best sensor has an active element that:

- Reacts only to 1 environmental parameter.

This is a rather rare occurrence. *Almost any semiconductor or wet electrode will react to changes in temperature and pressure.* Response to multiple environmental parameters is referred to as *non-specific response*.

- Responds to changes in temperature and pressure in a fashion that is easily modeled.
- Responds instantly to changes in the physical parameter.

The problem of non-specific sensor response can be overcome with:

- The housing or mounting arrangement of the active element.

For example, placing the thermistor of the SBE 3 in a fine needle protects it from pressure effects, but still allows it to react rapidly to changes in ocean temperature.


- The conditioning circuitry, which might have elements that compensate for temperature effects within the conditioning circuitry itself.
- The mathematical equation that converts sensor output to scientific units.

For example, the SBE 4 conductivity sensor is affected by temperature as well as pressure; this is characteristic of the glass used for the cell. The best way to remove these effects is mathematically, turning the calibration equation into a parametric equation that has terms that depend on temperature and pressure.

- A second shielded sensor that compensates for non-specific response.

For example, pH sensors have an electrode that is measured against a reference electrode contained within the sensor body.

## Sensor Response Times



### Sensor Response Times

- Sensors do not respond infinitely quickly to changes in their environment
- Sensor response to a step change in their environment is termed their *time constant*
- Time constant is typically stated as time to come to 63% of final value, given a *step* change in environment

Sensors do not react infinitely quickly to a new environmental condition. For example, let's look at a 2-box ocean, with the top box at 20 °C and the bottom box at 0 °C. If our CTD moved from the top to bottom box, we would see a temperature signal that changed very quickly from 20 °C to 0 °C, but not as a perfectly sharp jump. *The reason for a slower response time for sensors is often found in the packaging of the active element of the sensor.*

For example, a thermistor is housed in a thin metal sheath; the delay in response to a sharp change in temperature from warm to cold is due to the time required for the heat in the thermistor to diffuse into the environment. For a conductivity cell, there is flushing time of the cell. For a dissolved oxygen sensor, there is the time required for the concentration of O<sub>2</sub> near the electrode to equilibrate with the environment. *The time constant, or  $\tau$ , of the sensor is expressed as the time for the sensor to come to 63% of its final value given a step input.*

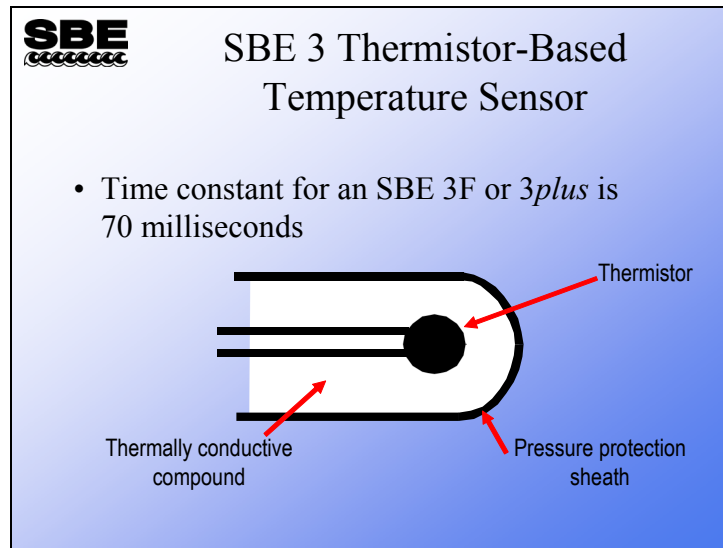
## Sensor Example: a Thermometer



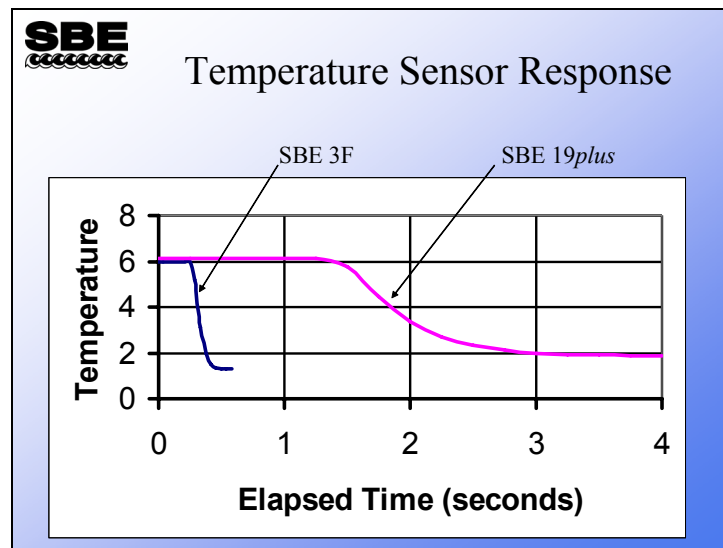
### A Thermometer

- Physical characteristic is ocean temperature
- Active element is a thermistor, a semiconductor that changes resistance when its temperature changes
- Conditioning circuit is an oscillator that changes frequency depending on resistance of thermistor
- Signal is a frequency that is measured with a frequency counter

## Sensor Example: a Thermometer (*continued*)




## Thermometer Response Comparison



This plot compares the time response of the SBE 3F with the SBE 19plus. The SBE 3F has a smaller thermistor and a smaller needle, giving it a faster response time.



