

# Astra: A Python Package for Cross-Instrument Stellar and Telluric Template Construction

André M. Silva<sup>1,2</sup>, J. P. Faria<sup>3</sup>, Nuno C. Santos<sup>1,2</sup>, Sérgio G. Sousa<sup>1</sup>,  
Pedro T. P. Viana<sup>1,2</sup>, and J. H. C. Martins<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Instituto de Astrofísica e Ciências do Espaço, CAUP, Universidade do Porto, Rua das Estrelas, 4150-762 Porto, Portugal <sup>2</sup> Departamento de Física e Astronomia, Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade do Porto, Rua do Campo Alegre, 4169-007 Porto, Portugal <sup>3</sup> Département d'astronomie de l'Université de Genève, Chemin Pegasi 51, 1290 Versoix, Switzerland

DOI: [10.xxxxxx/draft](https://doi.org/10.xxxxxx/draft)

## Software

- [Review](#) 
- [Repository](#) 
- [Archive](#) 

Editor: [Open Journals](#) 

## Reviewers:

- [@openjournals](#)

Submitted: 01 January 1970

Published: unpublished

## License

Authors of papers retain copyright and release the work under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([CC BY 4.0](#))

## Summary

*ASTRA* is Python package that provides a modular, instrument-independent interface for working with high-resolution stellar spectra. Designed to support data from multiple spectrographs — including ESPRESSO (Pepe et al., 2021), HARPS (Mayor et al., 2003; Pepe et al., 2002), MAROON-X (Seifahrt et al., 2022), and CARMENES (Quirrenbach et al., 2014) — *ASTRA* offers a unified abstraction over their data formats, enabling consistent access to fluxes, wavelengths, uncertainties, and metadata across instruments. Furthermore, it applies the necessary wavelength and flux calibrations that are needed, as described by the official pipelines of each instrument.

In addition to a common interface, *ASTRA* provides internal quality control checks of the observations, automatically divides them into the different sub-datasets that are commonly used by each spectrograph, and provides avenues to dynamically reject observation based on different properties. Furthermore, it also provides routines to mask the spectral imprint of Earth's atmosphere (in the form of telluric lines) and construct high-SNR, data-driven, stellar templates.

This package serves as the backend of the SBART pipeline (Silva et al., 2022) and is designed to be extensible and suitable for integration into larger spectral analysis workflows, enabling the construction of pipelines without having to tailor them to individual instruments. It is implemented in such a way that the user can select to only open in memory a small number of observations, such that it can seamlessly handle datasets with thousands of observations. Furthermore, it makes use of *python's* *autopproxy* objects, ensuring a smooth integration with codes that use the *multiprocessing* library to leverage concurrent processing for faster computations.

## Statement of need

In recent years, multiple ultra-stable, high-resolution spectrographs capable of meter-per-second (or better) radial velocity precision have become central to exoplanet and stellar astrophysics, e.g. HARPS, CARMENES, MAROON-X, and ESPRESSO. While each spectrograph provides high-quality observations, they also use distinct data formats and apply different corrections to the stellar spectra. This hinders the development of generalized analysis pipelines, and often leads to analysis pipelines that are focused on a single instrument. To the best of our knowledge, there is no library that provides a similar interface to access stellar spectra of multiple state-of-the-art spectrographs.

41 *ASTRA* was built with the intention of not only providing a common API to access stellar  
42 spectra, but also provides:

