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When the first edition of Elizabeth M. Shaw's *Hydrology in Practice* appeared in 1983, it was immediately perceived to be a valuable addition to the hydrology texts that were then available. It became a standard text in most, if not all, undergraduate and Master's level hydrology courses in the UK and was widely used elsewhere, despite the strong orientation towards the practical training of UK engineering hydrologists. It was Elizabeth's stated intention to ensure that engineers received the training necessary in hydrological measurements and analysis to be able to manage surface and groundwater water resources, floods and droughts in the UK.

Since that time, the organisation of the water industry has changed dramatically in the UK. No longer are there integrated water authorities dealing with supply, waste water, flood risk and water quality. Now we have regulated utility companies with responsibilities for supply and treatment and separate government agencies with responsibilities for water quality standards, licensing of abstractions and effluents, and flood defence. Much less hydrological analysis is done 'in-house' by these bodies; much more is commissioned from consultants. The major insurance companies have also taken much more interest in the hydrology of floods and droughts. European Directives, including the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive, have resulted in environmental and sustainability concerns becoming more important relative to purely engineering design issues in water resource management.

Elizabeth has long retired from teaching at Imperial College, but in talking to her in preparing this edition it is clear that she remains concerned about the training of the next generation of engineers and environmental hydrologists. She particularly feels that the recent developments have resulted in a loss of local expertise dealing with local problems using best practice methods. When we received the invitation of Taylor & Francis to prepare a fourth edition of *Hydrology in Practice*, she generously gave us a free hand to change the text and presentation in any way we wished. We have very much intended, however, to keep the applied nature of the text well to the fore, so that it still adhered to the original aims of the first edition. The need is still there, even if the scope of practical training required for hydrologists is now somewhat wider. Some of the methods in the earlier editions have been superseded but we hope that much of the spirit of the original remains.

Indeed, although we have made extensive changes to the text, there is still a lot that is recognisable from the third edition. Thus we have suggested that Elizabeth should remain as the first author for this fourth edition, especially since everyone has simply referred to the earlier editions as 'Shaw' for as long as we can remember.