

Earth Science Applications of Space Based Geodesy

DES-7355

Tu-Th

9:40-11:05

Seminar Room in 3892 Central Ave. (Long building)

Bob Smalley

Office: 3892 Central Ave, Room 103

678-4929

Office Hours – Wed 14:00-16:00 or if I'm in my office.

http://www.ceri.memphis.edu/people/smalley/ESCI7355/ESCI_7355_Applications_of_Space_Based_Geodesy.html

Class 8

Covariance and Cofactor matrix in GPS

If observations had no errors and the model was perfect
then the estimations from

$$\hat{x} = \left(A^T A \right)^{-1} A^T \vec{b}$$

Would be perfect

Errors, $\mathbf{v}$, in the original observations $\mathbf{b}$ will map into errors $\mathbf{v}_x$ in the estimates of $\mathbf{x}$ and this mapping will take the same form as the estimation

$$(\hat{\mathbf{x}} + \mathbf{v}_x) = (A^T A)^{-1} A^T (\vec{\mathbf{b}} + \vec{\mathbf{v}})$$

$$\hat{\mathbf{x}} = (A^T A)^{-1} A^T \vec{\mathbf{b}}$$

$$\mathbf{v}_x = (A^T A)^{-1} A^T \vec{\mathbf{v}}$$

If we have an expected (a priori) value for the error in the data, σ , we can compute the expected error in the parameters

Consider the covariance matrix

and for this discussion suppose that the observations are uncorrelated (covariance matrix is therefore diagonal)

$$C_{ii} = E(v_i^2) = \sigma_i^2$$

$$C = E(vv^T)$$

Assume further that we can characterize the error in the observations by a single number, σ .

$$C_{ii} = \sigma^2 I$$

then

$$C_x = E(\mathbf{v}_x \mathbf{v}_x^T) = E\left(\left((A^T A)^{-1} A^T \vec{\mathbf{v}}\right)\left((A^T A)^{-1} A^T \vec{\mathbf{v}}\right)^T\right)$$

$$C_x = E\left(\left(A^T A\right)^{-1} A^T \vec{\mathbf{v}} \mathbf{v}^T A \left(A^T A\right)^{-1}\right)$$

$$C_x = \left(A^T A\right)^{-1} A^T E(\vec{\mathbf{v}} \mathbf{v}^T) A \left(A^T A\right)^{-1}$$

$$C_x = \left(A^T A\right)^{-1} A^T \sigma^2 I A \left(A^T A\right)^{-1}$$

$$C_x = \sigma^2 \left(A^T A\right)^{-1} \left(A^T A\right) \left(A^T A\right)^{-1}$$

$$C_x = \sigma^2 \left(A^T A\right)^{-1}$$

$$C_x = \sigma^2 (A^T A)^{-1}$$

Expected covariance is σ^2 (a number) times cofactor matrix, compare to

$$\vec{v}_x = (A^T A)^{-1} A^T \vec{v}$$

$$\hat{x} = (A^T A)^{-1} A^T \vec{b}$$

Covariance or cofactor matrix

$$(A^T A)^{-1}$$

Interpretation of covariance

$$C_x = \sigma^2 (A^T A)^{-1}$$

Variance of measurements

Measurement errors may be independent (our assumption – why we could factor out constant σ^2)

We saw before that A is dependent on the “direction” from antenna to satellite – so it is a function of the geometry

But total effect, after Least Squares, can be non-diagonal.

Since A is function of geometry only, the cofactor matrix is also a function of geometry only.

$$(A^T A)^{-1}$$

Can use cofactor matrix to quantify the relative strength of the geometry.

Also relates measurement errors to expected errors in position estimations

In the old days,
before the full constellation of satellites was flying,
one had to plan – design – the GPS surveying sessions
based on the (changing) geometry.

A is therefore called the “design” matrix

Don't have to worry about this anymore
(most of the time).

Look at full covariance matrix

$$C_x = \sigma^2 (A^T A)^{-1}$$

$$C_x = \sigma^2 \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_x^2 & \sigma_{xy} & \sigma_{xz} & \sigma_{x\tau} \\ \sigma_{yx} & \sigma_y^2 & \sigma_{yz} & \sigma_{y\tau} \\ \sigma_{zx} & \sigma_{zy} & \sigma_z^2 & \sigma_{z\tau} \\ \sigma_{\tau x} & \sigma_{\tau y} & \sigma_{\tau z} & \sigma_\tau^2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\sigma_{ij} = \sigma_{ji}$$

Off diagonal elements indicate degree of correlation between parameters.

Correlation coefficient

$$\rho_{ij} = \frac{\sigma_{ij}}{\sqrt{\sigma_i^2 \sigma_j^2}}$$

Depends only on cofactor matrix

Independent of observation variance (the σ^2 's cancel out)

+1 perfect correlation – what does it mean – the two parameters behave practically identically (and are not independent?!).

0 – no correlation, independent

-1 perfect anti-correlation – practically opposites (and not independent?!).

So far all well and good –

but Cartesian coordinates are not the most useful.

We usually need estimates of horizontal and vertical positions and velocities on earth (ellipsoid?).

We also need error estimates on the position and velocity.

Since the errors are a function of the geometry only, one might expect that the vertical errors are larger than the horizontal errors.

How do we find the covariance / cofactor matrices in the local (north, east, up) coordinate system?

Have to transform the matrix
from its representation in one coordinate system
to its representation in another
using the rules of error propagation.

First how do we transform a small relative vector in
Cartesian coordinates (u,v,w)
to local topocentric coordinates (n,e,u)?

$$\Delta \vec{L} = G \Delta \vec{X}$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} \Delta n \\ \Delta e \\ \Delta u \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -\sin \phi \cos \lambda & -\sin \phi \sin \lambda & \cos \phi \\ -\sin \lambda & \cos \lambda & 0 \\ \cos \phi \cos \lambda & \cos \phi \sin \lambda & \sin \phi \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \Delta x \\ \Delta y \\ \Delta z \end{pmatrix}$$

Where ϕ and λ are the lat and long of the location
(usually on the surface of the earth) respectively

Errors (small magnitude vectors) transform the same way

$$\vec{v}_L = G\vec{v}_x$$

Why?

Using linearity

$$\Delta\vec{L} = G\Delta\vec{X}$$

$$G(\Delta\vec{X} + \vec{v}_x) = G\Delta\vec{X} + G\vec{v}_x = \Delta\vec{L} + G\vec{v}_x = \Delta\vec{L} + \vec{v}_L$$

Errors (small magnitude vectors) transform the same way

$$\vec{v}_L = G\vec{v}_x$$

Now – how does the covariance

$$C = E(\vec{v}\vec{v}^T)$$

Transform?

Plug in – get

“law of propagation of errors”

law of propagation of errors

$$C_L = E(\vec{v}_L \vec{v}_L^T)$$

$$C_L = E(G\vec{v}_x (G\vec{v}_x)^T)$$

$$C_L = E(G\vec{v}_x \vec{v}_x^T G^T)$$

$$C_L = GE(\vec{v}_x \vec{v}_x^T)G^T$$

$$C_L = GC_x G^T$$

(does this look familiar?)

law of propagation of errors

$$C_L = E(\vec{v}_L \vec{v}_L^T)$$

$$C_L = E\left(G \vec{v}_x (G \vec{v}_x)^T\right)$$

$$C_L = E\left(G \vec{v}_x \vec{v}_x^T G^T\right)$$

$$C_L = G E\left(\vec{v}_x \vec{v}_x^T\right) G^T$$

$$C_L = G C_x G^T$$

(does this look familiar?)

(it better -- transforming tensors!!)

This is a general result for affine transformations
(multiplication of a column vector by any rectangular
matrix)

An affine transformation is any transformation that preserves

collinearity
(i.e., all points lying on a line initially still lie on a line after transformation)

and ratios of distances
(e.g., the midpoint of a line segment remains the midpoint after transformation).

Geometric contraction, expansion, dilation, reflection, rotation, shear, similarity transformations, spiral similarities, and translation

are all affine transformations,
as are their combinations.



In general, an affine transformation is a composition of rotations, translations, dilations, and shears.

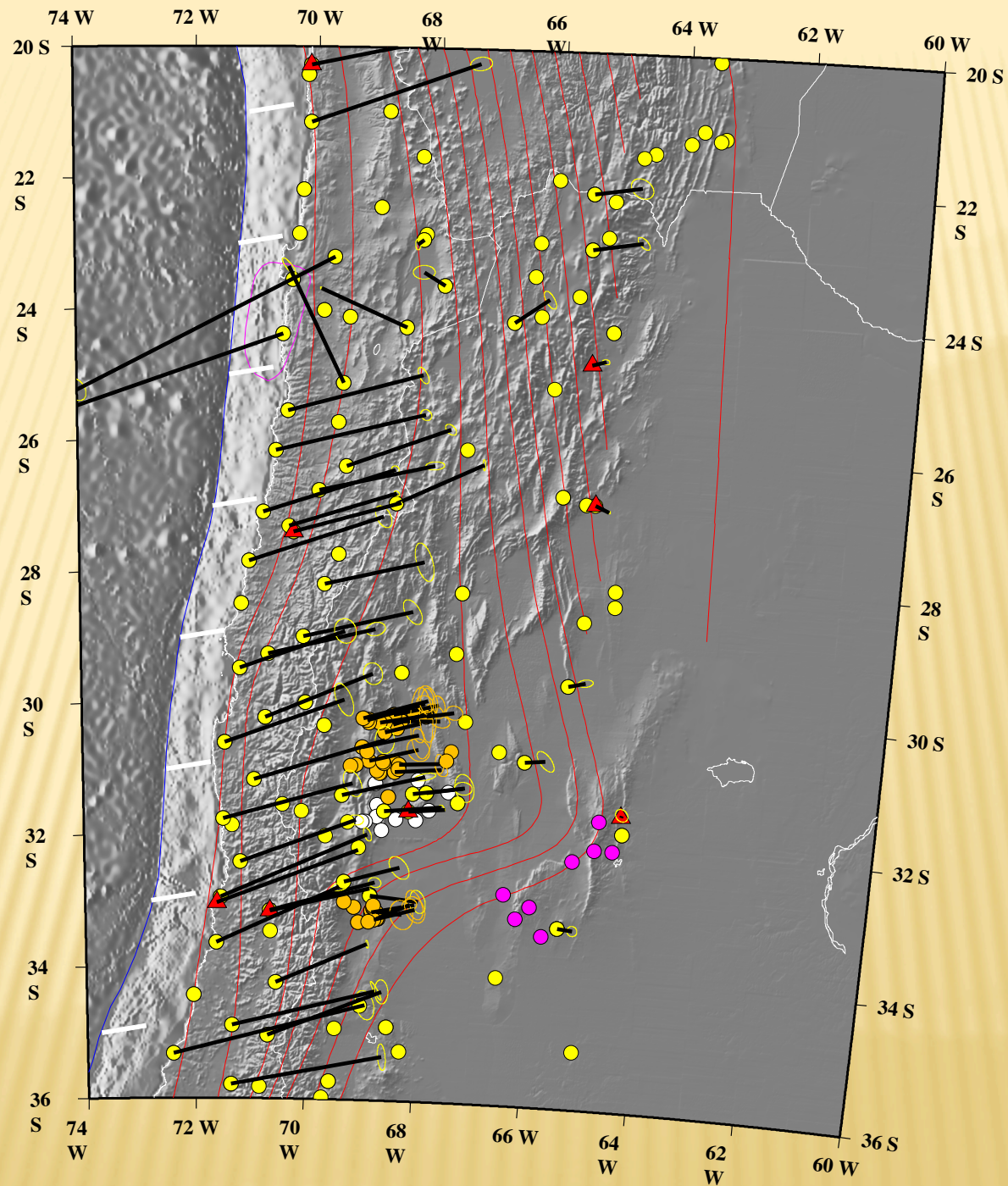
While an affine transformation preserves *proportions* on lines, it does not necessarily preserve angles or lengths.

Look at full covariance matrix
(actually only the spatial part)

$$C_x = \sigma^2 (A^T A)^{-1}$$

$$C_L = \sigma^2 \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_n^2 & \sigma_{ne} & \sigma_{nh} \\ \sigma_{en} & \sigma_e^2 & \sigma_{eh} \\ \sigma_{hn} & \sigma_{he} & \sigma_h^2 \end{pmatrix}$$

Can use this to plot error ellipses on a map (horizontal plane).