## Conductivity Sensor Response



### Conductivity Response


- Conductivity sensor response is influenced by several factors
  - Flow of sample through the cell
  - Temperature and heat capacity of the cell
  - Electrode condition
- A good estimate of SBE 4 time constant is 30 milliseconds
  - This is typical for all Sea-Bird conductivity cells

Sea-Bird conductivity cells have an effective volume (*i.e.*, the region within the cell where the conductivity measurement is actually made) of about  $2 \text{ cm}^3$ . At 30 ml/s, this volume is flushed in 67 ms. The cell response to a step change in conductivity has a  $\sin(x)/x$  character. Up to the first null ( $f_n$  at 15 Hz), this response approximates the shape of the temperature sensor's exponential response. For the  $\sin(x)/x$  function, the half-power point occurs at  $0.443f_n = 6.645 \text{ Hz}$  and conductivity Tau is therefore  $1/(2 * \pi * 6.645) = 0.024 \text{ s}$ . Because of viscous effects that tend to retain boundary layer water, the response measured in laboratory experiments is somewhat longer (0.030 s).

The measurement of a conductivity cell time constant is a difficult problem. Below are some references to papers that have addressed this problem.

- Gregg, M.C., T. B. Meagher, E. E. Aagaard, and W. C. Hess (GMAH 1981) "A salt-stratified tank for measuring the dynamic response of conductivity probes", IEEE Journal of Oceanic Engineering, vol OE-6, 113-118.
- Gregg, M. C., and W. C. Hess (GH 1985) "Dynamic response calibration of Sea-Bird temperature and conductivity probes", Journal of Atmospheric and Oceanic Technology, vol 2(3), 304-313.

## Pressure Sensor Response

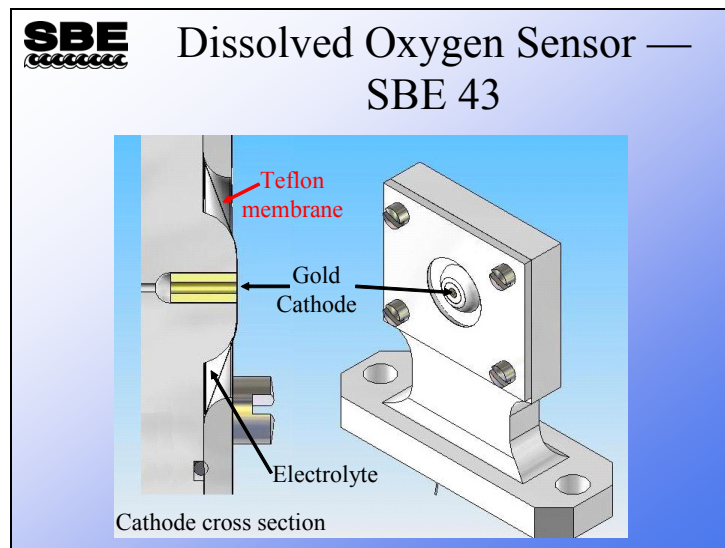


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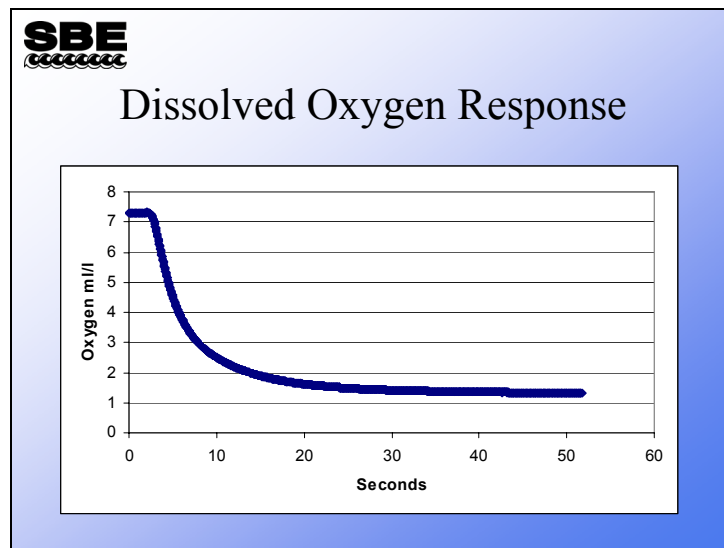
### Pressure Response

- A step change in pressure is not typically seen in the ocean environment
- Pressure sensor time constant is not an issue

