

Should SPARC change its name?

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Should SPARC change its name?

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find BELOW an update from 3 April 2012 on the state of discussion to initiate second iteration

23 August 2011

by Tom Peter and Ted Shepherd, SPARC co-Chairs

The WCRP is undergoing an internal restructuring which will see revised mandates for the four core projects to respond to scientific developments since those mandates were originally established — in most cases, around 20 years ago. SPARC is being asked to develop a stronger focus on stratosphere-troposphere coupling. This will involve a stronger engagement with tropospheric processes than has been the case so far. CLIVAR and GEWEX are being asked to focus on, respectively, ocean-atmosphere and land-atmosphere coupling, while CliC will continue to focus on cryosphere-climate coupling. Each core project is in the process of determining what this development implies for its programme of activities; see, for example, the report on the Panel Discussion at the last meeting of the SPARC Scientific Steering Group (SSG) elsewhere in this newsletter. As part of this process, the core projects are also being asked to consider whether a name change might be appropriate, to reflect the revised mandates. In the case of SPARC, this question was raised as part of the Panel Discussion to get a first impression of the views of the SSG. But any name change would also need the support of the SPARC community. The purpose of this appeal is to initiate such a discussion, for further consideration at the next SSG meeting in February 2012.

It can be argued that SPARC's name remains appropriate if "climate" is understood to include the troposphere — indeed it could be argued that SPARC's name is more appropriate now than it was originally. It can also be argued that the SPARC "brand name" has strong resonance within the community, among both scientists and funding agencies, based on its track record of delivering extremely useful, value-added scientific products. However, one can argue that so long as the legacy is clear and the core principles of the project are maintained, the community will transfer their loyalty (e.g., NDSC has changed to NDACC without losing its impact). Moreover, a name change provides an opportunity for people outside the project to take notice of the project's evolution. Given the increasing focus on climate services, it can be argued that having the word "troposphere" in the new core

project's name would make it easier for scientists and agencies to justify their investment in it — not only those presently involved in SPARC, but also those we will need to involve in the future in order to achieve our scientific goals.

A possible middle ground is to change the name but not the acronym, in order to maintain some continuity while signifying the evolution: e.g. Stratosphere- troposphere Processes And their Role in Climate (SPARC)¹. The bottom line, of course, is that whatever decision we will make concerning a name change has to serve the scientific agenda of the new core project, and that means serving the scientific community that will be represented by it. So we need your feedback on this question, and have therefore opened a web-based discussion ('blog') on this topic. We appreciate a lively discussion, e.g. on what the enlarged mandate will mean for the character of SPARC, and how to best cope with this. Opinions on the name might vary between not changing the name at all and choosing a new name without resemblance to the old one. We are interested in your opinion and hope for your input and support in this important matter. Should we change SPARC's name?

¹ Other proposed names that were discussed by the SSG included "Stratospheric and tropospheric Processes And their Role in Climate", "Stratosphere-troposphere coupling And its Role in Climate", or "Stratospheric and related tropospheric Processes and their Role in Climate". There were also name suggestions that would require a change of the acronym, but in the SSG discussion these did not receive broad support – and you might well have a different opinion.

3 April 2012 – Update on the state of discussion to initiate second iteration

Dear SPARC colleagues:

A possible name change for SPARC was first discussed at the Scientific Steering Group meeting in Pune, India, in 2011. Since the WCRP is undergoing internal restructuring and revising the mandates of its four core projects, SPARC is being asked to develop a stronger focus on the troposphere. As part of these changes, the core projects have also been asked to consider whether a name change would be an appropriate reflection of such a revision of their mandates. After our article in the SPARC Newsletter of July 2011 (no. 37), a blog was set up so that the SPARC community could openly discuss the possibility of a name change. The lively posts on the blog reflect a wide range of opinions, from those who felt a name change was necessary with no less than 16 suggestions for a new acronym, to those who expressed the feeling that the present name already incorporated a tropospheric focus implicitly and that a change would harm the SPARC "brand name" that has developed over the years. Thank you all very much for your contributions!

The idea of a name and acronym change was further discussed at the most recent SPARC Scientific Steering Group meeting in Zurich last month. Again, opinions and feelings were widespread. While it now seems clear that there will be a name change, some felt that keeping the acronym would maintain the continuity of the SPARC "brand name", while simultaneously showing the shift of focus. However, the blog provided hardly any support for such a "compromise". Rather, most colleagues argued in favour of either a complete change or no change at all. The SPARC Scientific Steering Group was not supportive of a new acronym that had no relation to SPARC, and

many felt that an acronym that included SPARC would maintain the brand name. The discussion was narrowed to the following options:

1. T-SPARC = Troposphere-Stratosphere Processes and their Role in Climate
2. SPARC+ = SPARC and the troposphere
3. SPARCTM = SPARC—Troposphere, Mesosphere
4. STARC = Stratosphere-Troposphere Processes and their Role in Climate
5. SPARCS = Stratosphere-troposphere Processes and their Role in the Climate System
6. or only name change but no change of the acronym.

The Scientific Steering Group was fairly evenly split between the option of changing the acronym to either T-SPARC or SPARCTM (options 1 or 3) and the option of changing the name but keeping the acronym (option 6). (There is some concern that SPARCTM may not translate well into plain text, where it would probably have to be represented as SPARC^{^TM}.) If we had to decide today — and as we probably will in the absence of further input from the community — we would go for T-SPARC. However, we wanted to share these developments with the SPARC community, before making a final decision.

Therefore we would now like to ask you, as part of the SPARC community, to reconsider the blog and sharpen your opinion on the matter. We value your further input: Should we change our acronym? And if so, do you like the options of T-SPARC or SPARCTM? Or do you have another suggestion? You can post again on this SPARC name/acronym change blog.

Thank you in advance for your input.

Greg Bodeker and Ted Shepherd
SPARC SSG Co-Chairs

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79 THOUGHTS ON “SHOULD SPARC CHANGE ITS NAME?”



Tom Peter
on **25.08.2011 at 6:14** said:

I received the following from Carl Brenninkmeijer in Mainz, Germany:

Dear colleagues, I was reading your newsletter #37. Thank you, it is always very informative.

If SPARC (I would never change the name) gets closer to the tropopause, a stronger link with CARIBIC may evolve. We have an enormous number of tropopause data, over the years, throughout the

seasons, and this seems to continue with increasing success. Please check our website, the publications list gives an idea about what we do, but there is much more, hopefully of benefit to a wider community. Please pass this message on, if that is fine with you, best regards, also on behalf of the many colleagues who make CARIBIC a reality.
Carl Brenninkmeijer



Diane Pendlebury

on **25.08.2011 at 13:37** said:

SPARC should keep its name if with the extension of its activities into the troposphere. Perhaps if the newsletter becomes full colour, then the logo could be modified to use more colours and reflect the extension into the troposphere (subtle change – not total redesign).



Greg Bodeker

on **26.08.2011 at 4:41** said:

WCRP is undergoing an internal restructuring and I think it will be difficult for WCRP to demonstrate to its lords and masters that it has adapted to the needs of its primary clients if its 4 core projects are also not evolving. My feeling is that if it is not immediately apparent that we are also shifting our research focus, that it will be very difficult for WCRP to argue convincingly that it has done so. SPARC is not its acronym. It is it's community, built on the support, camaraderie and 'extended family' of its people. If we keep the SPARC acronym I suspect that 99% of people in SPARC will believe that it is business as usual and will not feel the need to change their long-term strategic outlook. And if the members of SPARC don't do this, then SPARC doesn't do this. If we change the acronym, it will prompt everyone in SPARC to ask why the acronym is changing. This gives us an opportunity to explain why SPARC is changing and why SPARC needs to change. It creates a completely different mind set. It may also give people who were not previously strongly affiliated with SPARC cause to think "SPARC is changing, I wonder now whether there is a place for my work in the new SPARC?". For people already in SPARC, we know that while our acronym has become almost a brand name, our dedication to SPARC is not because of that brand name but because of what the community

provides. The success of the SPARC brand is a byproduct of the value of the SPARC community. Coke has such a successful brand because it tastes great (and has plenty of sugar and caffeine) not because it is called Coke. While I don't deny that changing the SPARC acronym would have its disadvantages, I believe that changing the acronym would have more advantages than disadvantages. It would show that we are sensitive to the needs of our parent organization (WCRP) and that we are ready to change. That we recognize that our value is in our community and not in our acronym. Keeping SPARC as the acronym but trying to sneak the word 'troposphere' in somewhere feels like a weak, half step forward. It suggests a reluctance to change rather than a willingness to change. We need to be braver. If we change the acronym I would keep as many of the graphical elements of the logo unchanged to reflect our heritage. So I would encourage people to start suggesting new acronyms. I will start with a really crappy one so that people see that if they do nothing it will be a disaster. So in the absence of anything better we go with:
STICS (Stratosphere-Troposphere Interactions in the Climate System).



