

The Independent Climate Change Email Review

I submit this document as an “interested party”. I have interacted with members of the Climatic Research Unit (principally, Phil Jones, Keith Briffa, Mick Kelly, and to a lesser extent Tom Wigley, Clare Goodess, and others) since the early 1980s. We have collaborated on research topics of mutual interest, occasionally published articles together, and for 30 years I have had excellent working relationships with them. Despite that, we don’t always agree with each other, which is, of course, quite normal on scientific matters. Nevertheless, **I have the greatest respect for their scholarship, insight and scientific integrity**, and I have seen nothing in the stolen emails that changes this opinion.

I note (in the FAQ section of your web site) that you have not yet read all the emails, and do not appear to find such a task essential. If that is indeed so, let me point out that the Associated Press reported the total volume of stolen material was about 1 million words, of which only a few sentences have raised any questions. I would therefore remind you of the statement attributed to Cardinal Richlieu:

“If you give me six lines written by the most honest man, I will find something in them to hang him”.

Please bear that in mind. The theft was a political act, and your inquiry should be fully aware of the context in which you are operating.

You expressly note that your inquiry “*is about proper scientific and FOI procedures and data handling within CRU*” and not about “*the fundamental science of climate change*” yet most of the questions you pose are indeed quite specific about scientific issues, some of which are topics of current research by a number of individuals. In particular, you pose a number of questions about the nature of the “Medieval Warm Period” which have no bearing on “*proper scientific and FOI procedures and data handling within CRU*”.

That said, let me address a few of your questions:

Does not the problem of divergence for the late 20th century record invalidate the deduction of tree ring palaeotemperatures for the period prior to the instrumental record?

How open have you been about this issue?

Several papers have been written about this topic (by Briffa, Cook, Hughes, D’Arrigo, Esper, Mann and others). It is hardly a topic that has been suppressed; rather, it has engendered lively debate, in which Keith Briffa has been an active and insightful participant. It is clear to me that the evidence for a uniquely warm late 20th century does not rest on tree ring data alone, nor is there compelling evidence that “divergence” was an issue in Medieval time; indeed, it might be a symptom of the very unusual conditions that have prevailed in recent decades as a result of human activities. But this is clearly a scientific debate that has no bearing on the quality or integrity of scientific procedures at CRU and is unrelated to FOI requests.

You query the phrase, “*it would be nice to try to "contain" the putative "MWP" ...*”

The scientific literature is replete with articles that supposedly identify a “Medieval Warm Period” but since the time period of this interval has never been clearly defined, it provides plenty of temporal latitude for confusion. Thus, you may find articles claiming evidence for a

MWP from AD 800-1000, whereas another may argue that the interval occurred from AD1200-1400....and every combination in between. My interpretation of this sentence is that the temporal dimension of the so-called MWP needs to be better defined, and to do that one needs a reconstruction that goes beyond the last 1000 years (as indicated by the rest of the sentence cited) I think the word should have been “constrain” rather than “contain”, which simply highlights the danger of picking out phrases that were not written for publication.

How important is the assertion of “unprecedented late 20th century warming” in the argument for anthropogenic forcing of climate?

The argument for anthropogenic forcing of climate is based on our understanding of radiation, atmospheric physics, feedbacks and model simulations which provide a multi-dimensional fingerprint of the changes expected with increased levels of greenhouse gases. Late 20th century warming is an expected, and well-observed, consequence of the increase in greenhouse gases that have been measured. No other forcing can explain the warming observed in the late 20th century.

As noted earlier, **this question has no bearing whatsoever on your brief** to examine, “..whether there is any evidence of the manipulation or suppression of data which is at odds with acceptable scientific practice ... CRU’s policies and practices for acquiring, assembling, subjecting to peer review and disseminating data and research findings, ...CRU’s compliance or otherwise with the University’s policies and practices regarding requests under the Freedom of Information Act (the FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (the EIR) for the release of data , or ... the appropriate management, governance and security structures for CRU and the security, integrity and release of the data it holds”

It is alleged that instrumental data has been selected preferentially to include data from warmer, urban in contrast to rural sites; that the rationale for the choice of high/low latitude sites is poor; and that the processes by which data has been corrected, accepted and rejected are complex and unclear ...”

There are numerous articles in the published literature which specifically examine urban versus rural stations, oceanic versus land stations etc. This is a non-issue; warming is strong and clear at the most rural of networks. Whether the procedures for selecting records is clear or complex is in the eye of the beholder, but no doubt there is always room for improvement. I understand that there is a WMO initiative underway to make more of the data available in an “open source” format, and that would certainly address this criticism.

It is alleged that there have been improper attempts to influence the peer review system and a violation of IPCC procedures in attempting to prevent the publication of opposing ideas.

This is an important issue. I can only provide you with my own experience as author, or co-author of over 170 peer-reviewed scientific articles and author, or editor of 12 books on climatology and paleoclimatology. I have also served as Associate Editor of the *Journal of Geophysical Research*, and on the Editorial Boards of several journals and book series (Blackwell, Springer, Kluwer and others). Peer review is not a perfect system, but editors try to find reviewers who will provide an authoritative and frank assessment of a paper. Then, with the reviews in hand, the editor must decide on whether the paper is accepted or rejected. I have never experienced an attempt to sway the editorial system in the way implied here, and in my opinion, to do so would be counter-productive as editors as a whole value their independence.

So, I can not accept the idea that the peer review system can be hijacked to favor one view over another—given the preponderance of journals that are available, this seems to me an absurd idea. Of course, scientists may conclude that a particular journal has standards that are unacceptably low, and thus choose not to submit articles to it, or to think twice about citing articles that such a journal publishes, but that is nothing more than the normal workings of the “scientific marketplace”

Respectfully submitted
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