
The relativity of volume

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When I was invited to mentor this edition of the OIML Bulletin on the topic of volume, because I have a background mainly in oil and gas, the question immediately translated in my mind to metrology, especially the measurement of liquids and gases. However, there are other interpretations as to what the topic of “volume” could encompass.

According to the Cambridge dictionary, volume is:

- the amount of space that is contained within an object or solid shape;
- the number or amount of something in general: for example, “It’s the sheer *volume* of traffic in the city that is causing the problems”;
- the level of sound produced by a television, radio, etc., or the switch or other device controlling it: for example, “Could you turn the *volume* down, please, I’m trying to sleep”; or
- one in a set of related books: For example, “The second *volume* of his memoirs will be published later this year”.

As can be seen, the variety in meanings speaks *volumes* on our perception of a seemingly straightforward question! Given the scope and field of activity of the OIML, it was not difficult for me to restrict my thinking to my initial thoughts on the matter. However, measurement of the level of sound was somewhat tempting to include as well.

Having used the word “perception”, I found it interesting to (briefly) talk to non-metrologists about volumes of liquids and gases. Although they too typically take into consideration measurements involving, for example, petrol, natural gas, drinks etc., in their perception volume is a perfectly viable quantity to express the amounts of goods in.

As a hardened metrologist since many years, the scientist in me is always looking for occasions to educate people on the relative nature of volume (and maybe even promote the use of other measurement quantities), but this may not be needed. When one thinks about it, their perception is – as I see it – a compliment to our sector. To the general public, using volume is a fit for purpose quantity they know and trust. And it is this trust that we, metrologists, are giving them.

On that note, with many thanks to all the contributors, I would say “keep up the good *volume* of work” and enjoy reading this *volume* of the Bulletin.