Richard Stolarski
on **26.08.2011 at 18:57** said:

I went to the SPARC website and found this statement:
"The principal objective of this project is to help the stratospheric research community focus on significant issues related to climate." The acronym SPARC, as it now stands, represents this principal objective well. I think that we should discuss modification (broadening?) of the objective first. The name of the project, and its acronym, should follow from that discussion. So I would rephrase the question as "Should SPARC modify its primary objective?" If the answer to that is yes, then the discussion should go to "how should it be broadened?" With a clear definition of broadened scope, we can discuss how to name the project. Some may argue that the project's scope has already been broadened by the sub-projects. If so, we still have to update the objective statement to reflect that broadening.



Pablo Canziani
on **26.08.2011 at 19:06** said:

 on [26.08.2011 at 19:00](#) said:

I have mixed feelings regarding a name change. I agree with Greg on the fact that SPARC represents a community not just a WCRP programme name. Furthermore SPARC has already been increasing its participation in tropospheric climate studies over the years, showing that tropospheric climate cannot be fully understood without the stratospheric processes component. I would personally hate to see that stratospheric research falls out of WCRP. On the other hand we do need to enhance our interactions with the tropospheric community. There is a real need for this. I guess Greg's STICS proposal is a fair description.

**Peter Braesicke**on [26.08.2011 at 20:00](#) said:

Would one of the two big Cola companies change its name? Presumably not! But they are not trying to become something new, they just want to continue selling sweet fizzy drinks. If we are serious about widening our scope and integrating new communities a name change seems necessary. Keeping SPARC as the legacy acronym and squeezing a word into the spelled-out version would be slightly disappointing and would not reflect the new aspiration. I am sort of attached to the old acronym, but on balance I would prefer a new acronym and I am sure SPARC will be remembered. I liked the "process" element of SPARC: Atmospheric Process Studies for Earth System Science (APSESS; spoken: aphis). Admittedly this is very broad ...

**Gloria Manney**on [26.08.2011 at 20:36](#) said:

I'm very surprised by the above discussion to learn that SPARC was apparently generally NOT thought of as having a tropospheric focus — ever since I've known of SPARC, I assumed that "and their role in climate" specifically meant a focus on stratospheric influence on *tropospheric* climate, and have considered any UTLS studies I was involved in the most appropriate of my work (more so than, say, upper

stratosphere/lower mesosphere or stratospheric sudden warming studies) when planning, e.g., presentations at SPARC-sponsored meetings.

If SPARC changes its name without changing the acronym, the name change will have virtually zero impact. If you want to hide the new focus (which seems to be what I thought the focus was all along) by all means keep the acronym. If you want to get out the message “we are doing something new”, you will have to change the acronym (and the logo).

Several recent studies connect the mesosphere with the troposphere (usually through the (in one sense or another) “waveguide” of the stratosphere). So does the mesosphere have any presence here? “Middle Atmosphere” could provide more choices of initials! E.g., MATRIIC = Middle Atmosphere/TRoposphere Interactions Influencing Climate (pronounced “Matrix” of course).



Greg Bodeker

on **26.08.2011 at 20:38** said:

I fully agree with you Gloria that SPARC has always had strong connections to the troposphere. I think a key issue here is that WCRP wants a new structure i.e.

SPARC = stratosphere troposphere

CLIVAR = ocean atmosphere

GEWEX = land atmosphere

CLiC = cryosphere atmosphere

i.e. that the research, instead of focusing on different components of the climate system, focuses on the interfaces and interconnections between the different components of the climate system. To realize that paradigm, the core projects within WCRP need to be *seen* to be making those connections. So I don't think that requires a huge change in SPARC philosophy. We are already doing a lot of what needs to be done. We just need to demonstrate that that is now our modus operandi.

I agree with you that to demonstrate that we are taking the new framework of ‘connectedness’ within WCRP seriously, that a name and acronym change is necessary.

I very much like your MATRIIC – Middle Atmosphere/TRoposphere

very much like your MATRINO = Middle Atmosphere/Troposphere Interactions Influencing Climate (pronounced "Matrix" of course), and think its much better than my STICS. The pronunciation as "Matrix" would be more natural if we had MATRIICS = Middle Atmosphere/TRoposphere Interactions Influencing the Climate System or MATRICS = Middle Atmosphere/TRoposphere Interactions in the Climate System.



Joan Alexander

on **26.08.2011 at 21:55** said:

I do not have a strong opinion about changing the acronym. However, I think it the word "Processes" is a key term describing work within the SPARC community. I think the simplest and still satisfactory thing would be to keep "SPARC" but change the meaning to "Stratosphere-troposphere Processes And their Role in Climate". It is most inclusive: encompassing stratospheric processes, tropospheric processes, and the interactions.



Martin Dameris

on **29.08.2011 at 5:54** said:

The success and importance of a programme or project is not depending on the chosen acronym. Therefore we should not focus to much on its discussion; I would wish that we concentrate the discussion on the content of the new scientific developments and not on the cover.

A lot of the scientific activities of the SPARC community in recent years have already focussed on the coupling to the troposphere.

Stratospheric processes and their role for climate (change) cannot be investigated without considering the coupling to the troposphere. This was impressively reviewed in the last two UNEP/WMO ozone assessment (2007, 2011). To my opinion there is already a strong focus on stratosphere-troposphere coupling in SPARC! From this point of view we would not need to change the acronym.

On the other hand it is clear that from time to time one must leave the old beattracks and create something which reflects further developments. But in this case I do not see that we are really thinking

about new things! Looking from this corner of the room I would recommend only a slight adaptation of the acronym. In this connection I like the example of NDSC which changed to NDACC. One possibility: SPARC > STARC



Andrew Gettelman

on **29.08.2011 at 7:26** said:

Stratosphere-Troposphere coupling seems implicit in the discussion of climate. I have always thought of this as ‘tropospheric climate’ (or climate of the troposphere: SPARCT for example). I think it is an interesting re-branding exercise that seems to need change, and I understand a desire to ‘shake things up’ to try to inject new energy into the project. But as noted, there is a vibrant community in SPARC already that is engaged in Strat-trop coupling and various other issues. I am not adverse to adding troposphere to the name, because it reflects what we do already. (SPARCT was about all I could come up with though STPARC is the most logical change, but doesn’t roll off the tongue, TSPARC would be better, but maybe changes the emphasis too much).

But there is always a danger in re-branding. Several people have already noted the analogy to marketing and in particular soft-drinks. One should remember the 1980s introduction of ‘New Coke’ which is widely used as a business school case study of how NOT to change. One should be careful of changes are made to something that is already working just for the sake of change. I think the key question is whether we are really setting a new strategic direction that needs a name change? Or are we continuing down a successful road? There are probably other ways of trying to engage new people in the community than changing the name.



