Summary of discussion at publications BoF

Opinion varied widely as to the necessity of a new journal, but there was general enthusiasm at the idea of participating - as readers, authors, referees, and, in some cases, as editors - in such a new journal, if one were to exist.

Some people felt that the increasing importance of computational techniques in astronomy today necessitates the creation of a dedicated journal, and the analogy was made with particle physics, which has long since made a definite split between journals for science results and journals for technical material (experimental details, as well as analysis software, etc). The latter stream is highly valued, both for providing a means of sharing and recording technical knowledge, and for rewarding the efforts of more technical staff, so the suggestion that astronomy would benefit from the same system.

The case was made that previous attempts to provide such outlets have not met with great enthusiasm from the ADASS community. The AIP's "Computers in Physics" journal (since merged with "IEEE Computational Science and Engineering" to form "Computing in Science and Engineering") had a similar intention to that proposed here (although covering all of physics, rather than just astronomy), but few astronomy-related papers were published there, and the same goes now for Experimental Astronomy.

There was general agreement that the ADASS community would benefit from producing more refereed papers, but most people felt that the opportunities provided by existing journals should be exhausted before serious consideration is made of starting a new one. This might even by coordinated - whether through the dedication of special issues, or more informally amongst authors - in an attempt to produce a journal with a critical mass of material about astronomy computing. It is not clear whether the increasing importance of this domain is better highlighted by the creation of a dedicated journal, or by making a significant presence within an existing journal.

Many people see PASP as the most appropriate outlet for papers on topics requiring a fuller treatment than allowed by the ADASS proceedings, and others mentioned that papers on algorithms can find a home in mainstream astronomy journals, so the problem of excluded material is really centred on descriptions software of pipelines, etc, whose details should be recorded and made available to their users, but which may lack the conceptual novelty required by most journals.

A requirement was identified for an outlet for publishing lessons learnt of the "we did this, but it didn't work because of these reasons" sort. That could be provided by a non-refereed section of a new journal, or, equally, by postings to astro-ph. There is already an "instruments and methods" chapter there, that is currently poorly used by the ADASS community, but it could be transformed by greater use into a suitable vehicle for knowledge exchange within the community.

Another advantage of publishing in astro-ph is that research astronomers are used to looking there, which would be an advantage for some papers in this domain, although, equally, some others may benefit more from publication in a journal (such as Earth Sciences Informatics or CODATA Data Science Journal) that is read by people working on analogous topics in related domains.