Error estimators ~

Remember the expression for the RMS in 2-D from before

$$DRMS = \left(\sigma_x^2 + \sigma_y^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

We can now apply this to the covariance matrix

Error estimates called “dilution of Precision” – DOP – are defined in terms of the diagonal elements of the covariance matrix

$$GDOP = \left(\sigma_n^2 + \sigma_e^2 + \sigma_h^2 + \sigma_\tau^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$PDOP = \left(\sigma_n^2 + \sigma_e^2 + \sigma_h^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$HDOP = \left(\sigma_n^2 + \sigma_e^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$VDOP = \sigma_h$$

$$TDOP = \sigma_\tau$$

G – geometric, P – position, H – horizontal, V – vertical,
T – time

The DOPs map the errors of the observations
(represented/quantified statistically by the
standard deviations)

Into the parameter estimate errors

$$\sigma GDOP = \sigma \left(\sigma_n^2 + \sigma_e^2 + \sigma_h^2 + \sigma_\tau^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$\sigma PDOP = \sigma \left(\sigma_n^2 + \sigma_e^2 + \sigma_h^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$\sigma HDOP = \sigma \left(\sigma_n^2 + \sigma_e^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$\sigma VDOP = \sigma \sigma_h$$

$$\sigma TDOP = \sigma \sigma_\tau$$

So for a σ of 1 m and an χ -DOP of 5, for example,
errors in the position χ
(where χ is one of G, P, H, V, T)
Would be $5\sigma \approx 5$ m

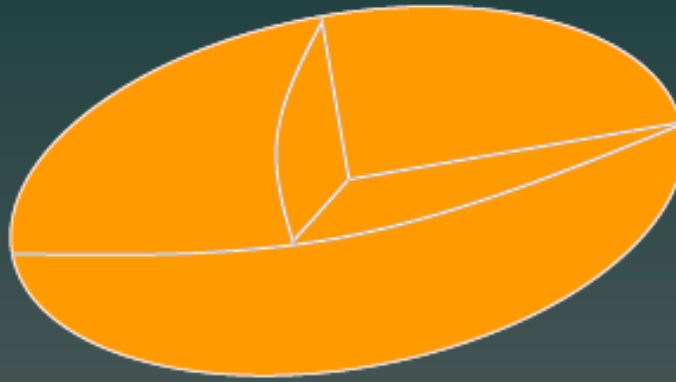
“Good” geometry gives ‘small’ DOP

“Bad” geometry gives ‘large’ DOP

(it is relative, but $PDOP > 5$ is considered poor)

3-D Accuracy Terms

- Error Ellipsoid



- 19.9% of positions will lie inside this “error ellipsoid”

In 2-D

There is a 40% chance of being inside the $1\text{-}\sigma$ error ellipse (compared to 68% in 1-D)

Normally show 95% confidence ellipses, is $2.54\ \sigma$ in 2-D

(is only 2σ in 1-D)
Can extend to 3-D

Another method of estimating location

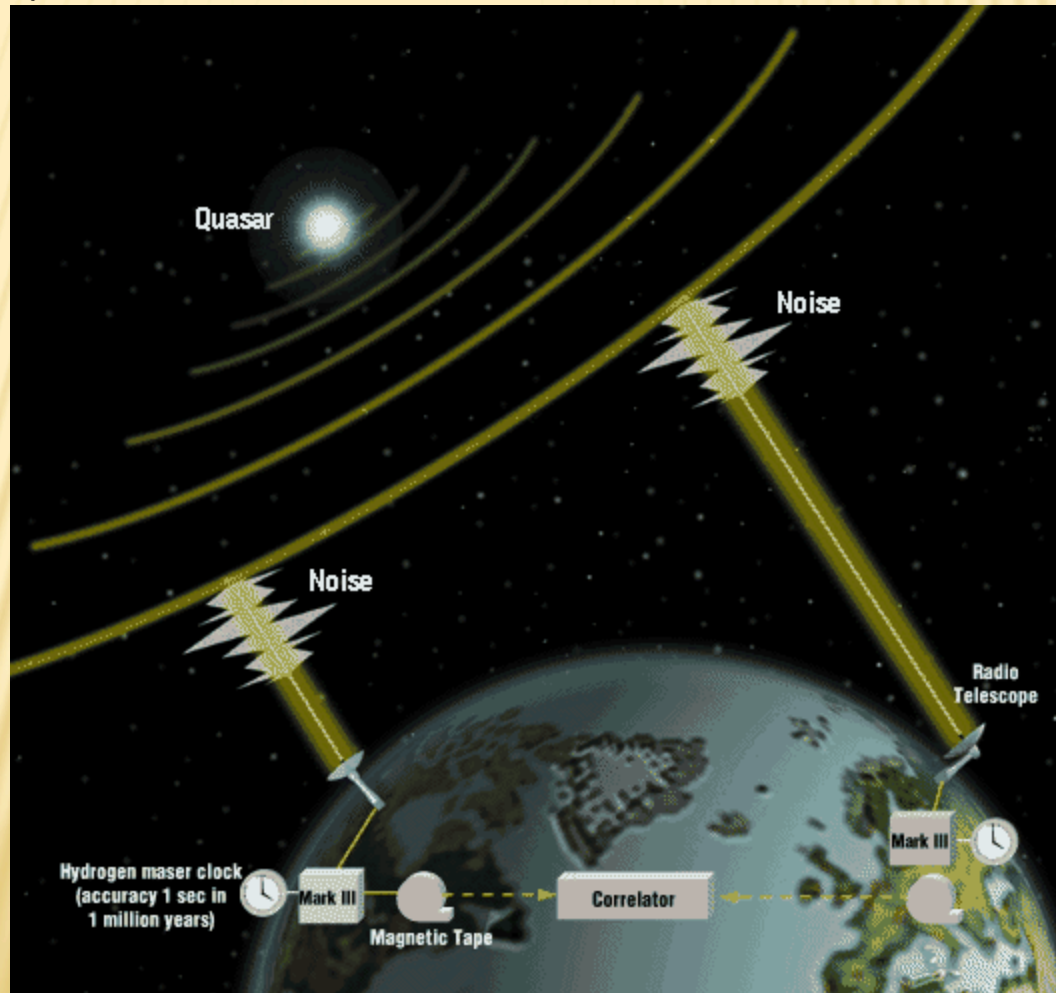
Phase comparison/Interferometer

- VLBI

- GPS-Carrier Phase Observable

VLBI

Uses techniques/physics similar to GPS but with natural sources
(in same frequency band and suffers from similar errors)



Correlate signal at two (or more) sites to find time shift

Need more than 1 receiver.

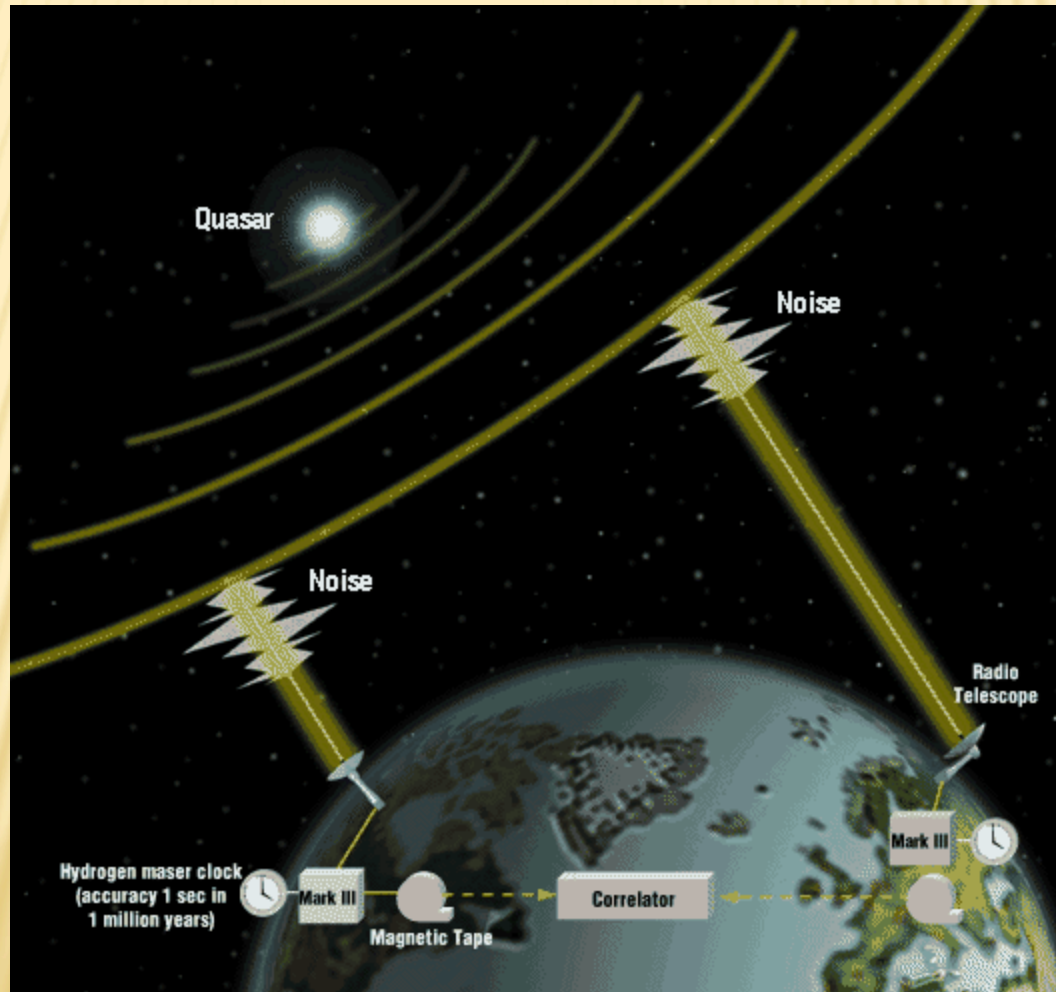
Differential (difference) method

(similar to PRN correlation with GPS codes

or

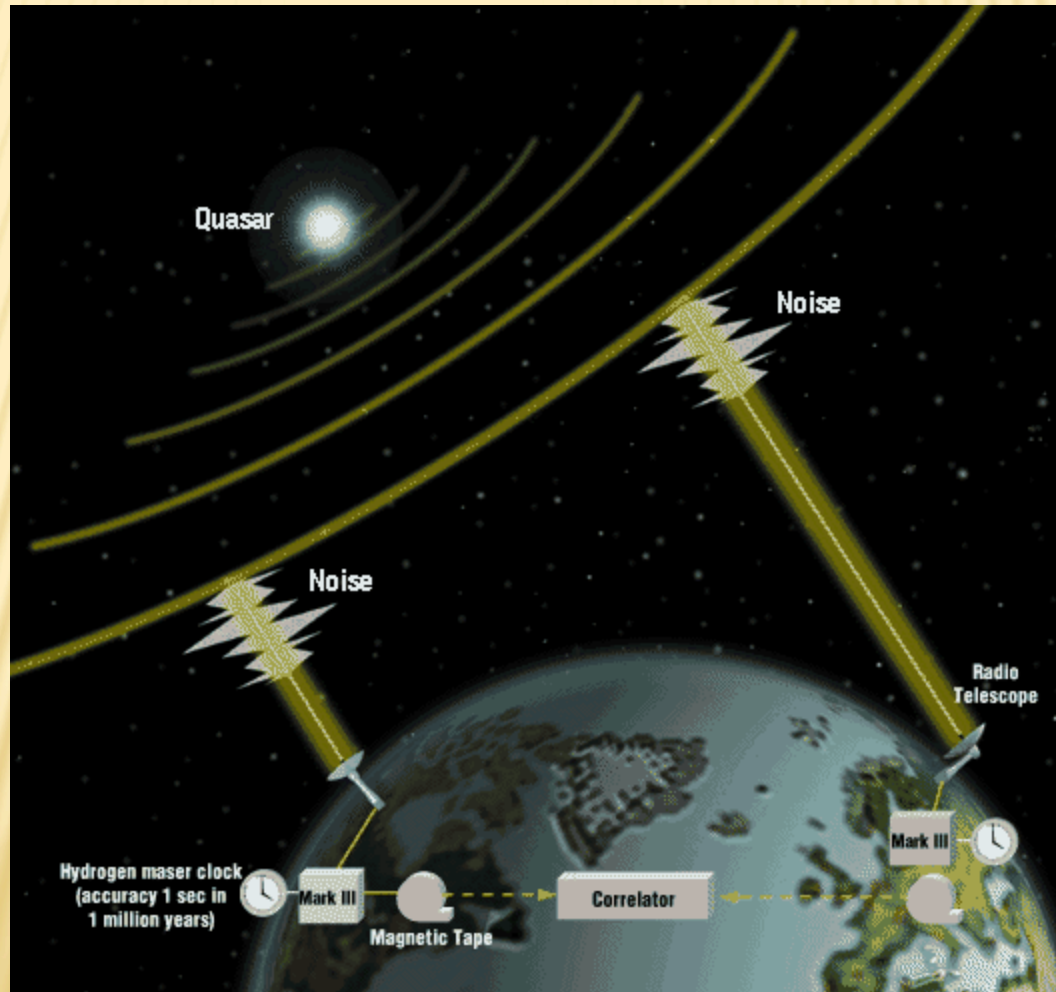
Aligning two seismograms that are almost same but have time shift)

Assume you are receiving a plane wave from a distant quasar



Two radio antennas observe signal from quasar simultaneously.

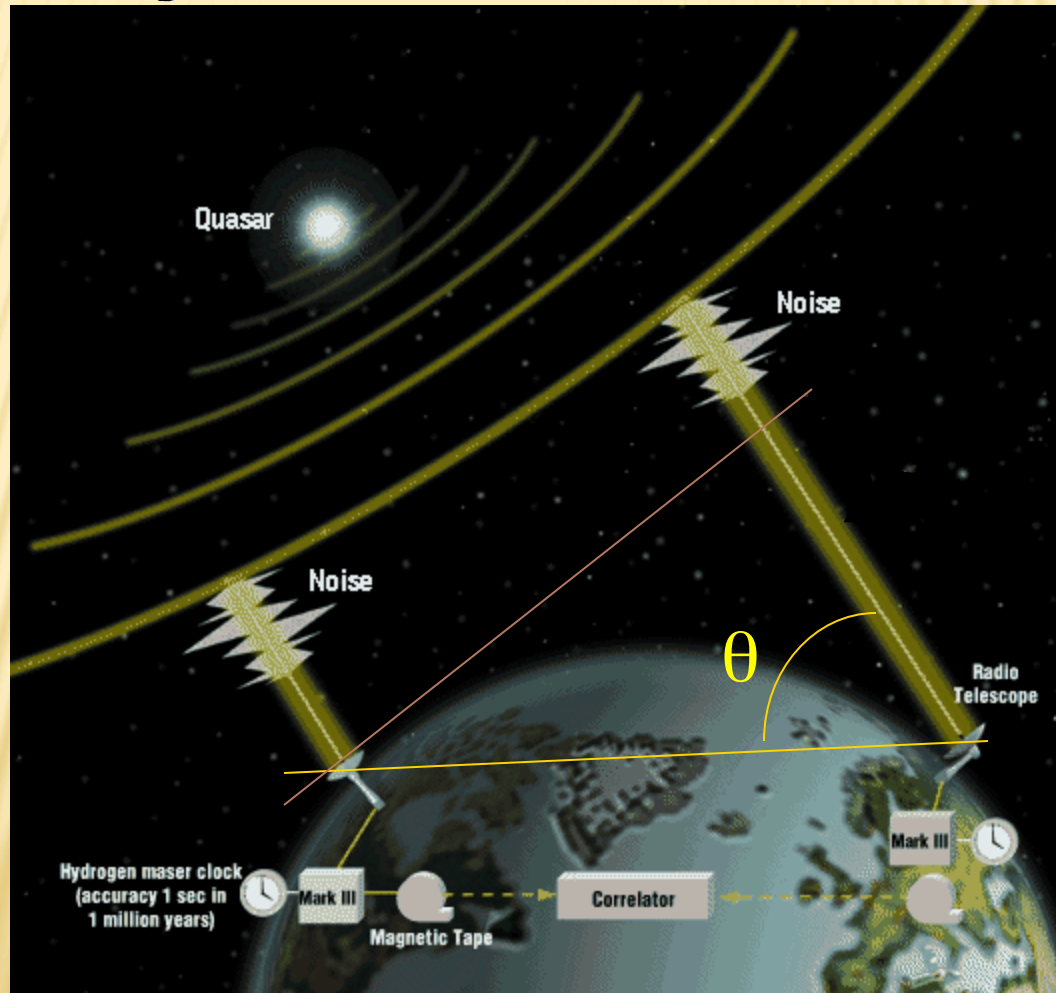
The signal arrives at the two antennae at different times