Jim Russell

on **29.08.2011 at 16:30** said:

I found the discussion of a possible name change for SPARC to be interesting and stimulating. Like Gloria Manney, I too have always thought that the words in the acronym “their role in climate” referred to

thought that the words in the acronym – their role in climate – referred to stratospheric influences on the climate system. As I recollect, the project was born at the time the world scientific focus on climate change was beginning to “heat up”, no pun intended. :-> SPARC enjoys a long and successful history and while it is a bit disappointing to consider a name change, I have to admit that a change is probably worthwhile just to reflect the new mandated focus.

I feel like some others who have responded, that the name change should retain as much of the original name as possible to reflect the success of the project and also to recognize what I believe was its original focus that has endured over time. So my suggestion is “Stratosphere-troposphere Processes And their Role in the Climate System” or SPARCS.



Darryn Waugh
on **29.08.2011 at 17:34** said:

I agree with Martin Dameris. We should be focusing discussions on the science and what SPARC (or whatever it is called) does, and not spend time worrying about name or acronym. I don't care what it is called as long as it's activities are focused on stratosphere-tropospheric coupling / processes.

Having said that, I am (like Gloria) very surprised to hear that the Climate in SPARC did not refer to tropospheric climate.



Marie-Lise Chanin
on **29.08.2011 at 17:42** said:

In the 20 years of its life, SPARC has continuously evolved to include more and more interactions with the troposphere within its programme and with joint activities with IGAC. Today it's necessary to go one more step in order for WCRP to cover the whole range of interactions with the different frontiers, but it could very well be done by enlarging its field of activities as well as its scientific communities, without braking the existing momentum of a successful programme, and clearly without changing its name, logos and what is a mark which will make years to reconstruct.



Leonhard Pfister

on **29.08.2011 at 17:45** said:

The sound of the acronym is actually important. Also important is its uniqueness in google searches. SPARC has a good sound, but is not unique in google searches.

Some suggestions that incorporate the new emphasis (which I think is a good idea, by the way).

COSTPARC; Coupling Of Stratosphere and Troposphere Processes ...

SATPARC: Stratosphere And Troposphere Processes ...

I admit, I am not the greatest at coming up with acronyms (!)



Juan Antonio Añel

on **29.08.2011 at 22:07** said:

SPARC began the Tropopause Initiative years ago and it helps in some way to involve people working on the connection between troposphere and stratosphere.

I like the name STICS. If the SSG feels that it is necessary to show in a more evident way to the WCRP that we are changing something, I would adopt it. If it is clear that we are adapting to the new goals without the need of changing the acronym, I would not modify it, but probably would include the word "troposphere".



Dennis Hartmann

on **29.08.2011 at 22:09** said:

Hard to find a more appealing acronym than SPARC. It's fun to play with ideas, though.

How about Stratospheric Processes And Their Tropospheric Environmental Responses (SPATTER), or CLimate And Stratospheric Processes (CLASP), if you want to put climate first. CLimate and Middle

Atmosphere Processes (CLIMAP) produces an acronym that has already been used by the paleoclimate community. Middle Atmosphere Science And Climate Impacts Research (MASACIR) has a bad connotation (massacre). Middle Atmosphere Research and Climate Change (MARCC). The Middle Atmosphere and Climate (TMAC), Human Influences and the Middle Atmosphere Response to Climate Change (HIMARCC, high mark) has good connotation, but the action flow is down up, rather than up down). Climate Change and Middle Atmosphere Processes (CCMAP, see see map). CMAP would also work, but has been used. The Middle Atmosphere and Surface Climate (MASC).

It would be useful to know exactly which extensions that would be more explicit than Stratosphere and Climate one would want to add or subtract from the mission.



Klemens Hocke
on **30.08.2011 at 7:27** said:

How about “APRIC” ?

= Atmospheric PProcesses and their Interaction with Climate

or = Atmospheric Processes and their Role In Climate

The acronym has a fruity association to apricot and it begins with “a”.

I have the impression that many of the SPARC members are interested in modeling and observation of the whole atmosphere.



Rob MacKenzie
on **30.08.2011 at 8:54** said:

I’ve read the comments to date on the proposed changes to SPARC focus, on a possible attendant acronym change, with interest. There are strong arguments for holding onto a name that is relatively well-known, and that fosters loyalty but, on balance, I am more swayed by the arguments about the need to show that WCRP programmes are changing. Most of the names so far suggested seem workable to me – we will come to feel fond of whichever we choose, I’m sure – but personally T-SPARC or SPARCT give me the best sense of “continuity with change”. Putting “Troposphere” at the front will not overwhelm the stratosphere if the two names are joined by a hyphen, and so long as

“p” for “processes” is retained.



Martin Jarvis

on **30.08.2011 at 9:50** said:

I agree that the science focus should come ahead of the acronym and, to me, ‘stratosphere’, per se, seems a little short-sighted when looking into the medium-term future. As noted by Gloria Manney, it excludes the mesosphere and it also excludes anything higher; this is at a time when climate communities are extending their models upwards in the atmosphere to include these regions because of the realisation that they can make a difference. Consequently I prefer the use of the phrase Middle Atmosphere because this phrase does not portray a sharp cut-off boundary.



Gunther Seckmeyer

on **30.08.2011 at 10:51** said:

we had a similar discussion within the NDACC (formerly NDSC) steering committee some year ago. While the arguments to change the focus of research have been as valid as they are now for SPARC, I still think it was a mistake to change the name, and even worse to change the acronym. Over the many years SPARC and NDSC have developed into a kind of trademark and these have their value by its own. To give an example from commercial industry big companies, e.g. a car manufacturer like Ford or Mercedes or VW ... would never change their names, just because they have new models even with new technologies like electrical cars. Therefore the advice is to keep the acronym in any case. A change in the focus towards troposphere is recommendable, but not necessarily connected with a name change.



Keith Shine

on **30.08.2011 at 13:45** said:

I agree with Martin Demeris and Doreen Wuech that we could waste

I agree with Martin Danabas and Darren Vaughn that we could waste a lot of time and energy unnecessarily on a sterile debate. Rich Stolarski's point is the most important in my view – the name should follow the objectives, and if they stay the same, then let's keep SPARC the same.

And on a lighter note, "Snickers" bars used to be called "Marathon" bars here in the UK and survived the name change!



Edwin Gerber

on **30.08.2011 at 14:25** said:

I'm relatively new to the SPARC community, and so I always thought that the "C" in SPARC referred to the entire climate system, including the oceans and ice sheets, and most certainly the troposphere! If the goal is to get people thinking more holistically, perhaps we could focus on the atmosphere as one system:

APAC "atmospheric processes and climate"

That said, if our emphasis is still on how the upper atmosphere couples with the rest of the climate, it seems that SPARC is a pretty good name (thinking of stratosphere in the historic sense, as being everything above the tropopause). We could perhaps make more of a difference by refining our scientific objectives to emphasize our focus on coupling with the climate below.

If a name change is needed to stir things up, we could expand "climate" to be the "earth system" and make it:

SPEARS = Stratospheric Processes and the EARth System*

*Could also be SPARES, Stratospheric Processes And their Role in the Earth System, but this might imply that we're not so necessary!



Dennis Hartmann

on **30.08.2011 at 18:00** said:

If you are a bowler, you would rather have strikes than spares, so I would recommend STRICES STRAtospheric Interactions

with Climate and the Earth System

with Climate and the Earth System.



Simon Chabrilat

on **31.08.2011 at 0:45** said:

SPARC is more than a brand: it is our name, which defines our mission in a few words to the society. I would like this name to change, because the traditional division in atmospheric layers has become an obstacle. The most important word in SPARC is "Processes". The word "Climate" is not really necessary since we belong to WCRP anyway (note that GEWEX does not include this word either). The acronym should be easy to pronounce, and it doesn't hurt if it is catchy enough to be remembered by anyone.

I see two approaches. In the first one, we stick to our original domain and extend our community only at the margins. In this case there is no reason to keep excluding the mesosphere and the lower thermosphere from our scope, and we need to acknowledge explicitly the connexion with the troposphere. So a new name like MAPIT (Middle Atmosphere Processes and their Impacts on the Troposphere) would do the job.

