The Vibroseis Surface Source

During the 2009–2010 Antarctic field season the Linking Micro-Physical Properties to Macro Features in Ice Sheets With Geophysical Techniques (LIMPICS) project aimed to make seismic vibrator measurements for the first time in Antarctica [*Kristoffersen et al.,* 2010]. In contrast to an impulsive surface source of millisecond duration, a controlled vibrator source emits energy as a finite amplitude pressure pulse over many seconds. Energy losses by inelastic behavior are thus much less because of reduced ground pressure.

The project used a truck-mounted Failing Y-1100 vibrator (peak actuator force equivalent to 12 tons) on skis towed by a PistenBully snowcat on the floating Ekström Ice Shelf near the German research station Neumayer III. Sweeps of 10-second duration with a linear increase in frequency over the range of 10–100 hertz were compared to shots of 300-gram explosive charge fired in 10-meter-deep boreholes (Figure 1). Both types of data were recorded with a snow streamer (i.e., geophones towed on a cable across the snow surface), and the data show the primary reflection from the ice-water interface, its multiples, and the reflections from and within the seafloor. The explosives source is clearly rich in higher frequencies (up to 300 hertz), while the energy in the vibroseis record is limited to the sweep frequencies. The vibrator excites slightly more surface waves than the explosive charge, but the total energy level is higher relative to an explosive charge at 10-meter depth. Identifiable reflections are present over a two-way travel time of more than 2 seconds.

With the current vibroseis–snow streamer setup, seismic data production is about 10 kilometers per day for single-fold coverage, with peak production rates up to 3 kilometers per hour. Optimization should enable a doubling of the production rate to 20 kilometers per day even for multifold coverage, comparable to onshore vibroseis surveys. Surface properties do not impose a problem, as the vibrator pad (2.5 square meters) generally sank no more than a total of 10–20 centimeters in dry snow after three consecutive sweeps.

Future Prospects

A vibrator has the advantage of being a known and repeatable source signal and also of having reduced logistics costs, higher production rates, and less impact on the environment than explosives. Further investigations should address appropriate selection of vibrator size (commercially available vibrators range from 50 kilograms to more than 10 tons) for a tradeoff between resolution and penetration depth depending on target objectives and the applicability of vibrator types (inducing shear or pressure waves) to sophisticated analysis methods such as amplitude variation with offset. Logistical limitations require improved implementations such as mounting a vibrator directly on a sled (instead of on a truck on skis) and modular systems for deployment with smaller airplanes.

The vibroseis–snow streamer configuration used presents a tool suitable for traverses of several hundred kilometers and thus for target-oriented surveys for specific objectives such as (1) exploring the sub-ice sediment structure suitable for sampling by scientific drilling and analysis for climate information; (2) investigating the physical properties of the ice-bedrock interface; (3) exploring grounding line processes like internal basal ice structures and water-routing systems; (4) conducting surveys of subglacial lake settings, especially water depth and sediment information; (5) complementing radar in exploring the physical properties of the lower part of the ice sheet; and (6) tying together offshore and onshore seismic data for geological interpretations.

Photos of the vibrator truck and the measurement setup are available in the online supplement to this *Eos* issue (http://www.agu.org/eos_elec/).

Acknowledgments

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Global Shallow-Water Bathymetry From Satellite Ocean Color Data

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Knowledge of ocean bathymetry is important, not only for navigation but also for scientific studies of the ocean's volume, ecology, and circulation, all of which are related to Earth's climate. In coastal regions, moreover, detailed bathymetric maps are critical for storm surge modeling, marine power plant planning, understanding of ecosystem connectivity, coastal management, and change analyses. Because ocean areas are enormously large and ship surveys have limited coverage, adequate bathymetric data are still lacking throughout the global ocean.

Satellite altimetry can produce reasonable estimates of bathymetry for the deep ocean [*Sandwell et al.*, 2003, 2006], but the spatial resolution is very coarse (~6–9 kilometers) and can be highly inaccurate in shallow waters, where gravitational effects are small. For example, depths retrieved from the widely used ETOPO2 bathymetry database (the National Geophysical Data Center's 2-minute global relief data; http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/fliers/01mgg04.html) for the Great Bahama Bank (Figure 1a) are seriously in error when compared with ship surveys [*Dierssen et al.*, 2009] (see Figure 1b). No statistical correlation was found between the two bathymetry measurements, and the root-mean-square error of ETOPO2 bathymetry was as high as 208 meters. Yet determining a higher-spatial-resolution (e.g., 300-meter) bathymetry of this region with ship surveys would require about 4 years of nonstop effort.