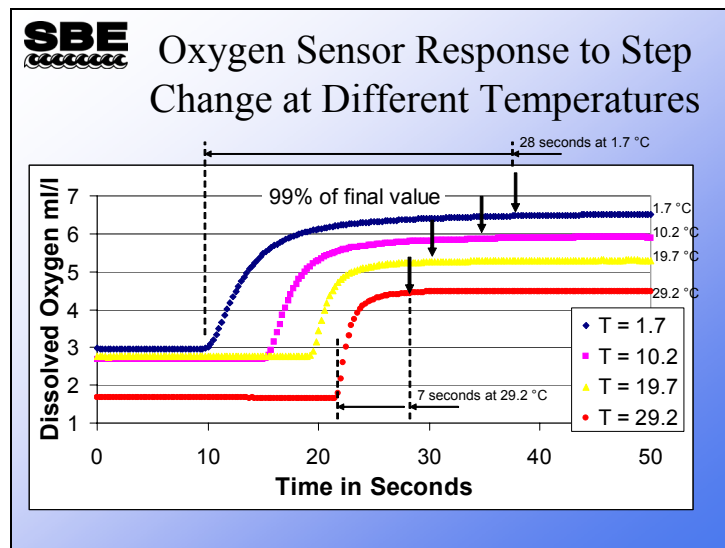
## Dissolved Oxygen Sensor



## Dissolved Oxygen Sensor Response

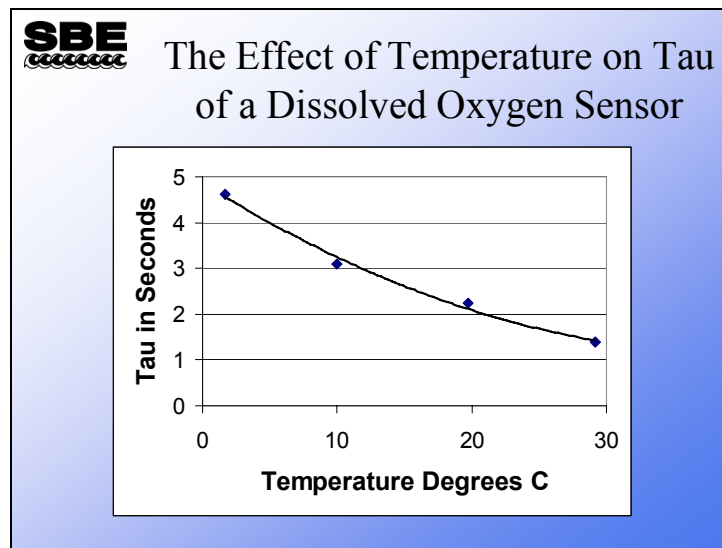


## Dissolved Oxygen Sensor Response (continued)




The plot above illustrates the effect that temperature has on a dissolved oxygen sensor. The colder the water that the sensor is working in, the longer it requires to come to a final value. This phenomenon is observable as upcast and downcast hysteresis. We will consider how to lessen this effect with the data processing *Align CTD* module in Module 9.

## Dissolved Oxygen Sensor Response (*continued*)



To induce a change in the oxygen sensor reading, oxygen in the environment must diffuse through a water boundary layer to the membrane surface. Next it must diffuse through the Teflon membrane that covers the electrode and into the electrolyte above the electrode. There a chemical reaction takes place at the electrode surface. The rates of these processes are temperature dependent. Thus the response of the sensor to a step change in its environment is temperature dependent. The plot above shows the changes in Tau for a typical sensor. Nominally, Tau at 20° C is 2 seconds, but varies with the age and condition of the sensor and membrane.

## CTD Sampling Rates




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Sampling Rates of Profilers

- SBE *9plus*: 24 Hz = 24 times per second
- SBE 25: 8 Hz
- SBE *19plus*: 4 Hz
- SBE 19: 2 Hz
- SBE 49: 16 Hz

Sea-Bird offers CTDs with sampling rates shown above. The SBE *9plus*, with the fastest sampling rate, produces the most detailed data. The other instruments are less capable but offer lower price, less complex deployment equipment, and a more compact instrument package. Not all applications require or benefit from the sampling rates achievable with the SBE *9plus*.

## Sampling Rate and Profiling Rate



**Interaction of Profiling Rate and Sampling Rate**

- Profiling rate = rate at which instrument package descends
- SBE *9plus* / *11plus*: Sea-Bird recommends profiling rate of 1 - 2 m/s
  - At 1 m/s and sampling at 24 Hz, a sample is taken every 4.2 cm

The CTD samples at a fixed rate and the instrument package is lowered through the ocean at a fixed rate. Consider the SBE *9plus*, sampling at 24 Hz and falling through the ocean at 1 m/s. We would be taking a sample every 4.2 cm.

$$100 \text{ cm sec}^{-1} / 24 \text{ sec}^{-1} = 4.2 \text{ cm}$$

Now consider reality. The CTD samples at 24 Hz and the instrument package falls through the ocean at a nominal 1 m/s. However, the ship heaves, alternately slowing and lifting the instrument package or dropping and accelerating the instrument package. This situation is not well enough constrained to assign an exact length scale to our measurement. We will investigate this problem further in the advanced data processing portion of the course.