Now I propose a much bolder change. GEWEX does not mention any specific oceanic layer in its name, and CliC does not separate the cryosphere into its Arctic, Antarctic or lacier components. Furthermore, what is the ultimate target of WCRP itself: tropospheric or surface climate? In the first case we would have a problem, as the current division of WCRP in four core activities appears to investigate all the interfaces with the troposphere but not the troposphere itself.

In short SPARC should extend its scope to the study of the whole atmosphere, and welcome all tropospheric scientists in its community. We should still remind everyone that our atmosphere is composed of several layers that all need further research since they exchange mass, momentum, radiation and chemical species. So I propose APEAL (Atmospheric Processes and Exchanges between Atmospheric Layers) or APCAL (Atmospheric Processes and Couplings between Atmospheric Layers).



Ken Carslaw

on **31.08.2011 at 12:17** said:

I think it would be a mistake to change SPARC to include the troposphere explicitly. If you study the stratosphere then of course you study its interactions – not just with the troposphere but also the mesosphere, etc. What if we discover a new and vitally important process driving climate that starts in the mesosphere and cascades through to the troposphere? Would we seek to rename SPARC again?

The push to make almost every proposal, programme or organisation something to do with “interactions” stems from the realisation that we can’t study the world in compartments. But neither can we study it just at the interfaces! The logical outcome is that we will have one programme dealing with the whole Earth system. Clearly that’s not going to happen. So for me, the logical focus for a programme should be one of the Earth’s compartments, accepting that of course we study the processes at the compartment’s interfaces.



Simon Chabrilat

on **02.09.2011 at 8:12** said:

Dear Ken,

I understand very well your points, but:

- It looks like tropospheric processes are not *explicitly* part of any WCRP core activity (I may be wrong there, and would be happy to be corrected). IMHO this issue should be solved either by WCRP creating a new core activity, or by SPARC accepting to extend its mandate to tropospheric processes. I understand that the latter option implies sharing some budgets and radically opening the SPARC community. This may be the bottom issue for this whole blog.

- “...accepting that of course we study the processes at the compartment’s interfaces.”

Outsiders often consider our research as being too isolated in its own compartment. It is important to publicize that this is not the case.

Finally, the exemple you give (“What if we discover a new and vitally important process driving climate that starts in the mesosphere...”) is not covered in the current SPARC name, but quite well by several new names proposed above (e.g. mine:

MAPIT, APEAL or APCAL).

On a personal note, I find the discussion on this blog quite interesting and enjoyable 😊



Björn-Martin Sinnhuber

on **12.09.2011 at 11:59** said:

If SPARC will significantly expand or change its objectives, a new name and/or acronym may be appropriate. However, here I very much agree with Rich Stolarski and others that a discussion on the new objectives should come first. As long as the objectives are only gradually expanding, I feel that the current name Stratospheric Processes And their Role in Climate is actually more up-to-date than it ever was in the past 20 years.



Marv Geller

on **12.09.2011 at 22:11** said:

I very much agree with Rich Stolarski's comment that discussion of the mission/objectives of SPARC (or whatever it will be called) should precede discussion of the name change. In fact, once the mission/objectives are decided upon, maybe the need for a new name and what the new name should be will be more obvious, or at least better informed. It's also important to see how the mission/objectives of the other three Core Projects evolve in order to make wise choices for SPARC, so in my opinion discussion of a proposed SPARC name change should be shelved until it is clear how its agenda will evolve. So far, I have seen no instance where the name SPARC has limited the evolution of its agenda, which is now quite different than its original one. In a sense, concentrating of troposphere-stratosphere interactions in the climate system is more limiting than what has been the case with SPARC (e. g., its efforts relating to lab chemistry), so there is considerable wisdom in Alan Robock's comment "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." At least, we should be sure that the new name will serve the organization as well, or better, than has the name SPARC.



Shigeo Yoden

on **24.05.2012 at 14:45** said:

I vote for keeping the SPARC name and acronym, just after I have looked over this blog from the beginning.

Under the name of SPARC we have two objectives: (1) stratospheric processes, and (2) their role in climate. Here I have understood from the beginning of SPARC activities in the last century that climate means “tropospheric” climate as some people wrote already. (Maybe it could include the oceans, lands and sea-ice, too.) Thus, I do not think we need to include “troposphere” into a new name.

The above statements assume the main body of the SPARC community does not change so much after the reformation.

On the other hand, if there will be a substantial change of the community under the current restructuring process, for example, merger with some sub-groups of CLIVAR, GEWEX and/or other communities, then we should discuss the mission/objectives of the new group first, as Marv wrote. After agreeing a new scientific agenda, it will be straightforward to decide a new name of the group and its acronym. In such a case, totally new acronym would be more appropriate if we consider the history of each (sub)group, including SPARC.



Peter Hitchcock

on **13.04.2012 at 10:35** said:

I would support the steering group’s preference to change the acronym to T-SPARC (it’s much better to my mind than SPARCTM); but what about adopting the name Tropospheric and Stratospheric Processes And their Role in Climate? It seems to me less restrictive to processes that specifically couple the two layers—purely tropospheric processes could in principle still find a home, as could processes that couple any part of the middle atmosphere to the climate system through the stratosphere or troposphere.



Mark Weber

on **13.04.2012 at 10:59** said:

As Martin D. already pointed out, the name change from NDSC (Network for the Detection of Stratospheric Change) to NDACC (Network for the Detection of Atmospheric Composition Change) has some parallels to what is going on here. In the beginning we had to get accustomed to the new name (NDACC), but after some time you got used to it. I even forgot what the old acronym was and had to look it up again. In the same sense we should not be afraid of an acronym change.

My favorite would be "Atmospheric Processes and their Role in the Climate" (APARC),. Even though the focus may shift now more to the troposphere, we should be much more general and include all part of the atmosphere from the troposphere to the thermosphere and beyond (see for instance, the recent discussion on impact of solar variability and climate change on neutral density changes in the thermosphere).



Farahnaz Khosravi

on **13.04.2012 at 11:10** said:

I have not commented on this before, but due to the email send out today I do it now. In my opinion SPARC does not necessarily need to change its name for emphasizing an additional tropospheric focus. One could use still SPARC as acronym and just change the name (option 6 in the email). However, this could cause some confusion to the ones who are new to the community or the ones who hear for the first time of SPARC. Thus, an acronym not too different from the original one would be the best. I like all suggestions that were listed in the email, but my favorite is T-SPARC.



Piers Forster

on **13.04.2012 at 12:26** said:

Given the new choice after the SPARC SSG of T-SPARC, SPARCTM or keeping SPARC and changing the name.

My vote would come down on the side of keeping SPARC and changing the name (if we have to) by a minimal amount to Stratospheric Processes and their Role in the Climate system

I think we could then have a one sentence tag line on all documents that broadens this out such as “SPARC researchers the role of the stratosphere, and middle atmosphere, examining their coupling to the troposphere and overall role in the the Earth’s climate system, including their impact on climate and weather at the surface”

The current tag line is “a core project of the World Climate Research Programme which coordinates international efforts to bring knowledge of the stratosphere to bear on relevant issues in climate variability and prediction”

seems rather weak. And maybe means that as others say above – we need to define what we want to focus on. I think, at risk of upsetting folk on the SPARC margins, being to pluralistic weakens our focus, so I would prefer to see a focused mission

Bests



Larry Thomason

on **13.04.2012 at 13:31** said:

Acronyms are funny things after a while they don’t mean their root words but represent what they are or do. How many people remember what IBM or ATT used to stand for (or NASA or NOAA for that matter)? In that regard I agree with Greg that SPARC is a community of scientists that has already extended their interests well into the troposphere; in that regard, I think SPARC serves us well as a name. I instantly know what the likely content (and the high quality of) any SPARC activity and value them highly. Within my organization, it is known that I have SPARC affiliations and my coworkers know what that means. A name change in that regard will only confuse the matter. However, if we are forced by politics to change the name of SPARC I would be personally disappointed but ultimately the change wouldn’t matter too much since the community will persist. Of all the names floated above, I don’t have a strong position other than maybe

SPARCS but perhaps that is not a strong enough break from SPARC. In any case, a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.