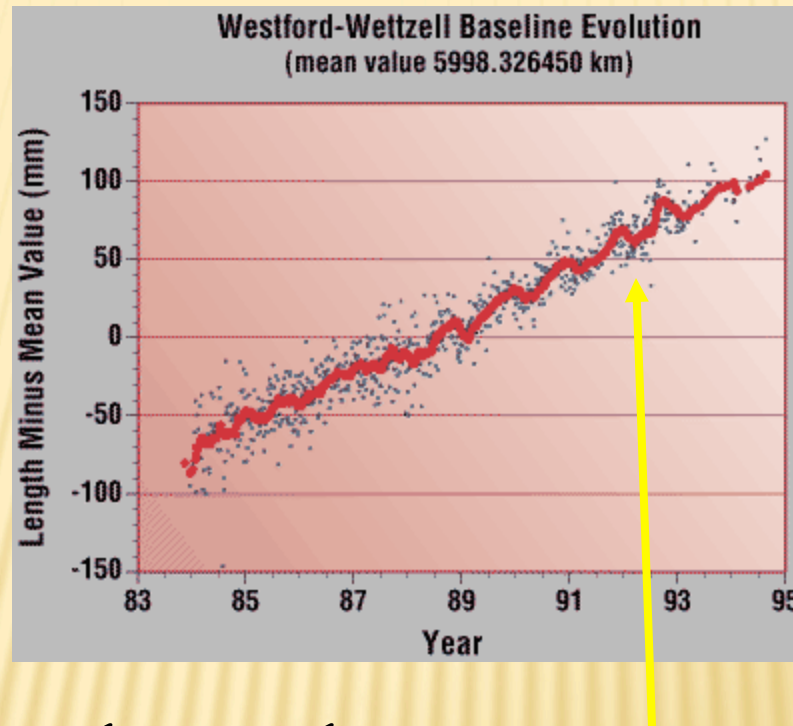
The distance or baseline length b between the two antennas can be defined as:

$$b * \cos(\theta) \approx c * \Delta T$$

where θ is the angle between the baseline and the quasar



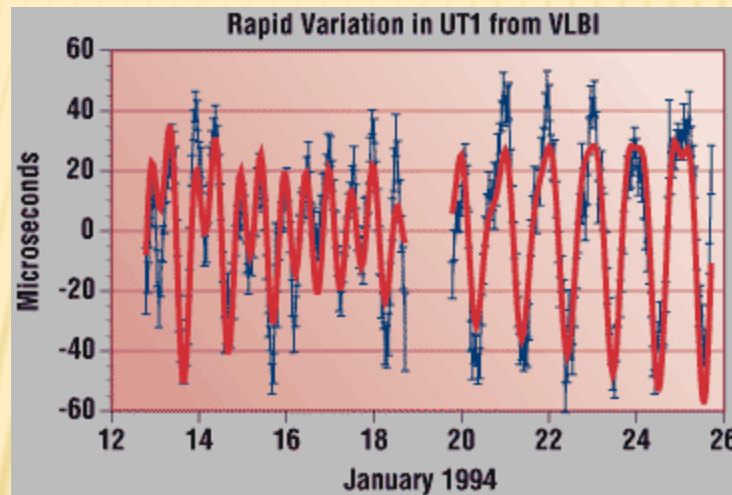
Baseline length Massachusetts to Germany



What is this variation?

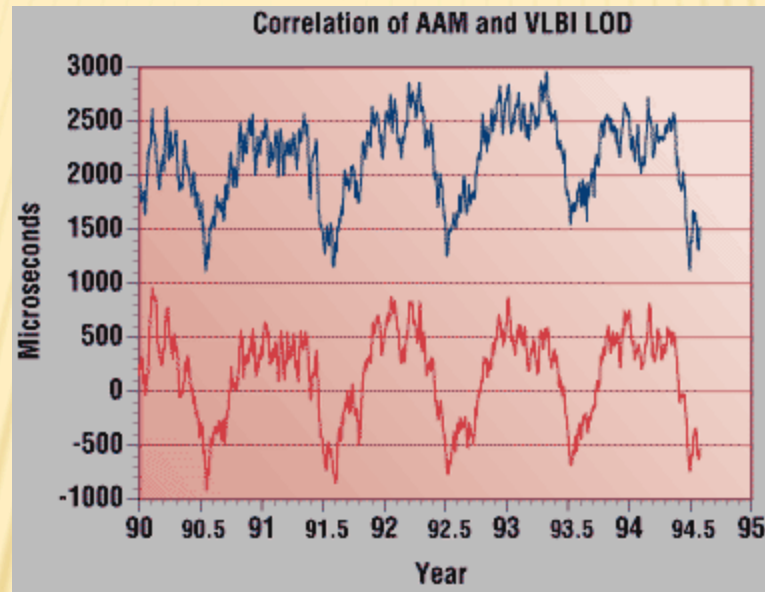
Seasonal variation, geophysical phenomena, modeling problems?

Short period (hours/days) variations in LOD

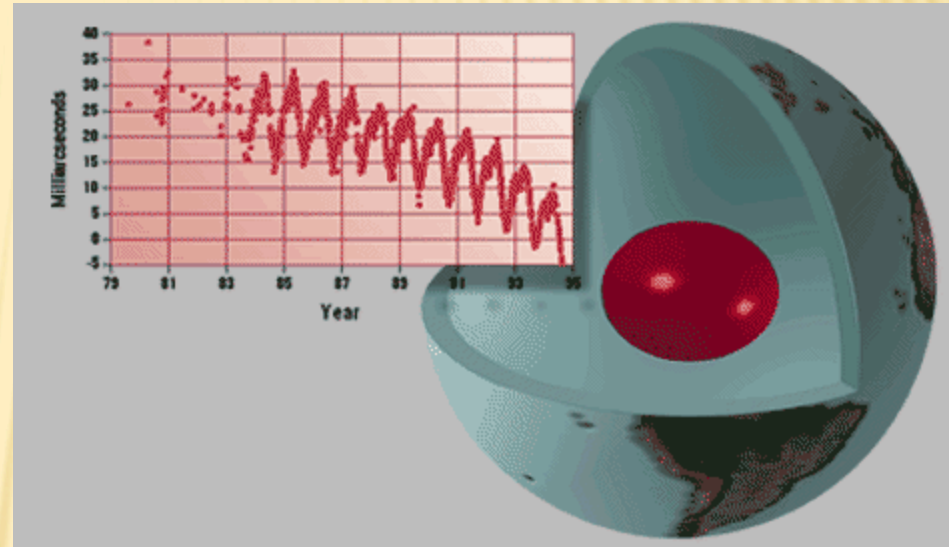
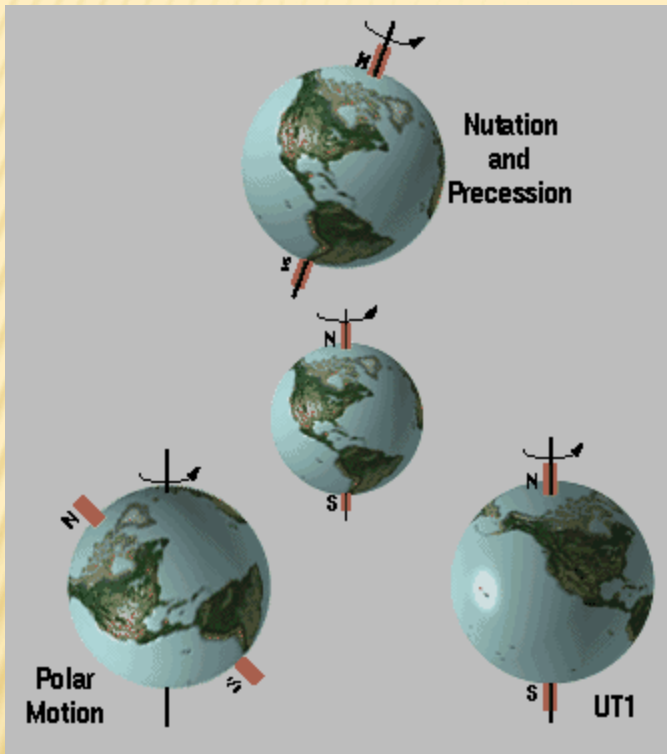


Mostly from ocean tides and currents

Correlation of Atmospheric Angular Momentum with (longer period – weeks/months) variations in LOD.

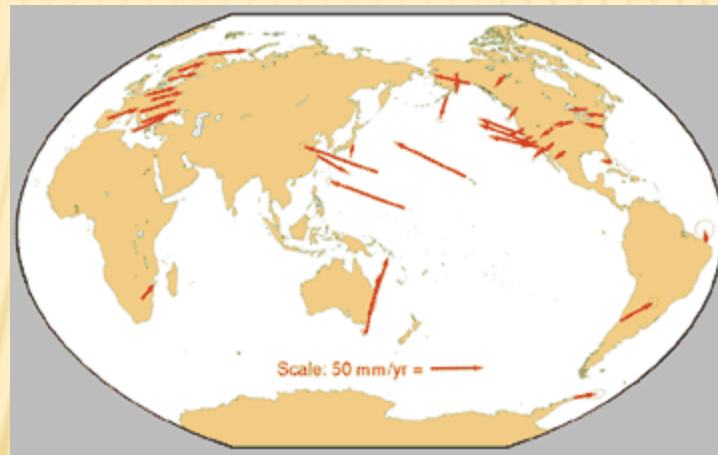


(longer term ~ months/years/...) changes in LOD and EOP



Exchange angular momentum between large earth structures (eg. core!) and Moon, Sun.

Plate velocities



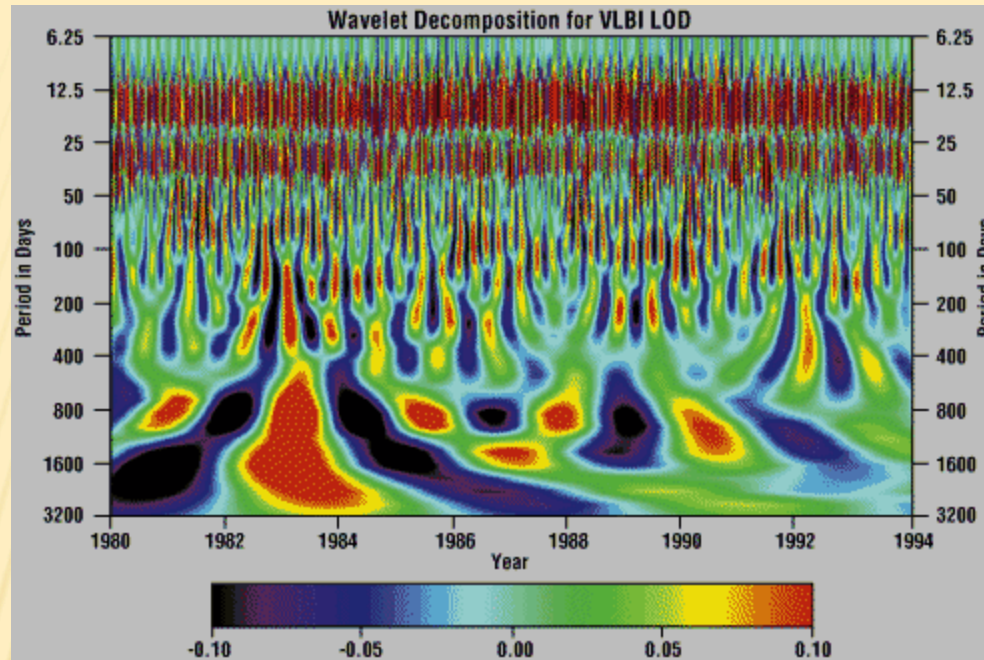


VLBI



Not the most portable or inexpensive system –
But best definition of inertial reference frame external to
earth.

Use to measure changes in LOD and EOP due to
gravitational forces and redistribution of angular
momentum.



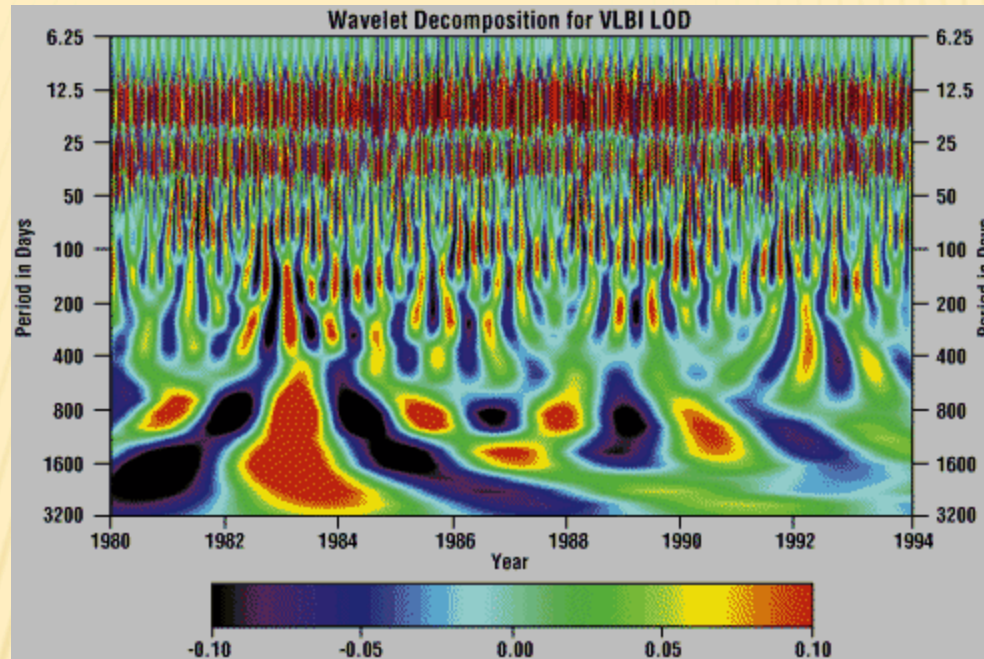
vertical cut ~ spectral decomposition LOD at that instant.

horizontal cut ~ how strength of component varies with time.