Clearly, alternative methods are needed for estimating bathymetry in shallow coastal regions. A rapid and relatively robust method may be found through a new way of looking at satellite measurements of ocean color. This takes advantage of the fact that photons hitting the shallow ocean bottom and reflecting back to the surface modify the appearance of ocean color.

Retrieving Depth From Analyzing Spectral Data

It is well known that measurements of water color could help define bathymetry in shallow regions [*Lyzenga,* 1981; *Polcyn et al.,* 1970]. Earlier methods to estimate bathymetry from ocean color, however, were limited to approaches [*Lyzenga,* 1981; *Polcyn et al.,* 1970; *Philpot,* 1989] that require a few known depths to develop an empirical relationship, which then allows researchers to convert multiband color images to a bathymetric map. The resulting empirical relationships are generally sensor and site specific [*Dierssen et al.,* 2003; *Stumpf et al.,* 2003] and not transferable to other images or areas. Further, the approach is not applicable for regions difficult to reach, due to lack of in situ calibration data.

To overcome such a limitation, a physics-based approach, called hyperspectral optimization process exemplar (HOPE), has been developed [*Lee et al.,* 1999]. Basically, the spectral reflectance (R_{rs}, the ratio of water-leaving radiance to downwelling irradiance hitting the sea surface) is modeled as a function of five independent variables that include bottom depth. In a fashion similar to other spectral optimization schemes [e.g., *Doerffer and Fischer,* 1994; *Klonowski et al.,* 2007; *Brando et al.,* 2009], HOPE derives bottom depth by iteratively varying the values of the five unknowns until the modeled R_{rs} best matches the measured R_{rs}.

Unlike the empirical approaches used for retrieving depth from water color [*Lyzenga,* 1981; *Stumpf et al.,* 2003], the only required inputs for HOPE are the spectral reflectance data obtained from a remote sensor, thus eliminating the need for image-specific or region-specific algorithm tuning.

Application of the New Method

The HOPE method was applied to ocean color images of the Great Bahama Bank collected by the Medium-Resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MERIS) operated by the European Space Agency (ESA). The data collected 14 December 2004 by MERIS were fed to HOPE to derive properties of the water column and bottom. The derived bottom depth (no tidal correction is presented in Figure 1c) shows a range of about 1–10 meters across the main portions of the banks and a maximum depth of about 20 meters at the bank edges.

MERIS-derived depths were compared with ship surveys [*Dierssen et al.,* 2009], and it was found that the two data sets were highly statistically correlated, with a root-mean-square error of MERIS-derived bathymetry of about 3.4 meters (Figure 1d). Note that the errors factor in the ambiguity that results from differences in the spatial scale of the relative measurements (300 meters for MERIS and ~10 meters for ship) and the spatial heterogeneity in bathymetry over those scales.

Results from another MERIS measurement (6 September 2008) show similar accuracy (see Figure 1d), indicating that this approach is robust and repeatable. Although the error of around 3 meters cautions against the use of these data for navigation, the retrieved bathymetry is substantially more reliable than that presented in ETOPO2.