- 43 1. Management of observations – *ASTRA* provides a high-level interface for accessing stellar  
44 spectra and metadata, built on a memory-efficient design that only loads a minimal  
45 number of spectra at a time. This ensures that *ASTRA* stays responsive, even when  
46 dealing with datasets with thousands of observations, at the cost of computational speed  
47 when interfacing with the data. This is done through the *autoprox* interface, ensuring  
48 full compatibility with any *multiprocessing*-based application.
- 49 2. Masking of atmospheric features – When dealing with ground-based spectroscopy, it is  
50 important to account for the spectral imprint of our atmosphere (in the form of telluric  
51 lines), as well as its yearly variation. *ASTRA* can automatically run *Telfit* (Gullikson  
52 et al., 2014) to generate a synthetic transmittance model and create a binary mask to  
53 reject the position of telluric lines;
- 54 3. Construction of high-SNR stellar models – The construction of high-SNR stellar templates  
55 from observations is pivotal for the extraction of precise radial velocities (Artigau et al.,  
56 2022; Silva et al., 2022; Zechmeister et al., 2018), determination of stellar parameters  
57 (Gomes da Silva, J. et al., 2021; Sousa, S. G. et al., 2024), and characterization of  
58 exoplanetary atmospheres (Azevedo Silva et al., 2022; Damasceno, Y. C. et al., 2024;  
59 Stangret, M. et al., 2024);
- 60 4. Dynamically group the observations into different sub-datasets – Over the lifetime of most  
61 state-of-the-art spectrographs they are subjected to instrumental interventions, leading to  
62 changes in the instrumental profile and offsets in radial velocities. As a consequence, it is  
63 often necessary to divide our data in the time-periods before and after such interventions,  
64 to construct individual templates in each. *ASTRA* is pre-configured with the dates of  
65 such instruments for all supported spectrographs, divides the observations in each dataset  
66 (or sub-Instrument) and creates individual stellar and telluric templates for each;
- 67 5. Filtering of observations – When analysing data, we often reject observations based on  
68 metadata information (weather conditions, airmass, among others). Within *ASTRA*  
69 the user can dynamically set filters on different properties, with the goal of either fully  
70 rejecting the observation, or rejecting it from a specific operation. This means that it is  
71 possible to reject an observation for the construction of the stellar template, but not  
72 reject it from any subsequent analysis.
- 73 6. Masking of wavelength regions – When dealing with stellar spectra we often need to  
74 reject wavelength regions due to different contaminating effects. *ASTRA* creates an  
75 internal binary mask for all pixels and allows the rejection of i) Telluric-contaminated  
76 regions; ii) Activity-sensitive regions; iii) user-provided wavelength intervals.

77 As the backend of the SBART pipeline<sup>1</sup>, it is already in use for scientific production, and is  
78 well-positioned to support the broader astrophysical community working with high-resolution  
79 spectroscopy.

## 80 Acknowledgements

81 This work was funded by the European Union (ERC, FIERCE, 101052347). Views and  
82 opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect  
83 those of the European Union or the European Research Council. Neither the European  
84 Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. This work was also  
85 supported by FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia through national funds by  
86 these grants: UIDB/04434/2020 DOI: 10.54499/UIDB/04434/2020, UIDP/04434/2020 DOI:  
87 10.54499/UIDP/04434/2020, PTDC/FIS-AST/4862/2020, UID/04434/2025.