Combining both ~ 2-D view dynamic nature of LOD.

dark red ~
peaks

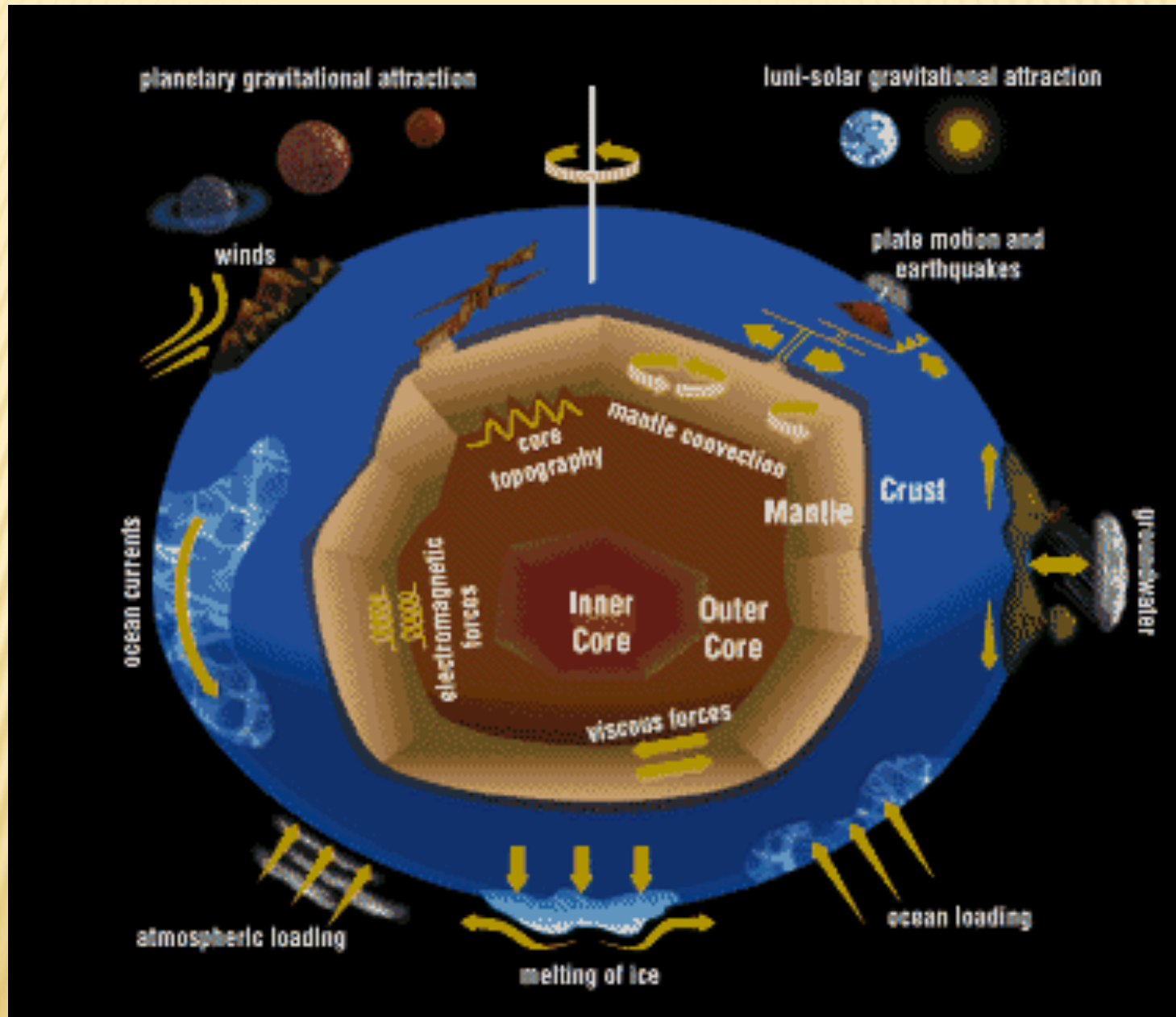
dark blue ~
troughs.



dominant features

monthly and half-monthly lunar tides, the ~800-day quasi-biennial oscillation, and the ~1600-day El Niño (dark red structure in 1983). Yearly and half-yearly seasonal excitations caused by meteorological variations have been removed for clarity.

Factors affecting EOP



Great book –

Longitude, by Dava Sobel,

describes one of the first great scientific competitions--
to provide ship captains with their position at sea.

This was after the loss of two thousand men in 1707,
when British warships ran aground entering the English
Channel.

The competition was between the Astronomers Royal
(fat cats), using distance to the moon and its angle with
the stars, and a man named John Harrison (unknown
commoner), who made clocks.

The accuracy demanded in the 18th century was a modest $1/2$ degree in longitude.

The earth rotates that much in two minutes.

For a six-week voyage this allows a clock error of three seconds per day.

Newton recommended the moon, and a German named Mayer won 3000 English pounds for his lunar tables. Even Euler got 300 for providing the right equations.

But lunar angles had to be measured, on a rolling ship at sea, within 1.5 minutes of arc.

The big prize was practically in sight for the lunar method, when Harrison came from nowhere and built clocks that could do better.

(You can see the clocks at Greenwich

Competing in the long trip to Jamaica, Harrison's clock lost only five seconds and eventually (the fat cats fought it) won the prize.

The modern version of this same competition was between VLBI and GPS.

Very Long Baseline Interferometry uses “God’s satellites,” the distant quasars.

The clock at the receiver has to be very accurate and expensive.

The equipment can be moved (on a flatbed truck), but it is certainly not handheld.

There are valuable applications of VLBI, but it is GPS that will appear everywhere.

GPS is perhaps the second most important military contribution to civilian science, after the Internet.

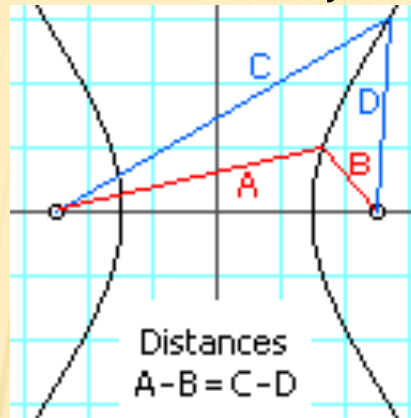
The key is the atomic clock in the satellite, designed by university physicists to confirm Einstein's prediction of the gravitational red shift.

Using pseudo-range, the receiver solves a nonlinear problem in geometry.

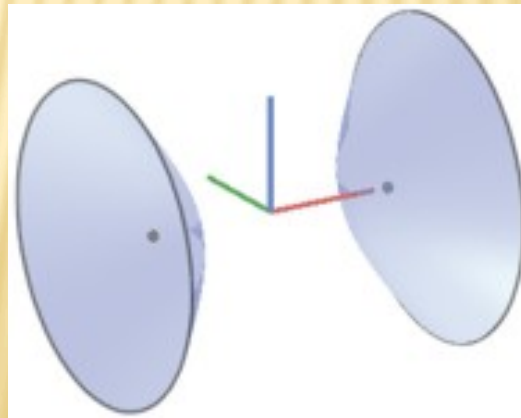
What it knows is the the distance d_{ij} between itself and the satellites.

What if we know the difference in arrival times of the same signal at two or more receivers.

In a plane (2-D), when we know the difference d_{12} between the distances to two points, the receiver is located on a hyperbola.



In space (3-D) this becomes a hyperboloid.



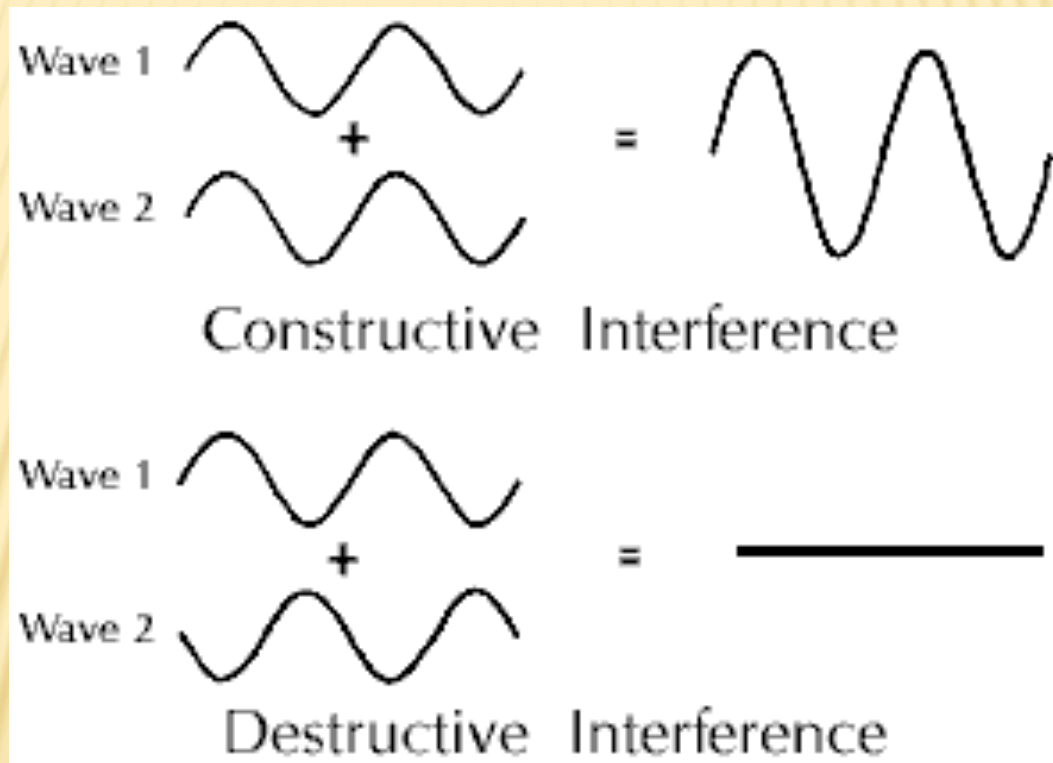
Then the receiver lies at the intersection of three hyperboloids, determined by d_{12} , d_{13} , and d_{14} .

Two hyperboloids are likely to intersect in a simple closed curve.

The third probably cuts that curve at two points. But again, one point is near the earth and the other is far away.

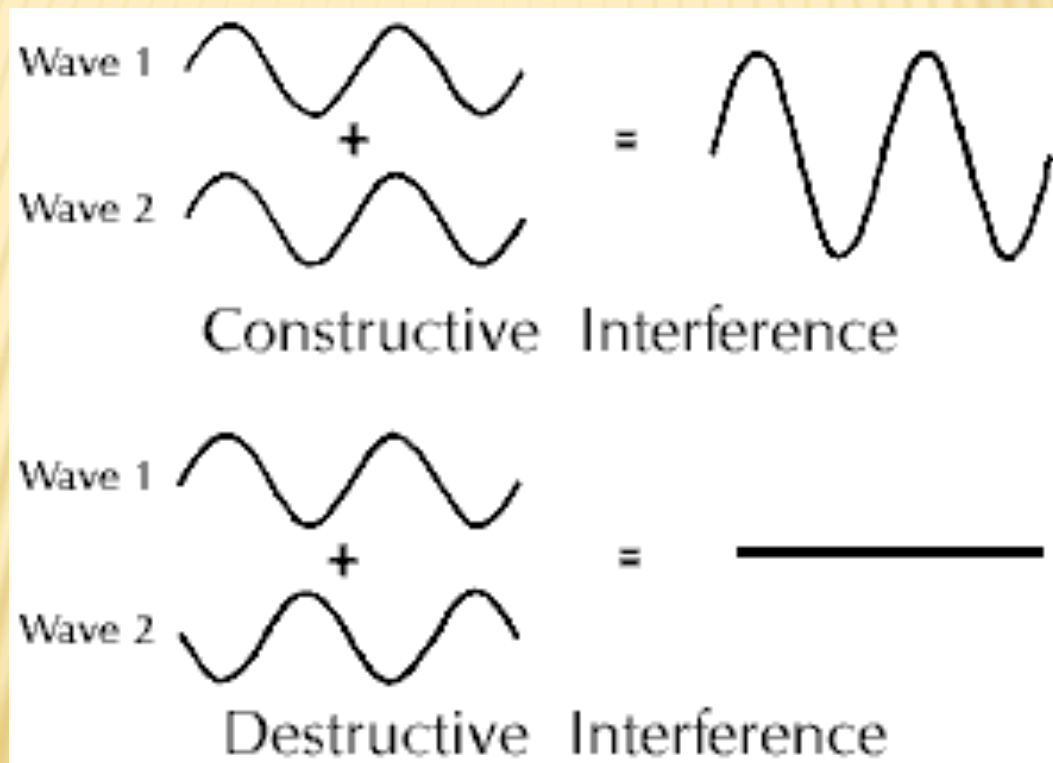
Interferometer

Based on interference of waves



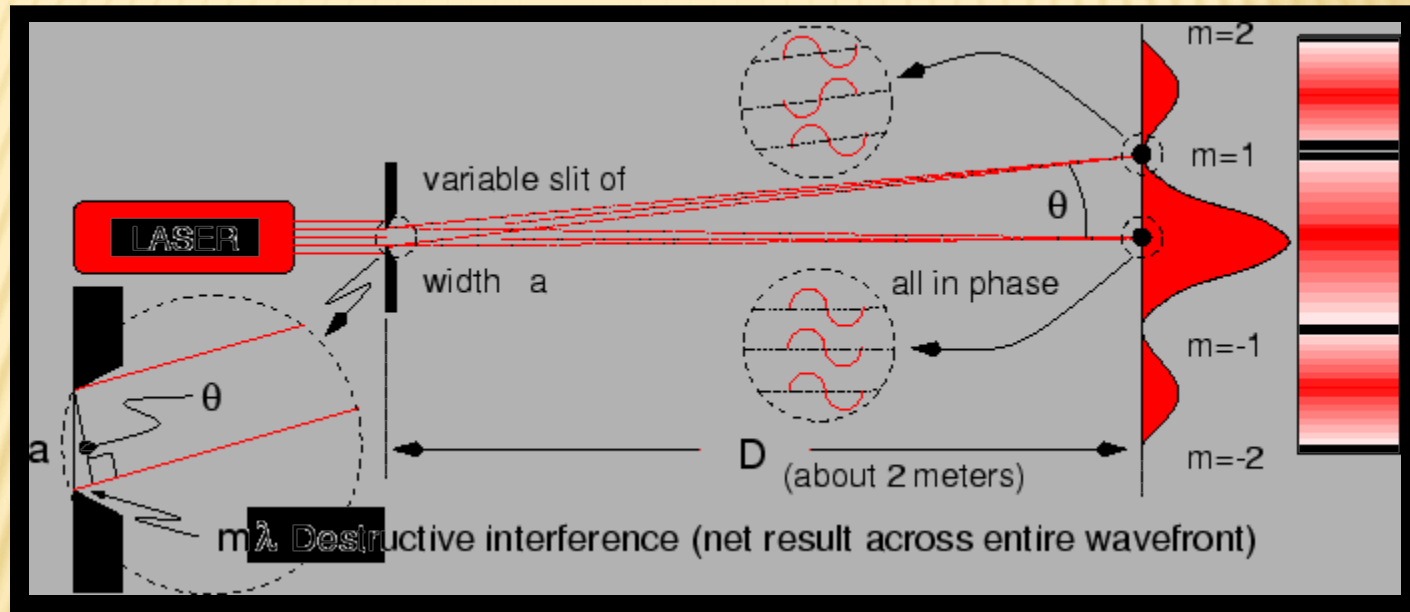
How to make principle of interference useful?

i.e. how does one get relative phase difference to vary,
so the interference varies?