José M. Castanheira
on **13.04.2012 at 14:15** said:

My choice is

T-SPARC = Troposphere-Stratosphere Processes And their Role in Climate



Pablo Canziani
on **13.04.2012 at 14:19** said:

Given the choice between the T-SPARC and SPARC-TM my choice goes for the latter. Having the modification at the end of the acronym better preserves original the identity while including the new areas.



John Scinocca
on **13.04.2012 at 14:49** said:

The original acronym, SPARC, had explicit meaning as to its mandate. It defined the area that it had carved out for itself. The role of the stratosphere on climate was an open area that required such an initiative.

T-SPARC has no real meaning. It is what all climate groups do. The only novelty seems to be the stratosphere but, due to the success of SPARC, climate groups have recognize the need to include stratospheric processes and are actively working in this area. Such an acronym provides not hint of its focus.

One needs to start with an explicit statement of what is the new SPARC mandate or area that it wishes to carve out for itself. An appropriate

acronym will then follow (e.g. the original SPARC was a direct statement of its mandate).

But herein seems to be the problem. Are we changing the name of SPARC for the sake of changing its name, or is there a real new focus that defines an area that we are carving out for ourselves? If such a new focus exists it needs to be presented in a concise statement. If this can be done then an acronym will follow.



Lon Hood

on **13.04.2012 at 16:10** said:

I vote to keep the acronym as SPARC but change the name to Stratosphere-Troposphere Processes and their Role in Climate



Rich Stolarski

on **13.04.2012 at 16:47** said:

I tend to favor T-SPARC. If we go with the other choice then it should probably be as Pablo has typed it SPARC-TM. The superscript TM at the end is usually a trademark symbol. While it is ok to use this without registering the trademark, it might be confusing.



R.-C. Ren

on **15.04.2012 at 1:37** said:

I agree with option 6, “only name change but no change of the acronym”. Because everyone knows that SPARC always evolves troposphere even we don’t change its name; SPARC is a famous brand, we should keep SPARC unchanged. To show the slight increase in its emphasis on troposphere, name change is totally enough.



Neal Butchart

on **19.04.2012 at 13:21** said:

Why not simply refer to the revamped SPARC as “New SPARC”. The WCRP then gets the message that SPARC is changed and as time progresses the “new” can be printed in smaller and smaller fonts until it eventually disappears. We then get back to SPARC which most people seem to like.

My British colleagues will confirm that this trick worked extremely well for the British Labour Party and Tony Blair at the end of the last century.



Anne Thompson

on **25.04.2012 at 16:50** said:

I have followed the discussion and do not have a strong view on Acronym. I think SPARC sparkles and has served us well as our interests have evolved over time. T-SPRAC is ok with me too. Marv’s observation that a new name might be appropriate with decisions at the WCRP level (ie wait) also makes sense.



Edwin Gerber

on **25.04.2012 at 18:30** said:

I would prefer option 6, to change the name and mission statement, but keep the acronym. If the consensus is that an acronym change is needed to shake things up, I prefer T-SPARC over SPARCTM, which is hard to write in plain text. It is also ambiguous as to how the latter should pronounced: is it SPARC-TM, or SPARC trademark?



Joan Alexander

on **26.04.2012 at 4:09** said:

I prefer to keep the SPARC acronym. Changing it now seems premature, since there is no current problem with the name, just a

stated desire to “develop a stronger focus on the troposphere”. If the time comes where the name no longer describes the various SPARC activities, that would seem a better time to consider a change.



Dr. ATMA RAM JAIN
on **26.04.2012 at 6:16** said:

Name could change to tropospheric and stratospheric processes and their role in Climate. However , perhaps it is better to retain the acronym as it is well established and all of us know about SPARC and its activities..



Elisa Manzini
on **26.04.2012 at 7:09** said:

Here my suggestion:

either stay as it is or option (6), with name:

“Stratosphere-troposphere processes and their role in climate”

Sincerely, either T-SPARC or SPARC TM does not sound appealing.



Steven Pawson
on **02.05.2012 at 16:21** said:

The acronym “SPARC” has one syllable and it is easy to say (in all languages I can think of). There’s nothing better than a simple acronym composed of the first letter of all (most) of the words in the title! Adding letters, whether at the beginning or the end, makes it harder to say out loud and more complicated to remember. I believe that the original acronym still describes the overall role of SPARC in WCRP and that the SPARC project can continue to evolve without changing its name. So I vote for no change.



Masatomo Fujiwara

on **07.05.2012 at 14:04** said:

I prefer to SPARC or SPARC^TM simply because we just proposed a Reanalysis/analysis Intercomparison Project under SPARC and named it as S-RIP. How should we do if we are to go with T-SPARC? T-S-RIP?? (But, I also know that S-RIP should become simply RIP in the future for the same reason discussed in this blog.) And, I agree with Steven that SPARC is much better than SPARC^TM as an acronym.



Holger Vömel

on **10.05.2012 at 13:43** said:

Great companies like IBM or BMW kept their acronym throughout times, even though they have worked on many different products. It is an expression of quality and dedication even in times of change. I would therefore vote to keep the acronym as is. The name behind the acronym may change, I don't have an opinion on that either way.



Alan Robock

on **12.05.2012 at 17:36** said:

I agree with others who want to keep the name and acronym SPARC. It is a great brand-name, easy to pronounce, and an excellent pun (spark has a very positive connotation). It is not a problem to modify and expand the research interests without changing the name or threatening encroachment on other programs.



Greg Bodeker

on **13.05.2012 at 11:21** said:

I have read all of the previous posts and spent some more time thinking about this. I understand the desire, if we do change the acronym, to

keep SPARC as some part of the acronym for continuity/posterity. This is why we ended up converging on options like T-SPARC and SPARC^TM. The more I think about these options the more I don't like them. SPARC is clean. It's easy to say. Bolting a T- onto the front or a ^TM onto the end makes what was a beautiful acronym ugly. It is also has some air of desperation about it. Some image of a bit of window dressing to placate the powers that be. I also suspect that if we went for something like T-SPARC or SPARC^TM, nobody would actually use the acronym. Can you really see yourself saying "I am going to a T-SPARC workshop"? I am guessing that most people would continue to say "I am going to a SPARC workshop". If we do decide to come up with a new acronym but nobody uses it, there is no point.

A number of people have suggested that we keep the acronym but change the name e.g. SPARC stands for "Stratosphere-troposphere Processes And their Role in Climate". To me this communicates a business-as-usual message. I don't see any indication from such an action that SPARC is changing. Our world *is* changing. WCRP is changing, and, in addition to SPARC needing to change, we need to be seen to be changing. Keeping the acronym but changing what it stands for does not communicate that message. The necessity of changing, and being seen to be changing, cannot be overemphasized. My feeling is that those people suggesting that SPARC keep its acronym but change what it stands for are not fully aware of the clarity and emphasis of the directive we have received from WCRP. I don't want to repeat what I said in my post of 26 August 2011 (see above) but everything I said there still stands. We need to appreciate that SPARC's value derives from what it is, not from what it is named. This certainty that our value is a function of who we are and how we operate, and not a function of whatever our acronym is, should put us in a position to be more courageous and more creative in responding to this directive from WCRP.

This is too important to get wrong. I would therefore propose the following:

- 1) That whatever decision is made, its outcome is announced at or before the next SPARC General Assembly which will be in 20 months time. If the decision is made to change the name and/or acronym that this decision is announced then (with the appropriate level of fan-fare). We need to have a time limit on these deliberations.
- 2) That we go back to the drawing board on alternative acronyms. In Zurich I had the feeling that we came close to settling on a completely different acronym to SPARC. We just couldn't find one that hit the target. In the end we swayed back to something that had SPARC in it

target. In the end we swayed back to something that had SPARC in it

but I think that we didn't have the time to consider the implications of that (as outlined above).

