From: Bob Hjellming <rhjellmi@aoc.nrao.edu>
To: abridle
Cc: rhjellmi
Subject: AIPS++
Date: Wed, 11 May 1994 15:24:08 -0600

Alan,

I hear from Richard Simon that you are going to be an "astronomical advisor" to AIPS++, or something to that effect. Also that you are the main person initially suggesting that SD prototyping be emphasized in the next few years. I hear Harvey and some friends are rather against all that.

I would be curious to hear what your view of the situation, and your role, really is. I am planning a continuing level of effort with regard to both general AIPS++ design issues in general and the interferometry side of things in particular. AIPS++ needs real work by people, but that seems to be getting harder to achieve. Both for those who want to contribute, like me, and those who want get get others involved,` like Richard.

Cheers, Bob

From abridle Wed May 11 18:56:53 1994
X-VM-v5-Data: ([nil nil nil nil nil nil nil nil nil]
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From: abridle (Alan Bridle)
To: Bob Hjellming <rhjellmi@aoc.nrao.edu>
Subject: Re: AIPS++
Date: Wed, 11 May 1994 18:56:49 -0400

My, isn't the rumor circuit wonderful....

I'm not in line to do anything particular in AIPS++ and indeed have been encouraging Richard _not_ to appoint anyone here (i.e. C'ville) as "official astronomer" on the interferometric side.

Recent history tells me that until the project is more ready to support application development at the AOC, the role of Project Scientist (Interferometry) is not particularly viable.

I do think that aips++ needs a limited-scope pilot project that will demonstrate its ability to produce a user-programmable interface, built around the toolkit concept, well enough documented that astronomers who are not steeped in C++ can easily customize it to their specific analysis needs. I have said for years that I think the single-dish package could be a good place to demonstrate this. Single-dish analysis requires a lot of customization by users but is not as complex algorithmically as interferometry. It may be a suitable arena for prototyping the user-programmability that was the main _non-political_ reason for starting a new NRAO software effort.

I made no headway at all with Geoff with this idea. But, seeing as:

(a) the GBT and the array-feed at Tucson both need new software but have not enough people to write it,

(b) Richard was deciding to concentrate aips++ effort for a while in the midst of a den of single-dishers and only a couple hours from the GBT operation,

(c) the VLA and VLBA are being reasonably well served by old AIPS in its semi-frozen state,

I thought I'd fly this old idea again to the new management.

Before doing that, I talked with Harvey about it, then by E-mail with a few AOC-ers. Part-way into that process, Tim Cornwell told me he had talked it over in a meeting with you and Juan so I didn't bother you two with it directly before trying it on Richard.

Richard decided to mention it as an option to the Visiting Committee. They seemed keen so Richard got the bit between his teeth while in Socorro and started selling it to the aips++ Consortium. I gather that the Dutch and the Australians also supported it but the Illinoids did not. They will presumably thrash something out at the meeting in

the U.K.

If this is indeed the direction that the aips++ project decides to go in, after their meeting in England, then the next Project Scientist should probably be a single-dish astronomer based here in C'ville. If aips++ shows that it can generate a plausible interface and support system for single-dish, then some time may have been bought for the missing parts of the interferometry design.

The only explicit proposal at this point for an ongoing u,v design is that it would be worked on, in Holland, by a group containing Bob Sault, Mark Wieringa and Dave Shone, while the "center" concentrates on the toolkit, documentation, and single-dish applications. There are some recent memos from Jan Noordam about this in the aips++ exploders.

Assuming that the experience of trying to assemble a functional prototype for GBT/Tucson applications is positive, and that a design emerges for the interferometric calibration, I would hope that a more tested and mature (experienced) project could then be shifted back to AOC when it actually becomes plausible to start writing astronomer-oriented tasks for interferometry. Until then. it's not clear to me that a Project Scientist (Interferometry) is needed at the NRAO.

Indeed, it might be better if there is _not_ such a position until the single-dish prototype of aips++ has been evaluated and we know if there is a project to continue in Socorro! It would be better for any consultations that go on with interfometrists at the NRAO to stay low-profile in order that (a) Richard avoid the debacle of yet another Project Scientist resignation if the infrastructure fails or an application-oriented person becomes frustrated and (b) he avoid the sociology of having a Project Scientist appointed during this temporary consolidation in Virginia appear to preside over the delivery of an early u,v prototype to new Mexico. That didn't work with Ed Fomalont and old AIPS, and it's not likely to work again. Even if the design is reasonable!

I'm not sure how these concerns translate into Dutch, but as this was the second language of the VLA in earlier times, they might sound better with a strong Dutch accent.

So yes I have recently been giving advice (unsolicited). I may thereby be drawn into giving some more (solicited). But no I have not agreed to become any kind of _official_ advisor to aips++. I shall resist becoming one if asked, as I don't think this would be the best way for me to help things go in what I think may be the right direction.

In any case, in the great and glorious world of steering committees and international consortia, none of this carves any tracks in the ice, let alone stone, until Richard gets back from the U.K.

Cheers, A.