Interference from single slit

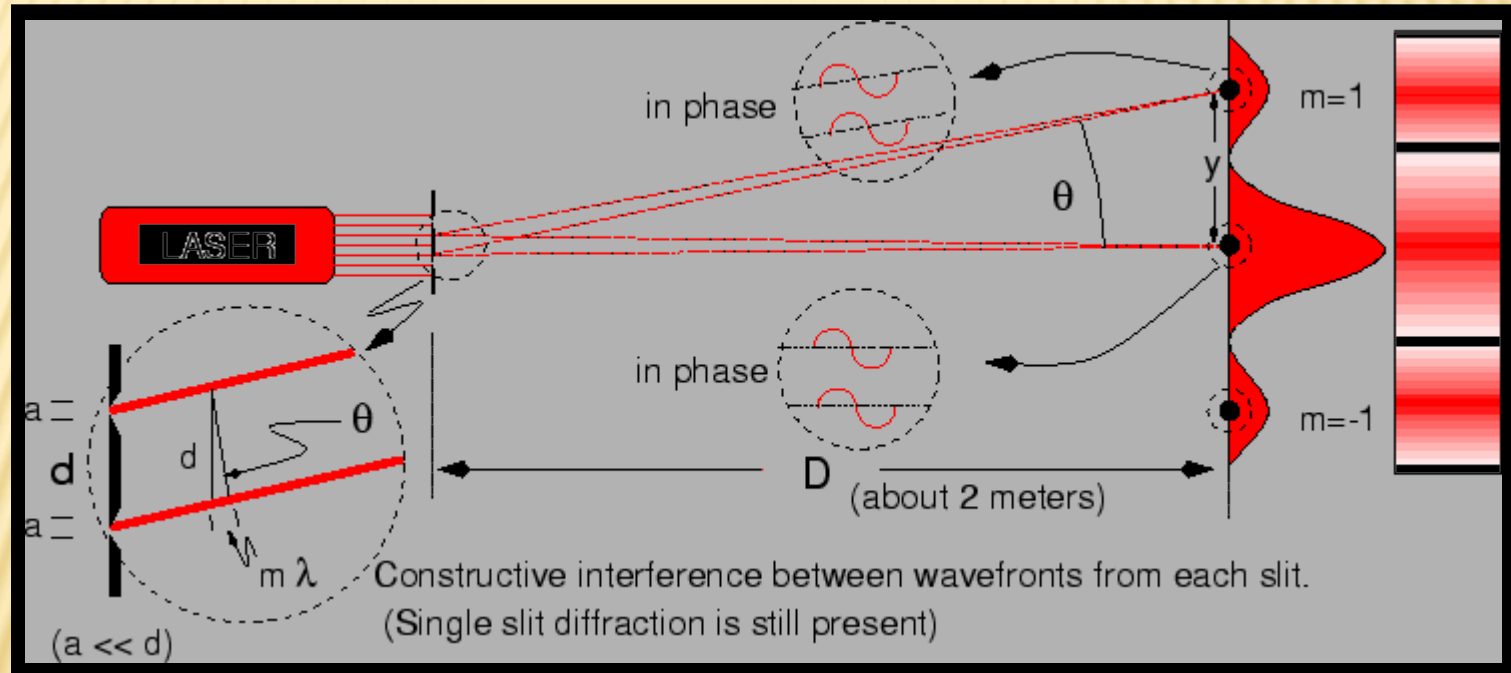
As move across screen get phase difference from different lengths of paths through slits



Makes "fringes"
As phase goes through change of 2π

Interference from double (multiple) slit

Similar for multi-slits, but now interference is between the waves leaving each slit



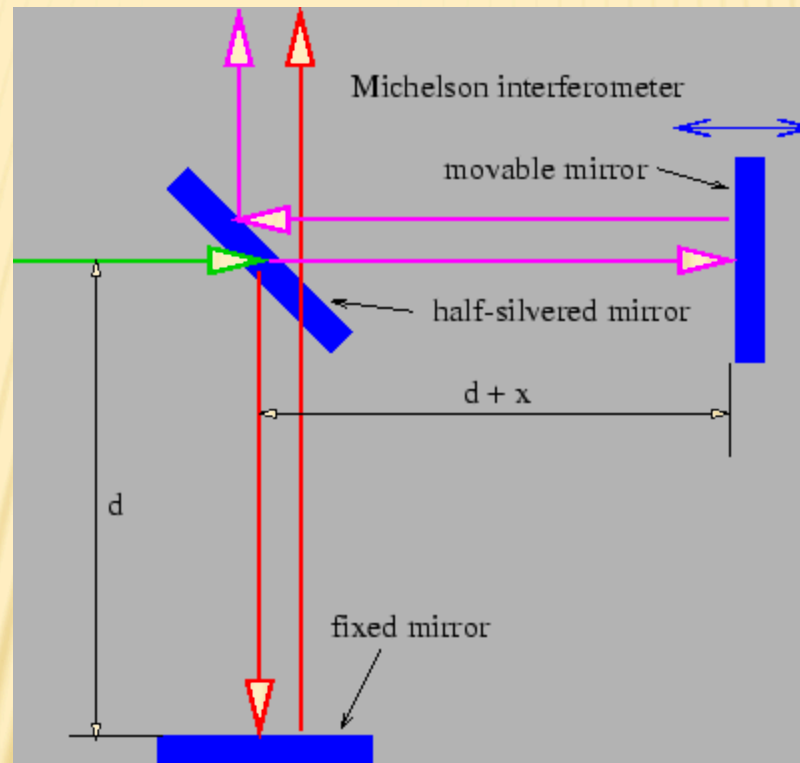
Light going through slits has to be “coherent”
(does not work with “white” light)

The phase change comes from
the change in geometric length
between the two “rays”

(change in length of $1/2$ wavelength causes π change in
phase – and destructive interference)

Michelson Interferometer

Make two paths from same source
(for coherence, can't do with white light)



Can change geometric path length with movable mirror.
Get interference fringes when recombine.

Definition of vector norms

Vector Norms

L^2 (Euclidean) norm :

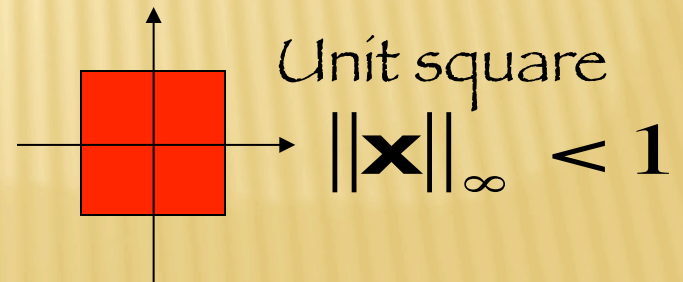
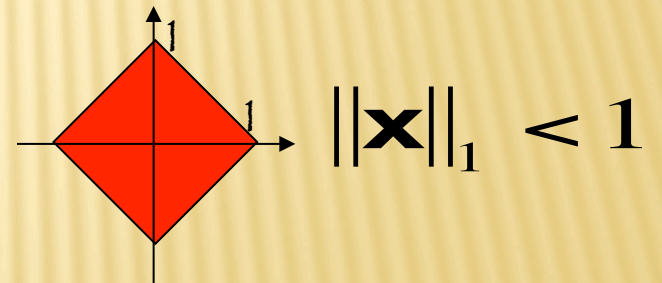
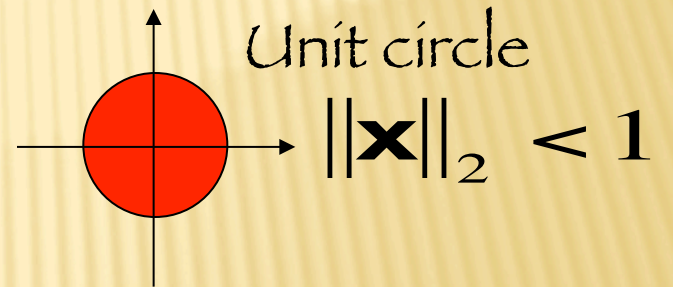
$$\|\mathbf{x}\|_2 = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n |x_i|^2}$$

L^1 norm :

$$\|\mathbf{x}\|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^n |x_i|$$

∞ or “max” norm :

$$\|\mathbf{x}\|_\infty = \max_i |x_i|$$



Interferometry



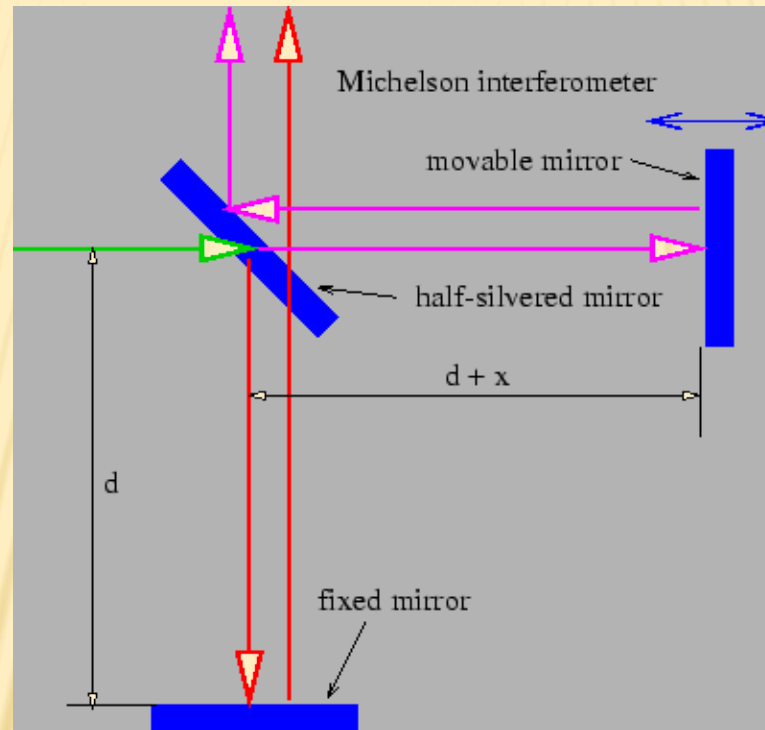
The phase change comes from the change in distance
(#wavelengths) between the two “rays”

(at constant velocity a) change geometric distance
traveled

(change in length of $1/2$ wavelength causes π change in
phase – and destructive interference)

Michelson Interferometer

Make two paths from same source
(for coherence, can do with white light!)

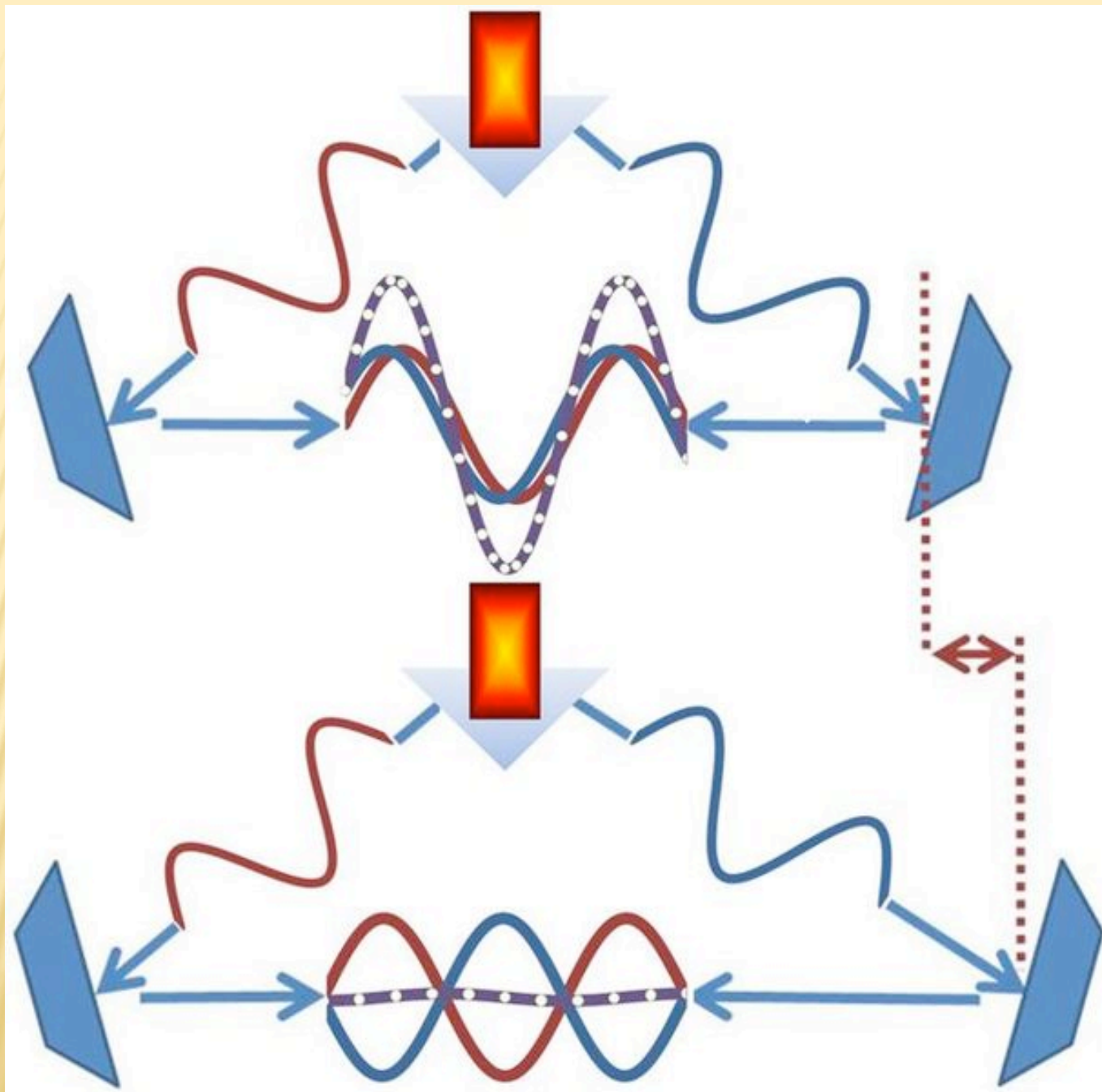


Can change geometric path length with movable mirror
(eg mount on speaker).
Get interference “fringes” when recombine.