So please, even if your strongest desire is to see SPARC keep its acronym, give some thought to possible alternative acronyms. Maybe this just doesn't work and we do end up either keeping SPARC and changing what it stands for, or bolting something onto the front or back of SPARC, but I don't think that we, as a community, have expended enough effort to come up with a new acronym. Report card on previous effort reads "Must try harder".

To put something new on the drawing board, I propose ASTRICS (Analyzing Stratosphere Troposphere Interactions in the Climate System) – pronounced Astrix. This has a few advantages:

- 1) Easy to say.
- 2) Brings to mind Astrix (as in Astrix and Oblix), a lot of power in a small package – the very definition of SPARC activities.
- 3) Completely different to SPARC – no window dressing.
- 4) Can, for the first few years, be written as "ASTRICS*" (superscripted *) with "**Formally known as SPARC" as a footnote.

Please think harder and let's have a legion of alternatives that we can discuss at the next SSG in Buenos Aires.



David Fahey

on **13.05.2012 at 22:16** said:

13 May 2012

Greg,

I think that we have a jewel with the acronym SPARC. I have not heard any suggestion that rivals it, including ASTRICS. It is legitimately derived from our key words, has one syllable, is pronounceable easily by most speakers, has a definitive sharpness with a 'hard c' sound, and plays nicely off the word 'spark' which we think we have a lot of. Therefore, we should be in pain before we give it up.

Changing the name and keeping the acronym is an elegant solution to changing our focus without losing or recreating our community identity and presence, ie having to reestablish our 'Nike swoosh'. I find it easy to accent "Stratosphere-troposphere processes and their role in

to accept “stratosphere-troposphere processes and their role in climate” because it is simple yet meaningful. The programmatic and scientific ‘umbrella’ this creates is large enough to fit anything new under while keeping all that we had.

So to help you deal with the pushback from WCRP and other handlers, I suggest that we consider another aspect of our identity, namely the SPARC logo. We potentially have two: one that is a artistic combination of only the letters SPARC and the words “Stratosphere-troposphere processes and their role in climate”. This would be used extensively on letterhead, webpages, etc., as our basic logo. The second would be more elaborate graphic design that would capture something of the atmospheric processes that we are concerned with. Both designs could/should be tasked to a professional graphics designer and not be the best efforts of scientists. I assert that these would strongly help us be seen as different and evolving, by ourselves and by others, and draw unwanted attention away from an unchanged acronym.

Losing the current SPARC logo would be to our great advantage and of course should happen in any case.

I can recommend Glynn Gorick’s work (<http://www.gorick.co.uk/>) (http://www.noc.soton.ac.uk/jmodels/glynngorick.html?KeepThis=true&TB_iframe=true&height=585&width=540) as a starting point for discussion of our ideas/preferences. Such an elaborate logo would be used more infrequently to represent us and our mission because it takes more space to show.

Back to ASTRICS, my primary difficulty with it is the use of ‘analyzing’ since it is the predominant word and understates our mission. I did check to see what google says is our competition for ‘astrics’ on the web. Very little. The main use is as a misspelling of ‘asterisks’.

So I hope you can relax about the need to change the acronym and instead focus on changing everything else.

Regards
Dave Fahey



Gloria Manney
on **13.05.2012 at 22:55** said:

Like Greg, I remain of the opinion that changing the name without changing the acronym (and T-SPARC isn't really changing the acronym, only, as Greg also notes, making it more awkward looking and sounding) will not communicate the fact that SPARC sees important reasons to change, and thus is changing. I remain partial to Greg's modification of my original suggestion to MATRICS (Middle Atmosphere/TRoposphere Interactions in the Climate System), first, because it conveys the increasingly prevalent idea that the whole middle atmosphere – the mesosphere as well as the stratosphere – is coupled to the troposphere, second, because “matrix” (as it is pronounced), gives a mental picture of (that) connectedness, and, third, because it is attractive and easily pronounced; in short, all of the reasons except (2) Greg gives for ASTRICS, but with the added advantage of not neglecting the mesosphere (and the “connectedness” picture perhaps being the counterpart of the Asterix and Obelix argument – that is, the “image”). I personally am **extremely** taken with ASTRICS specifically because of (2), but reluctantly have to question how strong that image argument would be for someone who didn't have a complete (as I choose to delude myself) collection of Asterix and Obelix on their bookshelf; it is tragic but true that they are not particularly well known in the US (of course, we are well-known for our “Philistine pig-ignorance” in such cultural matters:-))!



Greg Bodeker
on **14.05.2012 at 21:20** said:

I agree with what you've said Gloria and if I had to choose between ASTRICS and MATRICS then I would choose MATRICS.



Adam Scaife
on **14.05.2012 at 9:05** said:

Although the other suggestions are novel and innovative I think the problem here is that SPARC is very difficult to beat as an acronym. SPARC is punchy and lively, it also suggests bright ideas and even has stratosphere at the front. I prefer to CHANGE THE MEANING to “Stratospheric Processes and their Role in surface Climate” and and

Stratosphere processes and their role in surface climate and and
ALSO CHANGE THE LOGO as David suggest so that we can evolve
the activity. The logo ought to focus entirely on troposphere-
stratosphere interaction and I would suggest should somehow depict
the polar night jet and the NAO. I can imagine various options but won't
try to draw any here!



Kusuma G Rao

on **14.05.2012 at 10:58** said:

I appreciate the new proposal, “ASTRICS” (Analyzing Stratosphere
TRroposphere Interactions in the Climate System – pronounced Astrix)
by Greg Bodekar. It highlights the emphasis of SPARC on troposphere
component and part of the title, ‘Analyzing’ indicates what SPARC is
into. While we generated the Indian SPARC (I-SPARC) programme,
many monsoon experts were reluctant to join I-SPARC saying that
Stratosphere is not their expertise as they were thinking that, SPARC
does only Stratosphere, just because of the acronym SPARC.
However, T-SPARC acronym is not appealing. Since there is already a
programme called CAWSES (Climate and Weather of Sun-Earth
System) on atmospheric coupling from Troposphere to Ionosphere
including Stratosphere and Mesosphere, even the SPARC^TM would
be a partial overlapp.

I support the new name ASTRICS.



Peter Braesicke

on **14.05.2012 at 11:29** said:

I don't think we should move from something that is perceived as to
specific/narrow to something that might be even narrower. Currently, I
don't have a good idea for a new acronym, but I would find it helpful if
the new acronym could reflect the variety of the field more. Keywords
like ‘Earth System Science’ and ‘Climate System Interactions’ come to
my mind. I am not suggesting ‘CSI’ as an acronym; it is already taken,
even though it would allow spin-offs (e.g. CSI: Composition 😊)
I do not favour prefixing SPARC or to attach something like TM. If the
new remit is different (and my perception is it is, even though the remit

has been evolving), it might be worth celebrating this with a new acronym, a nice logo and a fanfare at launch.



Larry Thomason

on **14.05.2012 at 11:31** said:

The use of ASTRICS would suggest several irreverent logos to say the least (Gloria, I know perfectly well who Asterix and Obelix are, so I am not a Philistine or a Roman in this case!). I agree that if the WCRP needs to show evolution, short of growing a new pair of arms or a acquiring telepathy, SPARC changing name is a small price to pay to maintain the community that we value so highly. We don't want to end up in a natural history museum in a dubious 'action pose.' ASTRICS would be fine with me but I am sure that there are dozens of acceptable names and acronyms. At some point, the SG will have to pick one and take some complaints. It is why they get the big bucks, oh wait...



Larry Thomason

on **14.05.2012 at 11:34** said:

P.S. I think a complete change is a better idea than a near SPARC acronym given the directive from above.