## Sampling Rate and Profiling Rate (*continued*)

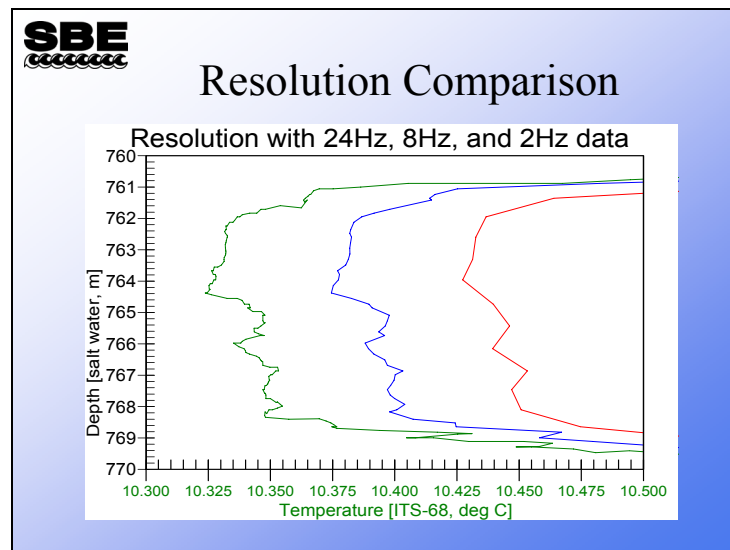


### Interaction of Profiling Rate and Sampling Rate

- SBE 25: At 1 m/s and sampling at 8 Hz
  - A sample is taken every 12.5 cm
- SBE 19*plus*: At 1 m/s and sampling at 4 Hz
  - A sample is taken every 25 cm
- SBE 19: At 1 m/s and sampling at 2 Hz
  - A sample is taken every 50 cm
- SBE 49: At 1 m/s and sampling at 16 Hz
  - A sample is taken every 6.25 cm


As discussed earlier, the lower sample rates of the SBE 19, 19*plus*, 25, and 49 instruments translates into a coarser resolution than that calculated in the SBE 9*plus* example. The following page illustrates the impact that sample rate has on resolution.

## CTD Resolution Comparison



The left-most plot is data collected at 24 Hz with a nominal 1 meter/second lowering speed. The middle plot is the same data set decimated to 8 Hz to represent the resolution of the SBE 25. The right-most plot is the 24 Hz data set decimated to 2 Hz, which is representative of the resolution that would be seen with an SBE 19. The obvious conclusion is that a faster sampling rate yields higher resolution of temperature structure in the ocean temperature profile.

## Activity



### Activity: Resolution Comparison


- SBE 25 and SBE 19 were deployed on same instrument package, compare data
- Run Data Conversion twice, using each data file in C:\Data\Module6\Resolution\
  - Puget25.hex with Puget25.con, and Puget19.hex with Puget19.con
  - Downcast only
  - Output pressure, temperature, salinity
  - Skip first 300 scans of Puget19.hex
- Run a separate SBE Data Processing (and Sea Plot) on each .cnv file at to see the Pressure - Temperature plots side-by-side
  - Plot Setup tab:
    - Plot type -- Single Y – Multiple X
  - Y-Axis tab: pressure, 0 – 40 db
  - X-Axis 1 tab: temperature, 9.5 – 9.6 degrees C
- Run each Sea Plot again to see Pressure - Salinity plots side-by-side
  - X-Axis 1 tab: salinity, 28.85 – 29.00 PSU

This activity requires some clever use of the processing software. First, use SBE Data Processing's *Data Conversion* module to convert downcast data from C:\Data\Module6\Resolution\Puget25.hex. Then run *Data Conversion* to convert downcast data from C:\Data\Module6\Resolution\Puget19.hex, but skip the first 300 scans; these are invalid data acquired during the instrument package soak.

Next, run SBE Data Processing's *Sea Plot* module, and create a plot for Temperature vs Pressure of Puget25.cnv, as described in the slide above. Adjust the resulting plot so it fills half your screen. Now, open another copy of SBE Data Processing and run *Sea Plot* again; make a plot of Puget19.cnv with the same plotting parameters and adjust it to fill the other half of your screen. How do the plots compare?

Now try Salinity vs Pressure.

## Coordinating Measurements



Coordinating C, T, and D  
Measurements in Time and Space

- Recall that an SBE *9plus* sampling at 24 Hz and being lowered at 1 m/s samples every 4.2 cm
- With this level of resolution, physical positioning of sensors makes a difference in calculated parameters like salinity and density

Salinity is a function of conductivity, temperature, and pressure. The mathematical relationship that defines salinity in these terms was established in 1978 by a group of scientists working with the international scientific organization UNESCO.

Salinity must be calculated from conductivity, temperature, and pressure measurements made on the same water parcel.