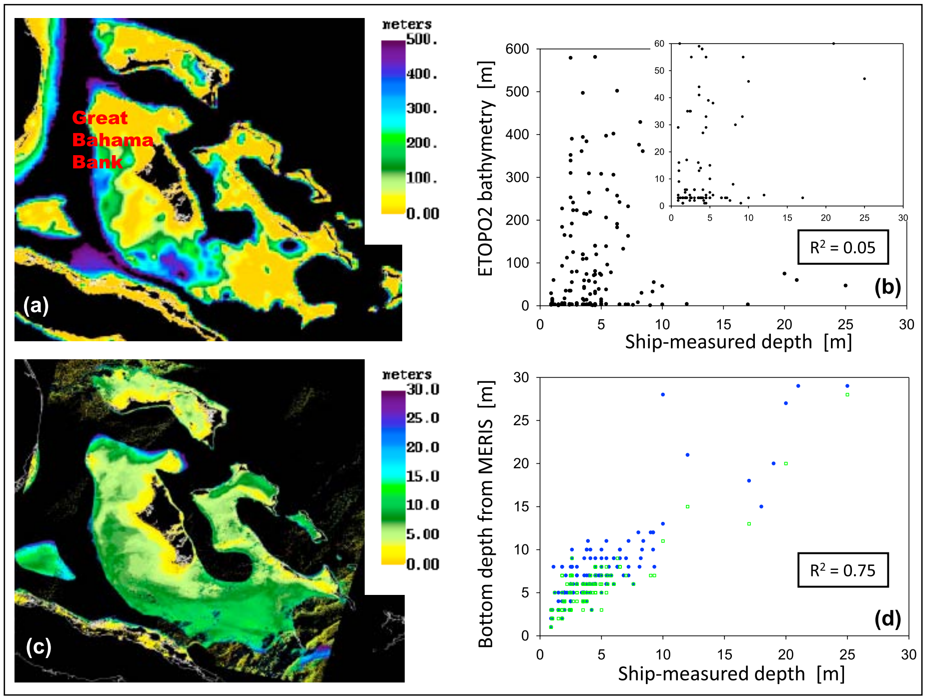

Fig. 1. (a) Depth of the Great Bahama Bank retrieved from the ETOPO2 bathymetry database. (b) Scatterplot between in situ depth and ETOPO2 bathymetry of matching locations (inset shows ETOPO2 bathymetry under 60 meters). (c) Bottom depth derived from Medium-Resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MERIS) measurements (14 December 2004) by the hyperspectral optimization process exemplar (HOPE) approach. (d) Like Figure 1b, a scatterplot between in situ depth and MERIS depths (rounded to nearest integer to match ETOPO2 format; blue indicates 14 December 2004, green indicates 6 September 2008). The coefficient of determination (R^2) represents all data points (281) in the plot. Note the color scale difference in Figures 1a and 1c. Black pixels represent land or deep waters.

Toward More Accurate Global Assessment of Shallow Waters

Because polar-orbiting sensors like MERIS and Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) make measurements globally and near daily with a spatial resolution of hundreds of meters, the proof of concept seen through comparing remote sensing retrievals with ship surveys around the Great Bahama Bank demonstrates the great potential in deriving global, higher-resolution, shallow-water bathymetry from ocean color satellites. Such retrievals can complement information gained from surveys and altimetry results. Merging such data products with other bathymetry sources will provide unprecedentedly valuable information to scientists, commercial entities, coastal managers, and decision makers. To reach this highly desired goal, however, would require dedicated efforts to improve and mature algorithms for processing optically shallow waters from current and future ocean color satellite measurements.

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GEOPHYSICISTS

Bruce A. Warren (1937–2010)

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AGU Fellow and 2004 Maurice Ewing medalist Bruce A. Warren died suddenly on 2 September 2010 at the age of 73 while vacationing in Provincetown, Mass. He was a renowned physical oceanographer who was primarily responsible for the discovery, analysis, and dynamical interpretation of multiple deep currents throughout the world ocean. His work significantly advanced the field in areas including the dynamics of ocean general circulation, large-scale water property distributions, and the deep circulation of the world ocean. He was also a fellow of the American Meteorological Society (AMS) and was the society's 2010 Sverdrup Gold Medal recipient "for advancing our understanding of the general circulation of the ocean through observations and dynamical interpretation."

As Bruce noted in his Maurice Ewing Medal remarks, three individuals whom he met early in his career had a dominant influence on his work. Arnold Aarons, his freshman physics professor at Amherst College, Massachusetts, steered Bruce to an undergraduate summer job at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), where he assisted oceanographer Henry Stommel. Later that summer, Bruce worked at sea alongside WHOI's Fritz Fuglister on the R/V *Atlantis* and discovered that he loved seagoing oceanography.

Completing his undergraduate work in 1958, Bruce went on to earn his Ph.D. in physical oceanography from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1962. Stommel and Aarons were formulating their famous dynamical framework for the deep-ocean circulation then. Bruce returned to this touchstone throughout his career in WHOI's Department of Physical Oceanography, where he advanced to senior scientist in 1978. He dedicated much of his career to exploring and explicating the deep circulation of the world ocean, often using or expanding upon the Stommel-Aarons framework. He remained active at WHOI as a scientist emeritus from his retirement in 2003 up to his passing.