Ted Shepherd

on **14.05.2012 at 12:55** said:

Like many who have posted, my basic view is that at the end of the day the program will carry itself as long as it maintains the characteristics that have made SPARC so effective in the past. So whether we change our name/acronym is not a big issue and we should not get too hung up on it. On the other hand, we do need to make a decision, one way or the other, at some point, and the purpose of this blog is to gather responses from the community to aid that decision.

It is important to emphasize that we have not been told by the WCRP

that we should change our name, only that we should discuss the matter openly and boldly. We need to be conscious of the fact that if you ask a group of people who are heavily invested in something, and who are identified with it, whether they need to change, the answer is likely to be no; so we need to resist that kind of complacency and really ask the searching questions. To me, the important voices are the young scientists just building their careers; do they regard the current name as a help or a hindrance when, e.g., trying to raise funding for new activities, or getting colleagues involved from outside the traditional SPARC community? That I think is the most fruitful perspective. Whatever we do should be done to help us achieve our goals.

It is true that overall there is some pressure for the WCRP to demonstrate evolution through its internal restructuring, and if none of the core projects change their acronym then there may be a perception of "business as usual". But probably more important is getting the core projects to work together in a more integrated way to address societal needs. So I don't think we should feel compelled to change for change's sake. The WCRP just wants to make sure that if we decide not to change, it is not out of complacency or a lack of imagination. They are already very impressed by the level of openness we have shown so far.

I must admit to being a little surprised by the postings suggesting that we need to figure out what the new program will be like before thinking about a new name, because I thought this discussion had already been going on within SPARC for several years, with regular articles in the SPARC Newsletter reporting on the evolution of our thinking at SPARC SSG and WCRP JSC meetings, including an updated implementation plan available at

<http://www.sparc-climate.org/publications/programme-plans/>

So these comments suggest that somehow the word has not got out very well. Yet the broad outline is, I think, clear and so far as we are aware, without controversy: SPARC will broaden its scope rather than shift it, so the stratosphere will not be lost; connections with the mesosphere are most definitely included; and we are to include those aspects of tropospheric climate that involve a strong coupling with the stratosphere (and mesosphere). The last condition is there to avoid duplication with the new GEWEX and CLIVAR projects, whose focus will be on land-atmosphere and ocean-atmosphere coupling, respectively.

A very important point in all this is that SPARC's scope is broadening in a way that is entirely consistent with developments within the community-driven SPARC activities that define the program, so in practice the evolution will be bottom-up; we don't really need to change anything in how we operate to enable it to happen. Another way of putting this is that our evolution is following the science, rather than being dictated programmatically. That is what we have been telling the JSC and they seem completely satisfied with our response. So in that sense, SPARC doesn't need to change; on the contrary, we have been given a green light to proceed in the direction we are already going.

Therefore my own personal view is very much as expressed by Dave Fahey, namely that since the acronym SPARC has tremendous appeal and is a help rather than a hindrance, we should keep it. I too find the slight change in name (Stratosphere-troposphere Processes And their Role in Climate) to be an elegant solution to the issue, and not a cop-out. Since our "change" is not really a sea-change but rather a continuation of the path we are on, towards a more integrated view of the atmosphere, I don't see the need to signal a major change to the outside world, and I like Dave's idea of signaling our evolution in other ways, especially a new logo.

In particular, I don't buy the argument of "change for change's sake" (which is effectively the argument that we need to change to get people to take notice). These days, any new program is looked at very warily by funding agencies, and often by scientists too; there are just too many groups that purport to coordinate science but don't actually add value, and people are tired of that. Whereas SPARC has a great track record with the agencies we need to support our science, as well as with the scientific community. So by putting a new name on the table, we are actually putting ourselves into a potentially vulnerable position, and would need to be very sure that what we gain would outweigh what we would lose.

The response to this latest round of the blog has clearly shown that T-SPARC or SPARC-TM have very little traction in the community, so I agree with Greg that we need to reject those options and go back to the drawing board in terms of a potential new name. By my count, in this latest round, those arguing for no change (or a change in name but not acronym) outnumber those arguing for a decisive change by about 2:1. So my sense is that if change is to happen, we would need to come up with a really catchy new name that would rally the community

behind it. As several have said, it will be hard to beat SPARC!



Steven Pawson

on **14.05.2012 at 14:29** said:

It's good to see the debate moving forwards. Greg: sorry, but I don't see "ASTRICS" as being viable. As I said a couple of weeks ago, and as many of the very recent posts suggest, it is very hard to beat SPARC. It has power and simplicity – and it still represents what the WCRP needs (consistent with the Implementation Plan for which Ted has provided the link).

We should give credit to Marie-Lise and Marv for coming up with such a good acronym in the first place.

Keeping the acronym but re-designing the logo is a good idea – maybe a more vivid/colorful logo would be appropriate for this age when the emphasis is more on on-screen viewing than on printed materials.



Diane Pendlebury

on **14.05.2012 at 16:02** said:

If an acronym change is necessary then I like ASTRICS (but only because I really liked the comic books as a kid – and CliVar could become Ocean and Boundary Layer Impacts on the Climate System (OBLICS)) and I like CSI because as Peter suggests, it does allow for the subtopics. However, my preference would be to keep the acronym and change the logo and, as Piers suggested, change the tagline to describe what SPARC does, although his was quite long. How about: "The role of stratospheric and other atmospheric processes on climate and weather, and their coupling to the Earth's climate system" (Well, it needs more word-smithing by better writers than me, but something to that effect.) I think this sort of change would show that SPARC is evolving to include more of the atmosphere without losing the brand name. The "atmospheric" in the tagline (instead of tropospheric) doesn't alienate the upper-middle atmosphere people. The "stratospheric" keeps the sense of the original and is the meat of the sandwich, so to speak.



Paul A. Newman

on **14.05.2012 at 20:49** said:

I would prefer to keep the SPARC name. The SPARC acronym is now a known seal of scientific quality, and SPARC has an excellent heritage. SPARC also rolls off the tongue easily.



Emily Shuckburgh

on **14.05.2012 at 21:31** said:

Hmm – I'm not sure I'm going to add much here, but these are my thoughts for what it is worth...

I actually quite liked T-SPARC... SPARC always had the advantage of a) saying what it did, and b) being a dynamic-sounding sparky kind of name, and c) having a nice long-lived community feel which has developed over many years – for me at least, SPARC has always represented much more than just an acronym. T-SPARC similarly would have the advantage of a) saying what it does, reflecting the broader scope that has developed and b) sounding even more dynamic in a T-Rex kind of sparky way but with bigger teeth, and c) keeping the long-standing community feel. (Personally I'm not keen on SPARC-TM simply because I'm not sure that the business-related connotations of TM are something we really want to invoke.)

I'm kind of ambivalent about the S turning into Stratosphere-troposphere. I agree that I don't really see the point of change for the sake of change, but equally on balance I'd probably say that we'd all agree that it's good to reflect the way the focus has changed over time and that we've probably got to the point where it would be good to be explicit (WCRP aside) about that fact that these days we are a broader community (and to make it clear to the relevant broader community that they are welcome to join our club).

I think changing completely would probably be a bad idea, simply because there is a real family-feel that has developed around SPARC – something which I don't think exists elsewhere – that sort of community

feel is very difficult to generate and, personally, I don't think its something one wants to risk losing once its developed.



Karen Rosenlof

on **14.05.2012 at 22:34** said:

Of all the suggestions discussed here, I prefer Pier's idea of keeping the acronym (and the name), but changing the tag line if WCRP requires a change. If it's critical to have a name change, I'm personally partial to Gloria's suggestion of MATRICS because it's easy to pronounce, and it explicitly includes the mesosphere, which is feeling the impacts of climate change as well.



Isla Simpson

on **15.05.2012 at 0:50** said:

I vote for keeping the acronym SPARC and re-designing the logo. I don't feel like a name change is really necessary. I assumed that the role in climate included tropospheric climate and I see from the postings above that many other people did as well. If a name change is necessary then I think Stratosphere-troposphere Processes and their role in Climate is the best one. Out of the proposed acronyms I prefer T-SPARC as it's not clear how you pronounce SPARC^TM.