## Coordinating Measurements (*continued*)



### Conductivity and Temperature Measurement Revisited

- SBE 3 thermistor is contained in a 0.75 mm diameter needle that senses an approximate volume of 2 ml of seawater around it
- SBE 4 conductivity cell measures the conductivity of 2 ml of seawater
- These measurements are made in different places

The active part of the thermometer is found at the end of the slender needle. The volume of water measured by the end of the needle is approximately 2 ml.

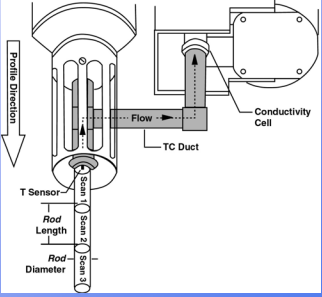
Recall that the conductivity cell is a glass tube containing platinum electrodes; conductivity is measured on the volume of water that the cell contains, approximately 2 ml.

## Coordinating Measurements (*continued*)

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### Coupling T and C Measurement — the *TC Duct*

- Water is pumped past active element of temperature sensor and into conductivity cell at a fixed, constant rate
- Plumbing setup greatly lessens effects of ship heave (stops *sloshing* through cell)
- Filtering and other data manipulation is much more successful because flow rate is constant



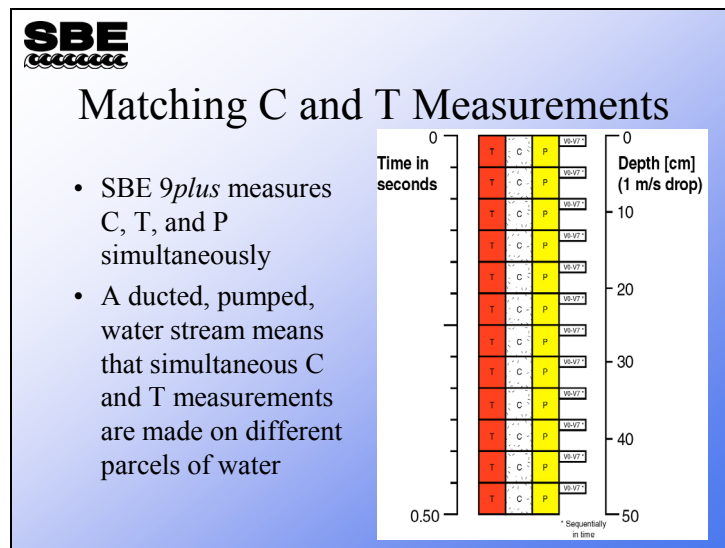
The diagram illustrates the TC Duct setup. It shows a vertical rod with a temperature sensor (T Sensor) at the top and a conductivity cell at the bottom. A TC Duct connects the two. A rod of water is shown flowing through the duct. The diagram also shows the profile direction and the flow direction. Labels include Profile Direction, Flow, Conductivity Cell, TC Duct, T Sensor, Rod Length, Rod Diameter, and T Sensor.

To ensure that the temperature and conductivity measurements are made on a constrained water sample, they are plumbed together and the *T-C pair* has water drawn through them with a pump that moves water at a consistent, known speed.

One way to visualize this is as a *rod* of water that moves into the duct and flows past the thermometer and into the conductivity cell. The diagram above shows the approximate size of the water parcel that constitutes a sample.

Because the water sample is pumped through the duct and conductivity cell, it is not subject to accelerations (sloshing) due to ship heave. This technique of constraining the sample as it is measured greatly improves the quality of the measurement and facilitates data manipulation.

## Coordinating Measurements (*continued*)



The SBE *9plus* acquisition architecture measures temperature, conductivity, and pressure simultaneously. Careful examination of the plumbing of the TC duct shows that a water parcel first encounters the SBE 3 thermistor and then transits into the conductivity cell.

For the most accurate estimate of salinity and density, the data stream must be manipulated, moving temperature and conductivity relative to pressure to match the measurements on a parcel of water.

Because the *9plus* measures T, C, and P simultaneously, and owing to the distance that the sample travels in the plumbing of the TC duct and the conductivity cell, the water that the T sample is taken from at time 0 is actually the same water that the C sample is taken from during time 2.

## Coordinating Measurements (*continued*)



### Matching C and T continued

- Because water stream is constrained, C and T measurements may be adjusted relative to time or pressure to match a T measurement on a parcel of water with a C measurement on that same parcel of water
- This *alignment* of measurements is done in SBE 11*plus* and may be fine tuned in post-processing

The adjustment of samples in the data stream is taken care of in the SBE 11*plus* deck unit and is termed *sample alignment*. Although we have been discussing the advancement in terms of an integer number of scans, careful calculation of flow rates, plumbing distances, and sample rates yields a nominal adjustment of 1.75 data scans. Because the conductivity cell is plumbed after the temperature, the conductivity channel must be advanced relative to the pressure and temperature measurements. The next slide illustrates this with an example.