Note from animation

Can “integrate” (count continuously) the fringes and see how they change,

but there is a certain ambiguity
(each set of fringes looks same as others)
[no “reference” fringe]



Another way to get phase change

Change the “optical path length” (e.g. by changing velocity)

What counts is number of “cycles” (wavelengths),
not geometric distance.

Change optical path length by changing index of refraction along path

(this is what happens to GPS in ionosphere and troposphere

– error for crustal motion,

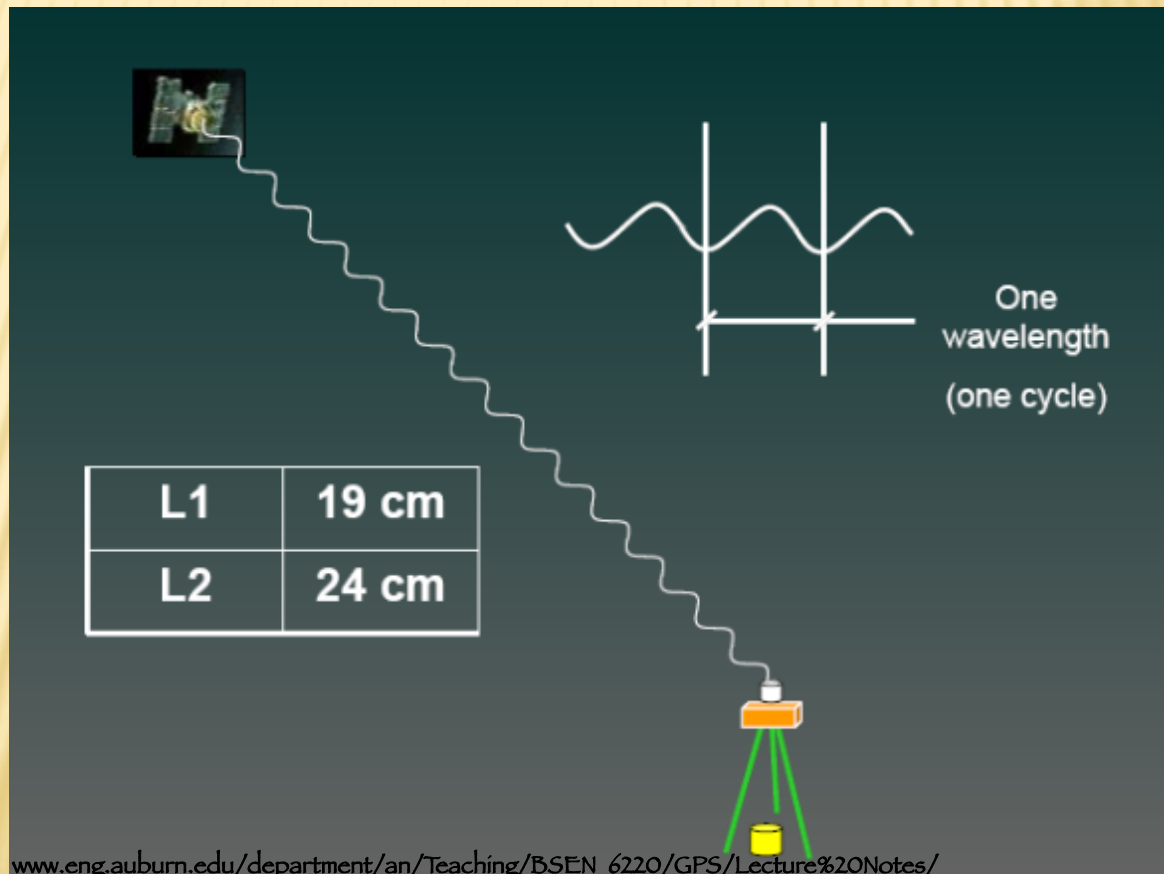
signal for ionospheric physics, weather, etc.)

GPS Carrier (beat) phase observable

(The word “beat” is usually not included in the “carrier phase observable” name, which can cause some [major] confusion)

The key is to count radio wavelengths between satellites and receiver.

This number (the phase) is an integer plus a fraction.



www.eng.auburn.edu/department/an/Teaching/BSEN_6220/GPS/Lecture%20Notes/Carrier_Phase_GPS.pdf

Phase measurements

One can convert phase to distance by multiplying the phase by the wavelength

(so phase measurements are another way to measure the distance from the satellite to the receiver – another "pseudo" distance measurement)

The wavelengths of the carrier waves are very short –

Approximately
19cm for L1 and
24cm for L2 –

compared to the C/A (length of one "chip" at ~1MHz is ~300m) and P code chip lengths.

Phase measurements

Phase can be measured to about 1% of λ (3.6°)

This gives a precision of

~2 mm for L1

~2.4 mm for L2

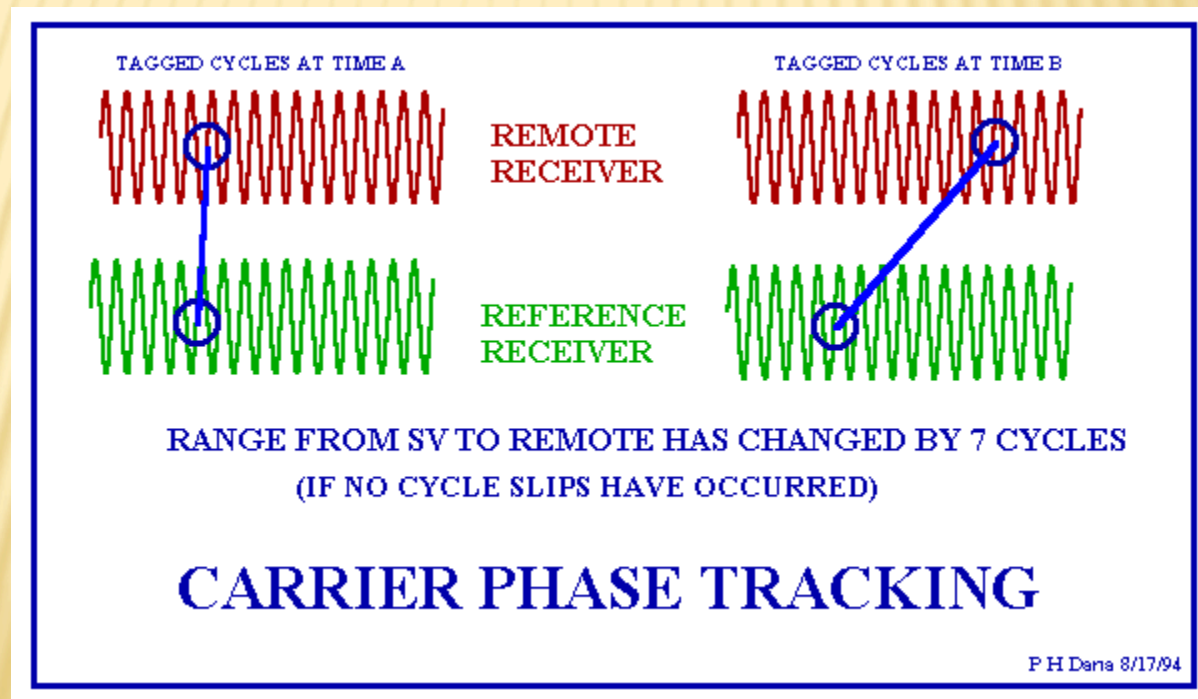
Phase measurements

this means that carrier phase can be measured to
millimeter precision

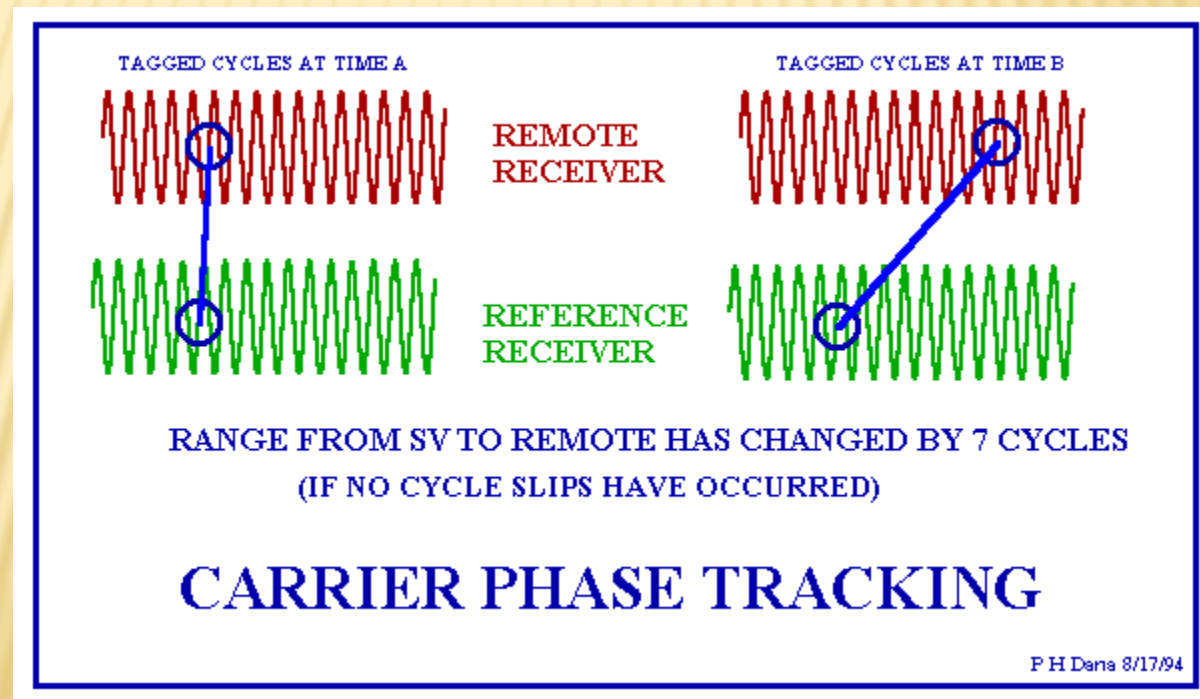
compared with a few meters for C/A code measurements
(but to get this you really need WAAS), and several
decimeters for P code measurements.

Tracking carrier phase signals, however, provides no time of transmission information.

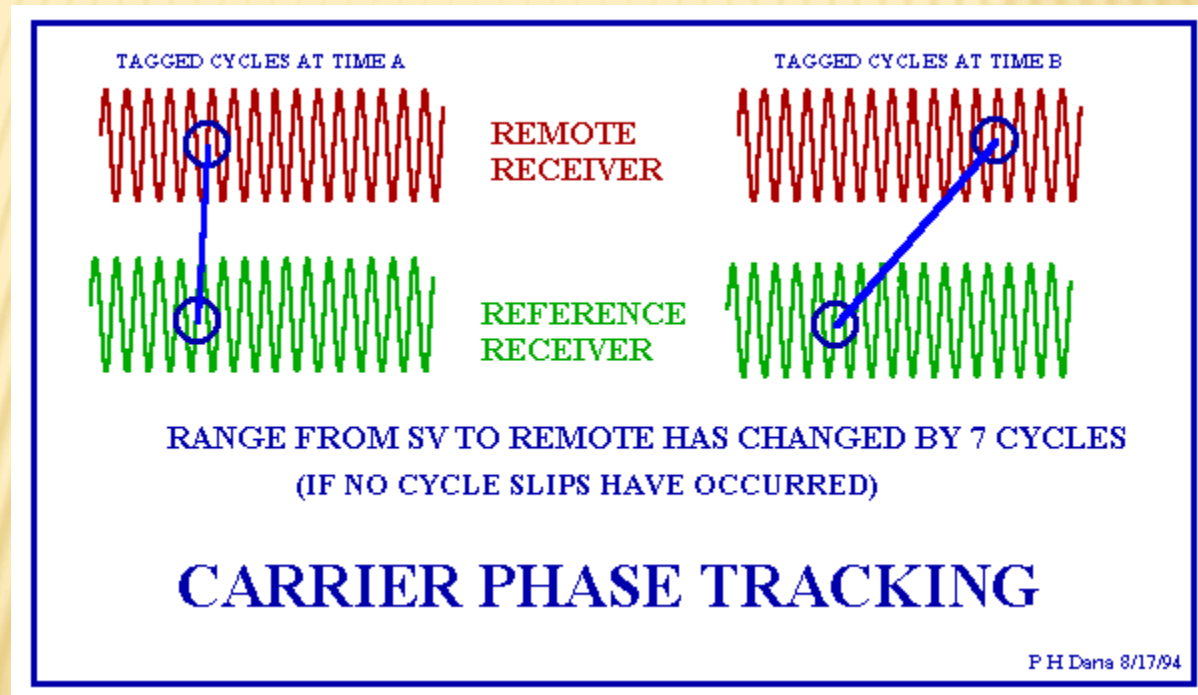
The carrier signals, while modulated with time tagged binary codes, carry no time-tags that distinguish one cycle from another.



The measurements used in carrier phase tracking are differences in carrier phase cycles and fractions of cycles over time.



Unfortunately
phase measurement is "ambiguous" as it cannot
discriminate one (either L1 or L2) cycle from another
(they all "look" the same).