Alan Robock

on **15.05.2012 at 1:38** said:

Dear Greg,

What you wrote has not changed my mind from my previous blog post. I don't see what is wrong with SPARC (the activities) and why it has to change. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. SPARC is a good brand name, and new activities are changing and expanding the work just fine.

I don't like your suggestion of ASTRICS. First of all, I have never heard of Astrix and Oblix, so don't know what you are talking about. Furthermore an asterisk refers to a footnote, and this sounds like you want to make SPARC a footnote, that is that SPARC is not important.



Holger Voemel
on **15.05.2012 at 1:47** said:

Greg, you said it yourself: "We need to appreciate that SPARC's value derives from what it is, not from what it is named." Therefore, it may not be wise to change the name for sake of change. Replacing a great acronym with one that does not carry weight in the community and hope it will grow may not be a good choice either.

To show that SPARC is changing, you might want to hype up the change that is already happening and that we want to see. I believe there are endless possibilities beyond the change of an acronym. This would actually focus the discussion back from just a five character acronym to the core of what we need to do to serve the scientific community.

I also like David's idea of bringing in a graphic designer to come up with a new logo. Here there are infinity ways keep the old yet express the change.



Michaela Hegglin
on **15.05.2012 at 8:23** said:

Just to give a similar vote as Alan from the youngish-SPARC scientist side despite the fact that I was a fervent Asterix and Obelix fan... My vote would be to keep the acronym and change the name. SPARC science still fits under the SPARC hat, even if it further broadens its scope or deepens its involvement in either tropospheric or mesospheric science. I think it is worth noting that nobody has said that the acronym should be changed because it is no longer appropriate, so this indicates to me that the suggested change is suggested for the sake of change itself. To me that is not a very compelling argument. In my experience the SPARC label has always been a powerful one, opening doors rather than closing them. Why would we want to give this up?

I also think that adding yet another acronym to the soup of acronyms out there will just confuse the issue and take away the clear identity we have established over the years.



Neal Butchart

on **15.05.2012 at 19:37** said:

I would prefer to keep the SPARC name. The SPARC acronym is now a known seal of scientific quality, and SPARC has an excellent heritage. SPARC also rolls off the tongue easily.

PS I was lazy and simply copied Paul Newman's nice short reply which I fully agree with. I dislike ASTRIC or whatever was suggested plus all the other suggestions in which SPARC acquires an unusual attachment. The suggestions of a new logo sounds rather good.



Andrew Charlton-Perez

on **16.05.2012 at 13:58** said:

My vote would go for keeping the acronym the same and changing the name (Stratosphere-troposphere Processes and their Role in Climate) as many others above. I would also second the idea that clearly defining the mission of the organisation is critical. I have always considered this mission to encompass coupling to the troposphere.

So far in my career I've always valued SPARC as an organisation because it has always seemed to have several well defined objectives and was of the right size to be able to deliver international projects with important scientific outcomes. One thing I don't like about the T-SPARC version is that it seems to place troposphere apart and above the rest of the acronym. As silly as it sounds it has always been important to me to have an organisation to belong to in which stratosphere was the first word. An ongoing struggle here (both in discussion with colleagues and in writing grant proposals) is to convince people that study of stratospheric processes is relevant to climate. This has never been a problem at SPARC meetings 😊

This also points to the importance of expanding the S to Stratosphere-

troposphere in addition to changing the mission statement, as this would serve to emphasize the important existing objectives of SPARC in this area.

**Pablo Canziani**on **16.05.2012 at 15:42** said:

After all these exchanges it is clear that we should not change for change's sake. Going over the replies, I personally do not like to begin a new acronym with the word 'analysing'. ASTRICS can be nevertheless appealing, given the famous Gaul, and the logo would be planet earth with two little wings to keep with the image the name evokes...

MATRICS is also interesting, and as mentioned many times, would include the mesosphere in the program. Nevertheless the popular image the term is linked to (to people not active in math or science) portrays a rather dark and dynamic series of movies.

The image a name conveys remains very important. Thus I am not sure MATRICS would send the proper message even though from a purely scientific view it is attractive.

I have been trying to think of something short and concise as SPARC, may be STARC but it is difficult to give it the correct meaning we want to convey! Furthermore while SPARC suggests electricity, light and ultimately a bright idea, STARC would suggest something sparse or hard.

I believe that nobody has come up yet with an acronym as appealing as SPARC, hence for the time being, unless there is a sudden illumination, we should stick to SPARC with a new meaning and definitely a new logo to capture the new program guidelines.

**Tiffany Shaw**on **16.05.2012 at 19:48** said:

I vote for keeping the SPARC acronym. I don't find the arguments for changing it very convincing and I don't find the alternatives as effective.

As a young scientist who is applying for funding and seeking new connections, it has been very helpful to be associated with SPARC and

the broader WCRP community. SPARC activities, such as DynVar of which I am a member, fit naturally into broader impact statements that are required by US funding agencies. While we don't run the risk of losing our broader impacts during this transition, we should work hard to preserve the strong sense of community that makes SPARC so special.

**Bill Randel**on **16.05.2012 at 21:28** said:

I vote to keep the SPARC name. SPARC is a well-established brand name, associated with high quality science. It is reasonable to change the name if desired, and also the logo.



Darryn Waugh

on **18.05.2012 at 1:47** said:

I don't see the need to change the name. As far as I can see the focus of the group will be the same, so why change the name.

If it is felt some change is needed to satisfy WCRP then I would vote for same acronym but changing "Stratospheric" to "Stratosphere-troposphere". This would portray the shift in focus from solely stratospheric to stratosphere-troposphere coupling, which I understand is what WCRP is requesting.



Martin Dameris

on **18.05.2012 at 6:45** said:

At the end of this (too) long discussion, for me there is no convincing argument which speaks for another acronym than SPARC. We should not lose our "trade mark" standing for a success story. And as said previously: In the past, the troposphere has been always a part of our research.



Natalia Calvo

on **20.05.2012 at 15:40** said:

I read some of the discussion last summer/fall, but I never replied, maybe because I didn't feel I had enough experience to know the consequences of a change (or not), regarding the reaction of the community or future funding opportunities. I think the answer depends too much on the personality of each of us.

My vote is however, to keep the name, SPARC, as it is. Since the first time I heard the acronym, when I was an inexperienced PhD student), I understood it as the role in Climate, thinking (probably naively) in tropospheric climate. This is why I agree with some of you that have said that the name is actually more appropriate now. I completely agree. Maybe today we are focusing on the interactions between the stratosphere and the troposphere and tomorrow we might be studying more about the stratosphere-upper atmosphere relationships... If we understand SPARC as a community I don't see such a need for a new name when we are just changing the focus.

We could also include the word troposphere in the name as some of you have mentioned. Of the new names proposed, I would go for T-SPARC. I don't like SPARC TM, are we a trade mark?

But in summary, I would keep SPARC, and "sell" our new focus on tropospheric issues appropriately.



Shigeo Yoden

on **24.05.2012 at 15:05** said:

I vote for keeping the SPARC name and acronym, just after I have looked over this blog from the beginning.

Under the name of SPARC we have two objectives:

(1) stratospheric processes, and (2) their role in climate

Here I have understood from the early days of SPARC activities in the last century that climate means "tropospheric" climate as some people wrote already. (Maybe it could include the oceans, lands and sea-ice,

too.) Thus, I do not think we need to include “troposphere” into a new name.

The above statements assume the main body of the SPARC community does not change so much after the reformation.

On the other hand, if there will be a substantial change of the community under the current restructuring process, for example, merger with some sub-groups of CLIVAR, GEWEX and/or other communities, then we should discuss the mission/objectives of the new group first, as Marv wrote. After agreeing a new scientific agenda, it will be straightforward to decide a new name of the group and its acronym. In such a case, totally new acronym would be more appropriate if we consider the history of each (sub)group, including SPARC.