## Coordinating Measurements: Aligning Data

**SBE** Schematic of Real-Time Data Manipulation for SBE *11plus*

Scan	Pressure	Temperature	Conductivity
0	$P_0$	$T_0$	$C_0$
1	$P_1$	$T_1$	$C_1$
2	$P_2$	$T_2$	$C_2$
3	$P_3$	$T_3$	$C_3$

Diagram illustrating the interpolation process for conductivity data. A bracket labeled  $C_{1.75}$  spans the interval between scans 1 and 2, indicating that the value at 1.75 scans is interpolated from  $C_1$  and  $C_2$ . An arrow points from  $C_{1.75}$  to the  $C_0$  cell in the table.

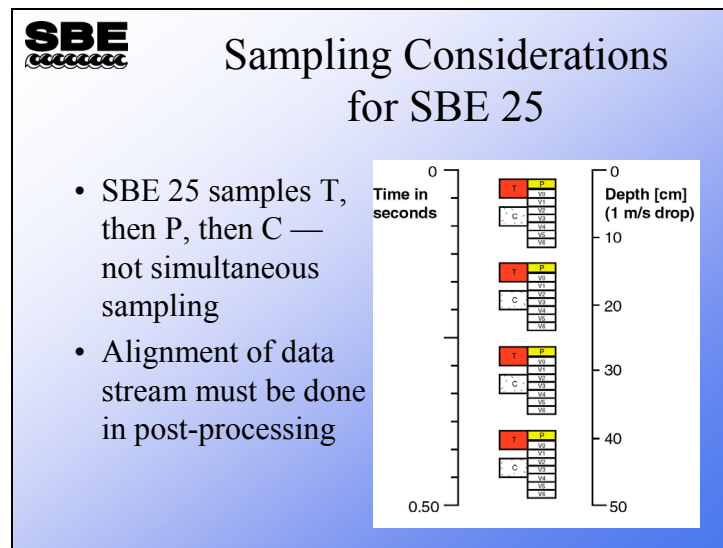
For example, a value for conductivity at 1.75 scans,  $C_{1.75}$ , is calculated by interpolating between the values for  $C_1$  and  $C_2$ .  $C_0$  is set to equal  $C_{1.75}$ . Then  $C_1$  is set to equal the value obtained from interpolation between  $C_2$  and  $C_3$ . This process continues to the end.

The *11plus* can perform this advancement on each of its data channels, with different advancements for each channel. The amount to advance a channel is entered in seconds. Recall that the *9plus* collects scans at 24 Hz, which equals 0.042 seconds/scan; therefore, a 1.75-scan advancement equals 0.073 seconds.

You might want to enter advancement values for dissolved oxygen sensors or fluorometers as well as for conductivity.

The 1.75-scan advancement is a nominal value; changes in flow rate caused by plumbing changes will necessitate changes in advancement. Similarly, you should consider any advancement that the *11plus* makes to your other sensors a nominal value and make your final decision based on observing the data.


## Coordinating Measurements: SBE 25



The SBE 25 has a different sampling order. The alignment of T and C must be done in post-processing, regardless of whether the SBE 25 is used for internally recording data or as a real-time instrument with a deck unit. As an internally recording instrument, the SBE 25 has the capability of averaging samples to increase the memory endurance. Averaging degrades the resolution of the instrument and makes the alignment of T and C less effective.

As the diagram shows, T and P are measured simultaneously, with C following. The SBE 25 has the same pump and TC duct as the *9plus*, yielding the same transit time for water moving past the thermometer and through the cell. A good nominal advance for conductivity is the same as for the *9plus*, 0.073 seconds.

## Coordinating Measurements: SBE 19 and 19*plus*



**Sampling Considerations for SBE 19 and 19*plus***

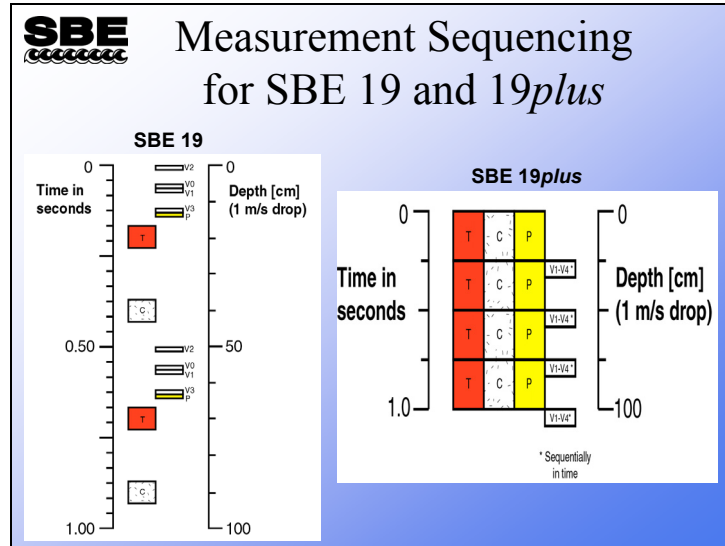
- SBE 19 samples P and T, and finally C
  - SBE 19 is not usually ducted
- SBE 19*plus* samples P, C, and T simultaneously
  - SBE 19*plus* has an integral duct
- Alignment for both SBE 19 and 19*plus* is done in post-processing

The SBE 19 has a different sampling protocol than the SBE 25 and the 9*plus*. The 19 uses the same signal condition circuit, an oscillator, to sample both T and C. A relay switches the oscillator between the thermistor and the conductivity cell. Further, to improve circuit stability, reference resistors are switched into the oscillator every 120 samples.