In other words, time-of-transmission information for the signal cannot be imprinted onto the carrier wave as is done using PRN codes

(this would be possible only if the PRN code frequency was the same as the carrier wave, rather than 154 or 120 times lower – and longer – in the case of the P code, and 1540 or 1200 times lower – and longer – for the C/A code).

The basic phase measurement is therefore in the range

0° to 360°

(or 0 to 2π)

Phase measurements review:

Phase measurement PRECISE

But AMBIGUOUS

Another complication ~

Phase measurements have to be corrected for
propagation effects

(several to 10' s of meters) to benefit from the increased
precision

The key is to count radio wavelengths between satellites and receiver.

This number (the phase) is an integer plus a fraction.

~~~~~

The integer part (called the ambiguity) is the tricky problem.

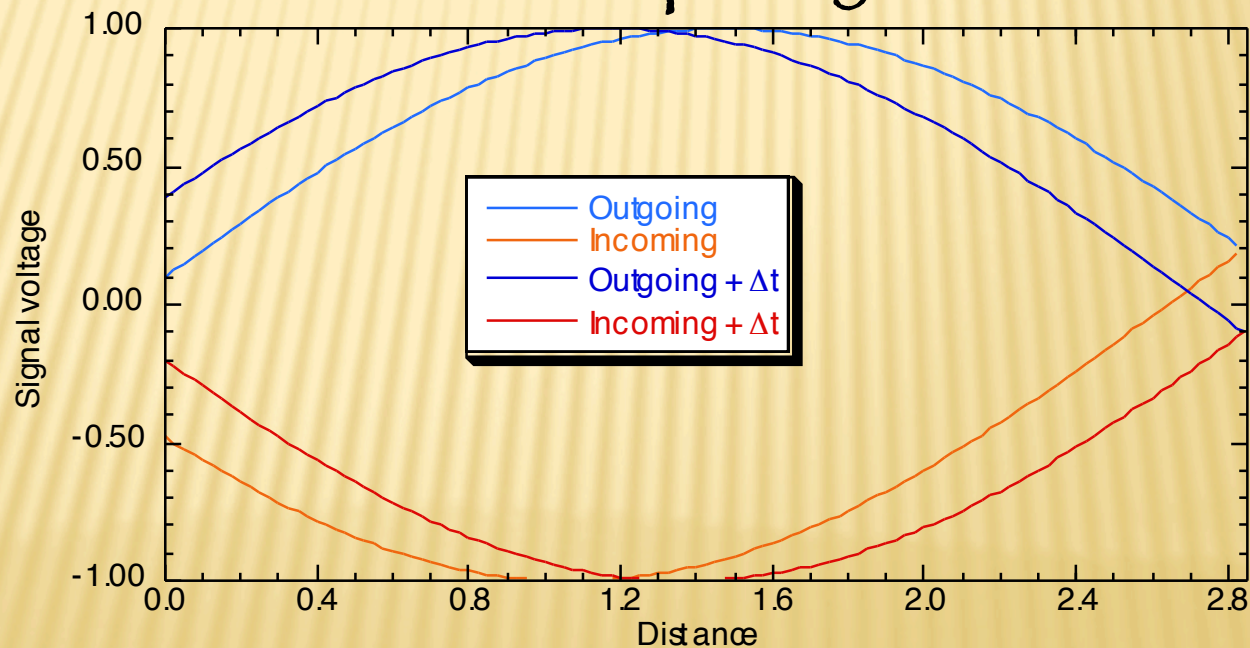
It has to be right, because one missing wavelength means an error of 19 cm or 24 cm (the satellite transmits on two frequencies).



Difference of phase measurement at two points less than one wave length apart.

(stays constant with time and depends on distance [for stationary source])

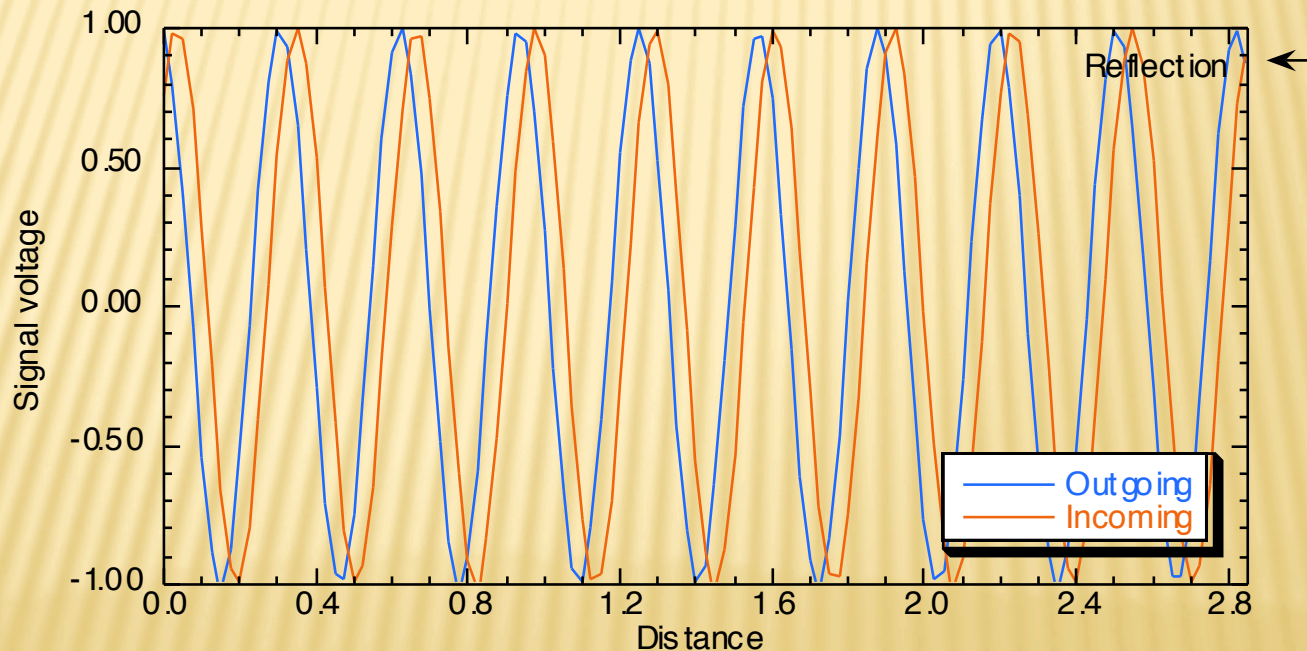
Low frequency



Higher frequency.

Phase difference still says something about distance but  
have to know number of cycles?

How to do this?





Note that the phase is not constant for fixed positions of the transmitter and receiver.

The rate of phase change, and therefore the frequency, is constant in this case.

(frequency is rate of change of phase [when the rate of change of phase is not constant - instantaneous frequency is the instantaneous rate of change of phase])

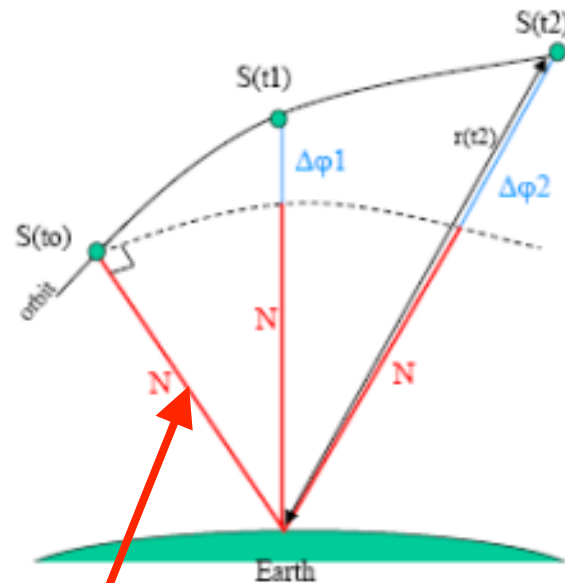
Moving transmitters and receivers cause the rate of phase change to vary, and therefore the frequency to vary --- a Doppler shift.



How to use the phase.  
We can keep track of phase once we lock onto it.

## Phase measurements

- When a satellite is locked (at  $t_0$ ), the GPS receiver starts tracking the incoming phase
- It counts the (real) number of phases as a function of time =  $\Delta\varphi(t)$
- But the initial number of phases  $N$  at  $t_0$  is unknown...
- However, if no loss of lock,  $N$  is constant over an orbit arc



But can't tell how many whole cycles/wavelengths there are between satellite and receiver – called the (integer) ambiguity.

Determining this integer is like swimming laps in a pool

after an hour, the fractional part is obvious, but it is easy to forget the number of laps completed.

You could estimate it by dividing total swim time by approximate lap time.

For a short swim, the integer is probably reliable.

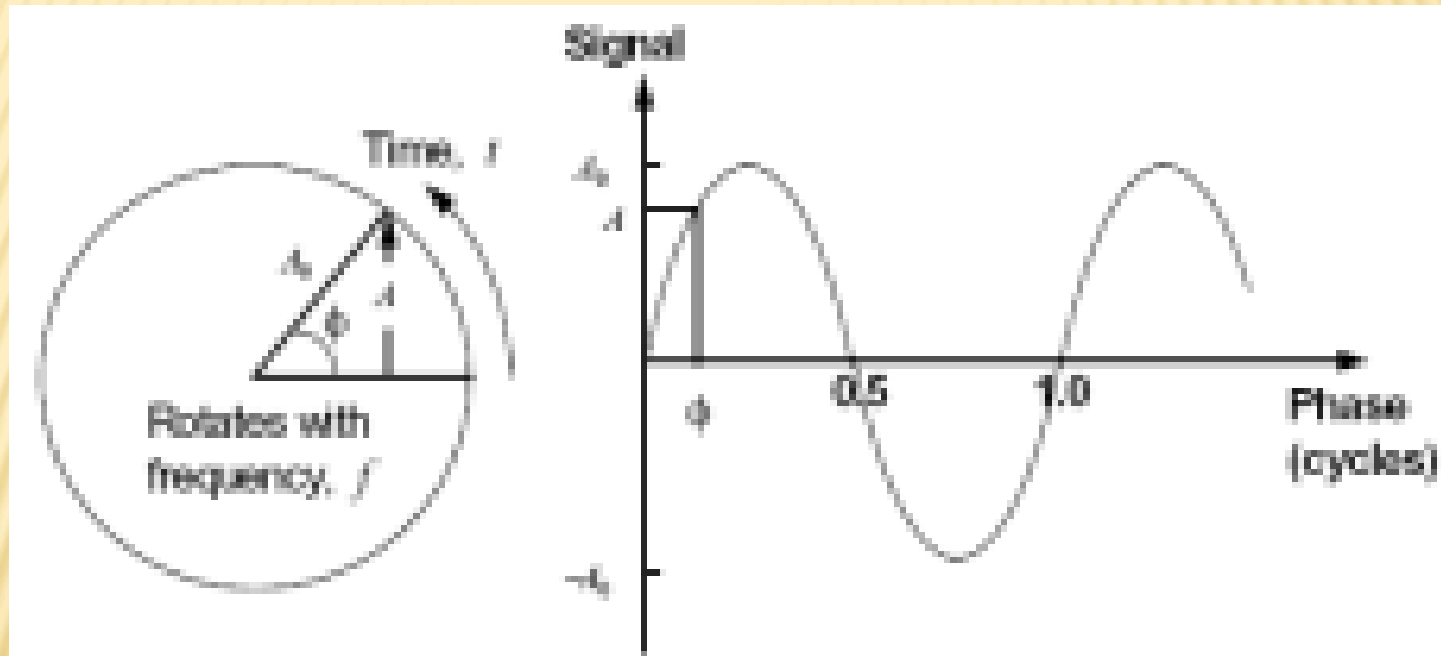
But the longer you swim, the greater the variance in the ratio.

In GPS, the longer the baseline between receivers, the harder it is to find this whole number.



# Phase, frequency and Clock time

Phase is angle of rotation



Unit is cycles  
Note is ambiguous by whole "rotations"

# Concept of time

(or at least keeping track of it)

based on periodic “motion”

Day – rotation of earth on own axis

Year – rotation of earth around sun

Quartz crystal (or atomic clock) – oscillations

Etc.

Phase is “%” of period.

But does not count whole periods.

Need way to convert phase to time units.

write

