

A MATTER OF TERMINIOLOGY
'CLOCKS' AND 'FREQUENCY STANDARDS'

In common language a clock tells the time - it gives the epoch. It is not just a source of constant frequency - that is a frequency standard.

True, to make a clock you need a frequency standard - the output of the clock is the integral of the frequency. But something more is needed to make a clock - a means of determining that arbitrary additive constant of integration - in other words a means of synchronising the clock to some standard time.

I think that it would help our understanding of what is meant if we made a distinction between a 'clock' and a 'frequency standard'. A hydrogen maser or the UWA sapphire loaded cavity oscillator is a frequency standard - it is not a clock (although it might be used to drive a clock).

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