The SBE 19*plus* samples T, C, and P simultaneously. This is an improved protocol over the 19.

Like for the SBE 25, the alignment of T and C must be done in post-processing, regardless of whether the SBE 19 or 19*plus* is used for internally recording data or as a real-time instrument with a deck unit.

## Coordinating Measurements: SBE 19 and 19plus (continued)



As was mentioned on the previous page, the SBE 19 samples P, then T, and finally C, at a sampling rate of 2 Hz. Because T and C use the same oscillator, there is separation in the measurements to allow time for the oscillator to settle into the new frequency after it has been switched. Alignment of T and C is done in post-processing and, as mentioned earlier, averaging of scans to improve memory endurance tends to degrade the instrument's resolution and make alignment less effective.

The SBE 19plus offers simultaneous sampling of P, T, and C, similar to the SBE 9plus. It has a sampling rate of 4 Hz. This sampling schedule is an improvement over the SBE 19 and SBE 25.

## Estimating Conductivity and Temperature Resolution

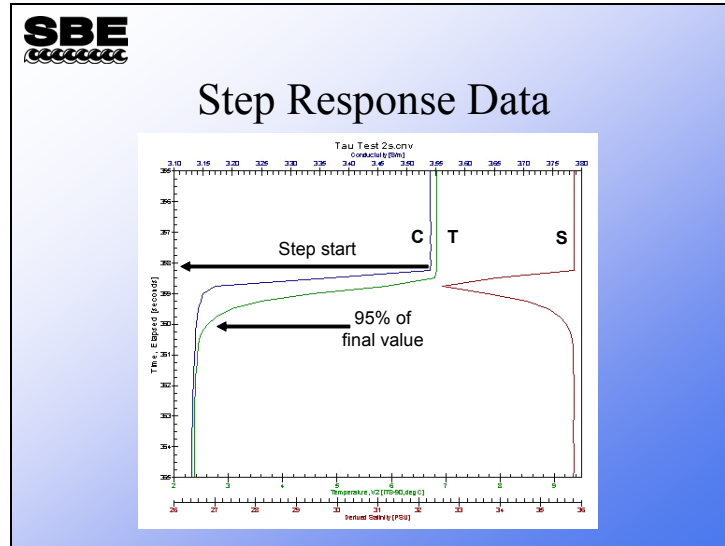
**SBE**  
Seabird Electronics

### Resolution Example

- SBE 19*plus* is placed in 1 degree saltwater
- Inlet to TC duct is plumbed to 6 degree water of same salinity
- After instrument stabilizes, tube is yanked off, yielding a step in T and C

We can conduct an experiment to demonstrate the spatial resolution that is possible with a given set of temperature and conductivity sensors at a specified sampling rate. In our experiment we have a large tank of saltwater at approximately 1 °C. We remove some of the water and allow it to warm to approximately 6 °C. The instrument of interest is placed in the 1 °C water and allowed to equilibrate. The inlet of the temperature and conductivity sensors is plumbed to the warm water tank and water is pumped past the sensors at the normal profiling rate. The warm water is pumped into a waste container so as not to warm the 1°C tank during the test. Data is collected at the highest rate available, and when the system is stable the tubing is yanked off the inlet to the sensors, producing a step change. Our interest is in how well we can resolve rapid changes in the water column in the field. The instrument's step response is an excellent indication of this.

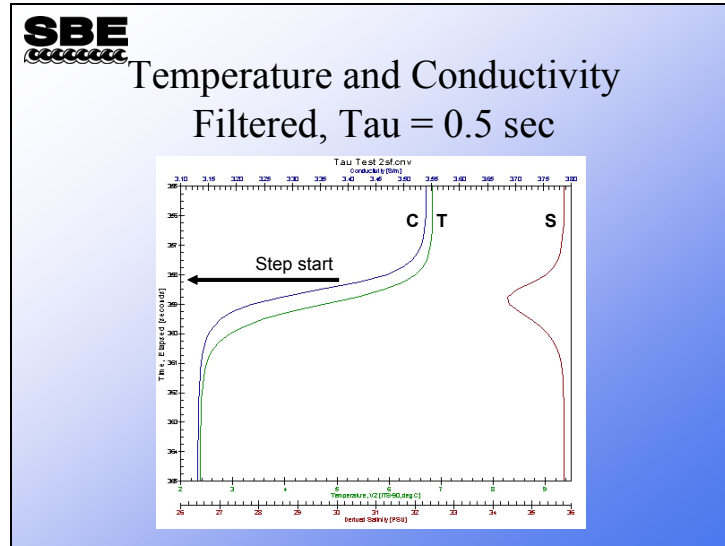
## Estimating Conductivity and Temperature Resolution (continued)



The above plot shows the results of the experiment. The Y axis is time in seconds; this corresponds to decibars at a lowering rate of 1 meter per second. Note that the temperature trace lags the conductivity trace, because the SBE 19*plus* temperature sensor time constant is approximately 0.5 seconds while the conductivity cell has a time constant of about 0.030 seconds.