$$T(t) = k(\phi(t) - \phi_0)$$

Where

$T(t)$  is time according to our clock at (some “absolute” time)  $t$

$\phi_0 = \phi(t=0)$  is the time origin (our clock reads 0 at  $\phi_0$ )

$k$  is the calibration constant converting cycles to seconds



# Frequency

Expressed as cycles-per-second  
(SI unit is Hertz)

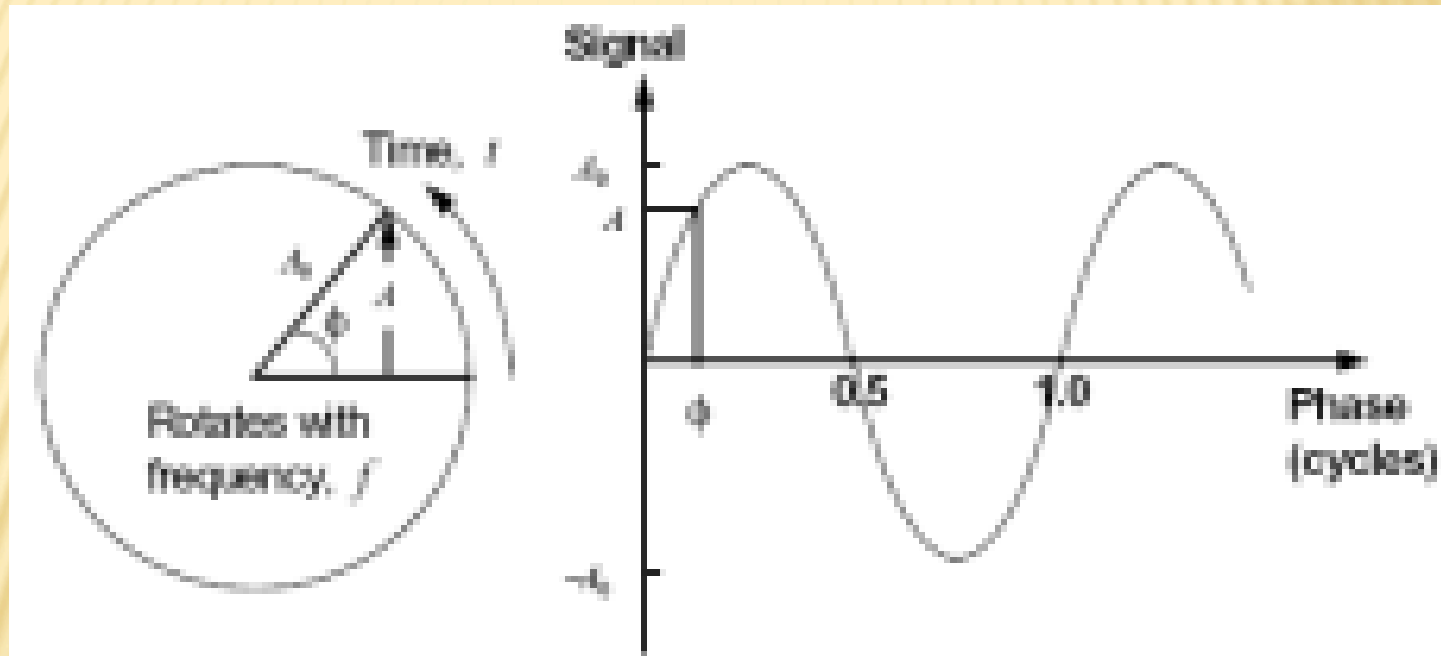
Assumes rotation rate is constant

Better definition – rate of change of phase with respect to time (this also covers instantaneous phase)

$$f = \frac{d\phi(t)}{dt}$$

$$f = \frac{d\phi(t)}{dt} = \text{constant}$$

pure sine/cosine



Phase changes linearly with time

We will treat

- Phase as the fundamental quantity
- Frequency as the derived quantity or dependent variable

Basis for “ideal” clock

Constant frequency

$$\phi_{ideal} = f_0 t + \phi_0$$

$$T_{ideal} = k f_0 t$$



$$\phi_{ideal} = f_0 t + \phi_0$$

$$T_{ideal} = k f_0 t$$

This suggests that

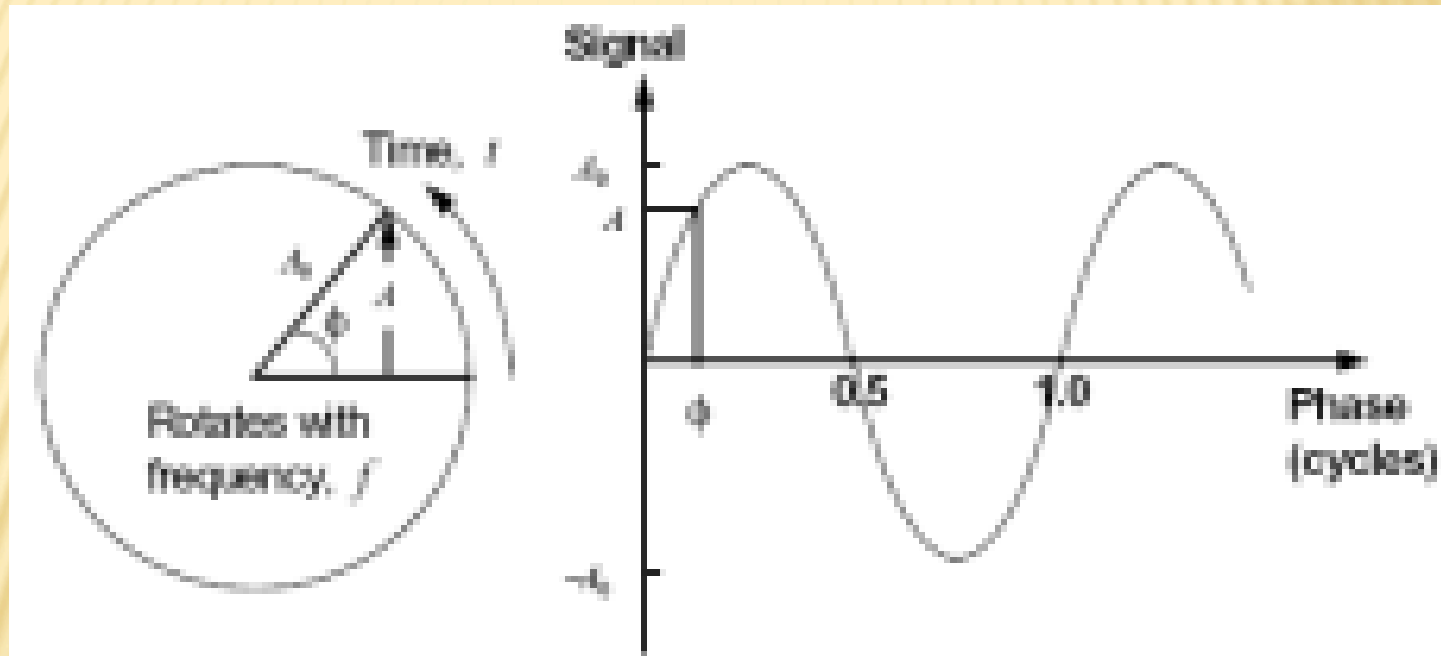
$$k=1/f_0$$

so

$$T(t) = \frac{(\phi(t) - \phi_0)}{f_0}$$

So we can describe the signal below as

$$A(t) = A_0 \sin(2\pi\phi(t))$$



If one measures  $A(t)$  one can determine  $\phi(t)$

## Signal for ideal clock

$$A_{ideal}(t) = A_0 \sin(2\pi\phi_{ideal}(t))$$

$$A_{ideal}(t) = A_0 \sin(2\pi(f_0 t + \phi_0))$$

$$A_{ideal}(t) = A_0 \cos(2\pi\phi_0) \sin(2\pi f_0 t) + A_0 \sin(2\pi\phi_0) \cos(2\pi f_0 t)$$

$$A_{ideal}(t) = A_0^S \sin(\omega_0 t) + A_0^C \cos(\omega_0 t)$$

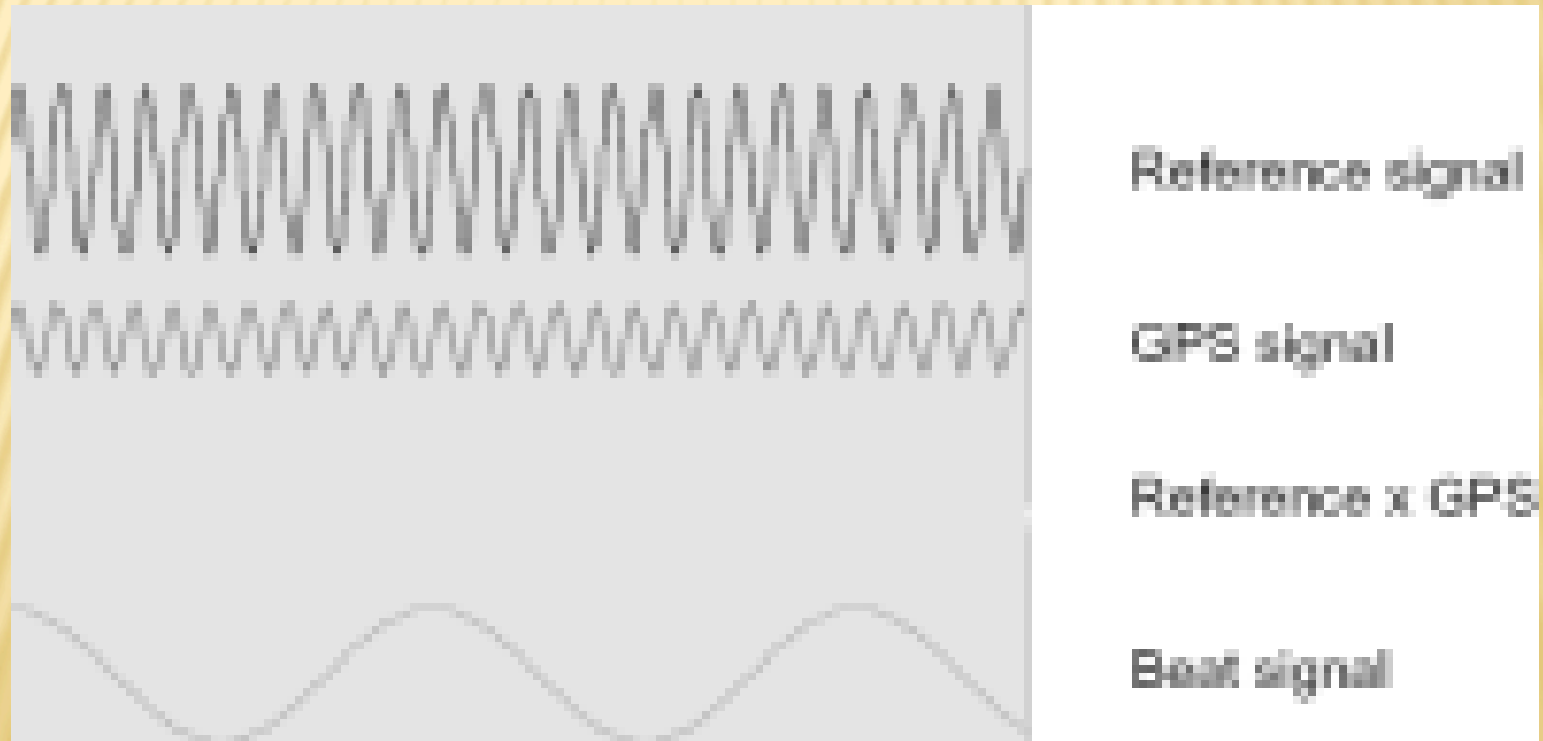
## Signal for real clock

$$A_{real}(T) = A_0^S \sin(\omega_0 T) + A_0^C \cos(\omega_0 T)$$

GPS signal of this form PLUS “modulation” by + or - 1.



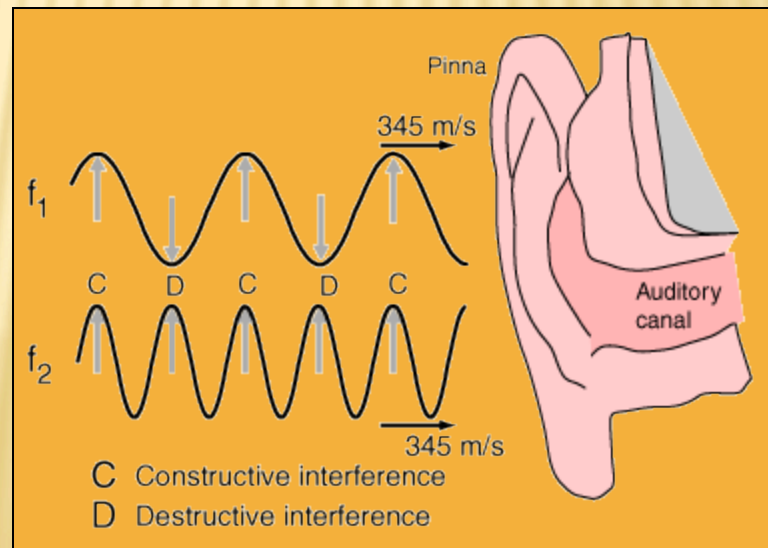
To “receive” a GPS signal the received signal (whose frequency has been shifted by the Doppler effect – more later) is mixed with a receiver generated copy of the signal producing a beat due to the difference in frequency



When two sound waves of different frequency approach your ear, the alternating constructive and destructive interference causes the sound to be alternatively soft and loud

-a phenomenon which is called "beating" or producing beats.

-The beat frequency is equal to the absolute value of the difference in frequency of the two waves.



# Beat Frequencies in Sound

The sound of a beat frequency or beat wave is a fluctuating volume caused when you add two sound waves of slightly different frequencies together.

If the frequencies of the sound waves are close enough together, you can hear a relatively slow variation in the volume of the sound.

A good example of this can be heard using two tuning forks that are a few Hz apart. (or in a twin engine airplane or boat when the engines are not “synched” = you hear a “wa-wa-wa-wa-... noise”)

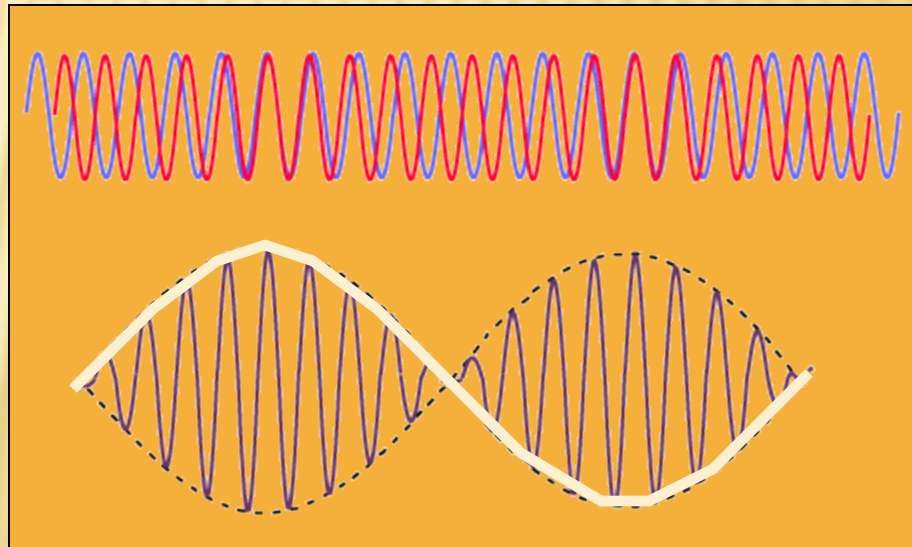


Beats are caused by the interference of two waves at the same point in space.

$$\cos(2\pi f_1) + \cos(2\pi f_2) = 2A \cos\left(2\pi \frac{f_1 - f_2}{2}\right) \cos\left(2\pi \frac{f_1 + f_2}{2}\right)$$

$$f_{beat} = \left| \frac{f_1 - f_2}{2} \right|$$

Beat -- Frequency of minima, which happens twice per cycle.



Note the frequencies are  
half the difference and  
the average of the original frequencies.

$$\cos(2\pi f_1) + \cos(2\pi f_2) = 2A \cos\left(2\pi \frac{f_1 - f_2}{2}\right) \cos\left(2\pi \frac{f_1 + f_2}{2}\right)$$

Different than  
multiplying (mixing)  
the two frequencies.