Bruce was in his element at sea. He was a meticulous observer who took and demanded highly accurate and precise data. For example, at the start of cruises he would orchestrate a competition to determine quantitatively who among the watch-standers could best draw water samples for dissolved oxygen analysis. He was also an excellent shipmate who once commented, "I like to go to sea and I like the company of people who like to go to sea." When not working, he could often be found on deck, smoking his beloved pipe. Those fortunate enough to sail with him might find themselves enjoying relaxed but stimulating conversations on diverse topics including aspects of history, gardening, ornithology, or literature while enjoying the ambience of the sea.

Bruce's seagoing observational efforts are numerous. One instance is his exemplary service as a principal architect of the 1994–1996 Indian Ocean expedition of the World Ocean Circulation Experiment (WOCE). He participated actively in the organizing and steering committees for WOCE Indian Ocean activities, contributed largely to the program design document, spearheaded the expedition coordination, and chaired the science workshop that followed. He spent significant time at sea during this ambitious and comprehensive single-ship oceanographic survey of the Indian Ocean and later authored scientific papers analyzing some of the remarkable data that were collected.

Back in his office, Bruce would deliberate long and hard while seeking to understand and synthesize the observations he had collected at sea. He brought pencil and paper, drafting table, rocking chair, and pipe to bear in this work. He used rigorous dynamics and Occam's razor as tools for interpreting the data. He also contoured vertical-lateral sections of ocean water properties by hand, recognizing this craft as an important step in the process of oceanographic data analysis. Bruce enjoyed the society of his colleagues on shore, too. For many years he could be found gathered with associates in the physical oceanography reading room of WHOI's Clark Laboratory at 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. for a coffee break and varied—often erudite—conversations, but also sometimes for sea stories. His hearty laugh resounded often through the hallways in Clark.

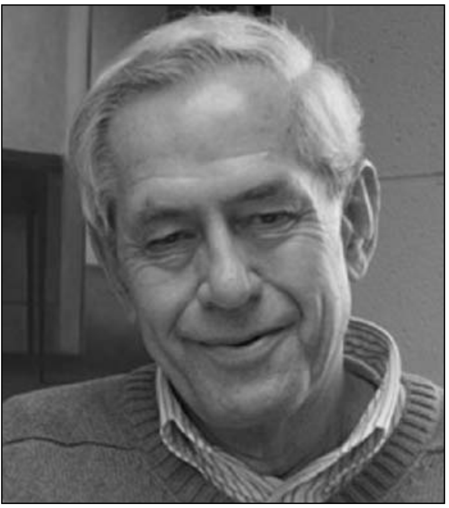
Photo by L. Pratt

Bruce A. Warren

Bruce loved language and words. An author of more than 50 scientific publications, he was a careful practitioner and fierce advocate of clear and concise exposition. The original and insightful scientific content of his papers, as well as their masterful composition, ensures their enduring usefulness. Bruce was editor of at least three books, including (with Carl Wunsch) the 1980 classic *Evolution of Physical Oceanography: Scientific Surveys in Honor of Henry Stommel*. He was a conscientious and careful coeditor of AMS's *Journal of Physical Oceanography* from 1980 to 1985, as well as a legendary reviewer. Many greatly benefited from his editorial advice and guidance.

Bruce had numerous interests outside of science and the sea, including history, gardening, literature, chamber music, and art. He was an avid naturalist who kept an illustrated notebook on Cape Cod, Mass., wildflowers. He was also an epicure, fond of a well-prepared meal, a stiff drink, and good company. He even combined writing with these interests, contributing a chapter entitled "Bars of Woods Hole" for the 1983 book *Woods Hole Reflections* and penning an article regarding geographical variations in gin-and-tonic garnishing customs entitled "The lemon-and-lime line: I. Appeal for data" in the unrefereed *Journal of Correct Oceanography* (*2*(1), 1983). He knew where to take colleagues for excellent food and authentic atmosphere including Dungeness crab at AGU Fall Meetings in San Francisco and Creole cuisine at Ocean Sciences Meetings in New Orleans. Many