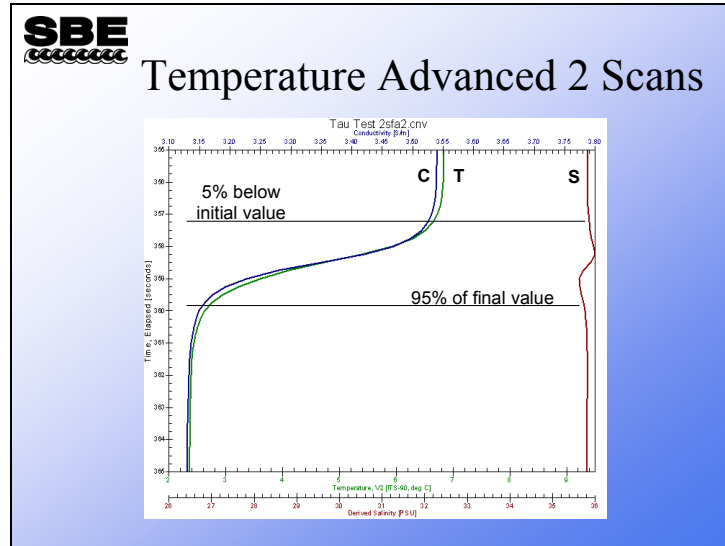
You can observe a large salinity spike produced by the mismatch in the time constants of the temperature and conductivity sensors.

## Estimating Conductivity and Temperature Resolution (continued)



We can achieve the best salinity response by filtering the temperature and conductivity signals to give them the same time constants. It is accepted practice to filter a data channel forwards and backwards to avoid introducing a phase shift in the data. Because of this, both the leading and the trailing edge of the step response are smoothed. If only conductivity were filtered the smoothed leading edge would not match the temperature channel and a larger salinity spike would result.

## Estimating Conductivity and Temperature Resolution (continued)

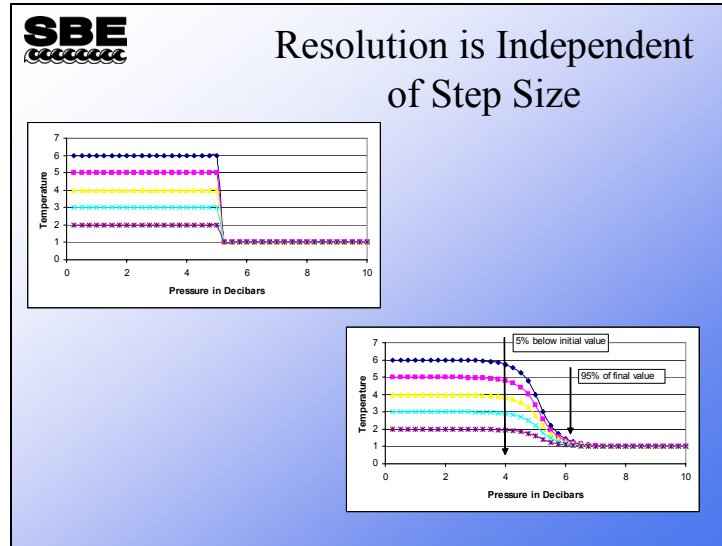


The next step in the process is to advance temperature relative to time to align the temperature and conductivity channels. Note that the salinity spike is much reduced; if the data were bin averaged on 2 decibar bins, the salinity spike would average out of the data.

Assuming that a 5% below initial value and 95% of final value criteria are acceptable for the resolution of a step change in temperature and conductivity, the SBE 19*plus* can resolve a step change over approximately a 2.25 second interval (corresponds to a 2.25 decibar interval at 1m/s lowering rate). A slower lowering rate will result in a smaller resolution distance.




## Estimating Conductivity and Temperature Resolution (continued)



You might think that the resolution of a step change depends on the magnitude of the change. Above are plots of the step response of a filter that closely resembles the temperature response of the SBE 19*plus*. It is obvious that the size of the step does not influence the distance (or time) required to resolve it.

## Activity



### Activity: Question and Example

- Question:
  - Can I profile really slowly and get as good resolution with my SBE 19*plus* as I could with an SBE 9*plus*?
- Example:
  - Use Seasave to look at the SBE 19*plus* cast:  
C:\Data\Module6\Slow19p\Palette.hex
  - Make the following plot:
    - Y axis: Pressure 0 to 20 db
    - X axis 1: Temperature 5 to 20 degrees C
    - X axis 2: density 998 to 1001 Kg/m3
    - X axis 3: descent rate -0.1 to +0.1
- What resolution are we seeing in this data?  
Any drawbacks to this technique?