<sup>1</sup>Publicly available at <https://github.com/iaastro-pt/sBART>

## References

- Artigau, E., Cadieux, C., Cook, N. J., Doyon, R., Vandal, T., Donati, J.-F., Moutou, C., Delfosse, X., Fouqué, P., Martioli, E., Bouchy, F., Parsons, J., Carmona, A., Dumusque, X., Astudillo-Defru, N., Bonfils, X., & Mignon, L. (2022). Line-by-line Velocity Measurements: An Outlier-resistant Method for Precision Velocimetry. *The Astronomical Journal*, 164(3), 84. <https://doi.org/10.3847/1538-3881/ac7ce6>
- Azevedo Silva, T., Demangeon, O. D. S., Santos, N. C., Allart, R., Borsa, F., Cristo, E., Esparza-Borges, E., Seidel, J. V., Palte, E., Sousa, S. G., Tabernero, H. M., Zapatero Osorio, M. R., Cristiani, S., Pepe, F., Rebolo, R., Adibekyan, V., Alibert, Y., Barros, S. C. C., Bouchy, F., ... Udry, S. (2022). Detection of barium in the atmospheres of the ultra-hot gas giants WASP-76b and WASP-121b: Together with new detections of Co and Sr+ on WASP-121b. *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, 666, L10. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202244489>
- Damasceno, Y. C., Seidel, J. V., Prinoth, B., Psaridi, A., Esparza-Borges, E., Stangret, M., Santos, N. C., Zapatero-Osorio, M. R., Alibert, Y., Allart, R., Azevedo Silva, T., Cointepas, M., Costa Silva, A. R., Cristo, E., Di Marcantonio, P., Ehrenreich, D., González Hernández, J. I., Herrero-Cisneros, E., Lendl, M., ... Pepe, F. (2024). The atmospheric composition of the ultra-hot jupiter WASP-178 b observed with ESPRESSO. *A&A*, 689, A54. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202450119>
- Gomes da Silva, J., Santos, N. C., Adibekyan, V., Sousa, S. G., Campante, T. L., Figueira, P., Bossini, D., Delgado-Mena, E., Monteiro, M. J. P. F. G., de Laverny, P., Recio-Blanco, A., & Lovis, C. (2021). Stellar chromospheric activity of 1674 FGK stars from the AMBRE-HARPS sample - i. A catalogue of homogeneous chromospheric activity\*. *A&A*, 646, A77. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202039765>
- Gullikson, K., Dodson-Robinson, S., & Kraus, A. (2014). Correcting for Telluric Absorption: Methods, Case Studies, and Release of the Telfit Code. *The Astronomical Journal*, 148(3), 53. <https://doi.org/10.1088/0004-6256/148/3/53>
- Mayor, M., Pepe, F., Queloz, D., Bouchy, F., Rupprecht, G., Lo Curto, G., Avila, G., Benz, W., Bertaux, J.-L., Bonfils, X., Dall, Th., Dekker, H., Delabre, B., Eckert, W., Fleury, M., Gilliotte, A., Gojak, D., Guzman, J. C., Kohler, D., ... Weilenmann, U. (2003). Setting new standards with HARPS. *The Messenger*, 114, 20–24.
- Pepe, F., Cristiani, S., Rebolo, R., Santos, N. C., Dekker, H., Cabral, A., Di Marcantonio, P., Figueira, P., Curto, G. L., Lovis, C., Mayor, M., Mégevand, D., Molaro, P., Riva, M., Osorio, M. R. Z., Amate, M., Manescau, A., Pasquini, L., Zerbi, F. M., ... Zanutta, A. (2021). ESPRESSO@VLT – On-sky performance and first results. *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, 645, A96. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202038306>
- Pepe, F., Mayor, M., Rupprecht, G., Avila, G., Ballester, P., Beckers, J.-L., Benz, W., Bertaux, J.-L., Bouchy, F., Buzzoni, B., Cavadore, C., Deiries, S., Dekker, H., Delabre, B., D'Odorico, S., Eckert, W., Fischer, J., Fleury, M., George, M., ... Penny, A. (2002). HARPS: ESO's coming planet searcher. Chasing exoplanets with the La Silla 3.6-m telescope. *The Messenger*, 110. <https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2002Msngr.110....9P>
- Quirrenbach, A., Amado, P. J., Caballero, J. A., Mundt, R., Reinert, A., Ribas, I., Seifert, W., Abril, M., Aceituno, J., Alonso-Floriano, F. J., Eiff, M. A., Jiménez, R. A., Anwand-Heerwart, H., Azzaro, M., Bauer, F., Barrado, D., Becerril, S., Béjar, V. J. S., Benítez, D., ... Xu, W. (2014). CARMENES instrument overview. In S. K. Ramsay, I. S. McLean, & H. Takami (Eds.), *Ground-based and airborne instrumentation for astronomy v* (Vol. 9147, p. 91471F). International Society for Optics; Photonics; SPIE. <https://doi.org/10.1117/12.2056453>
- Seifahrt, A., Bean, J. L., Kasper, D., Stürmer, J., Brady, M., Liu, R., Zechmeister, M., Stefánsson, G. K., Montet, B., White, J., Tapia, E., Mocnik, T., Xu, S., & Schwab, C. (2022). MAROON-X: the first two years of EPRVs from Gemini North. In C. J.

- 137 Evans, J. J. Bryant, & K. Motohara (Eds.), *Ground-based and airborne instrumentation*  
138 *for astronomy IX* (Vol. 12184, p. 121841G). International Society for Optics; Photonics;  
139 SPIE. <https://doi.org/10.1117/12.2629428>
- 140 Silva, A. M., Faria, J. P., Santos, N. C., Sousa, S. G., Viana, P. T. P., Martins, J. H. C.,  
141 Figueira, P., Lovis, C., Pepe, F., Cristiani, S., Rebolo, R., Allart, R., Cabral, A., Mehner,  
142 A., Sozzetti, A., Mascareño, A. S., Martins, C. J. A. P., Ehrenreich, D., Mégevand, D.,  
143 ... al, et. (2022). A novel framework for semi-Bayesian radial velocities through template  
144 matching. *Astronomy & Astrophysics*. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202142262>
- 145 Sousa, S. G., Adibekyan, V., Delgado-Mena, E., Santos, N. C., Rojas-Ayala, B., Barros, S. C.  
146 C., Demangeon, O. D. S., Hoyer, S., Israelian, G., Mortier, A., Soares, B. M. T. B., &  
147 Tsantaki, M. (2024). SWEET-cat: A view on the planetary mass-radius relation. *A&A*,  
148 *691*, A53. <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202451704>
- 149 Stangret, M., Palle, E., Esparza-Borges, E., Orell Miquel, J., Casasayas-Barris, N., Zapatero  
150 Osorio, M. R., Cristo, E., Allart, R., Alibert, Y., Borsa, F., Demangeon, O. D. S.,  
151 Di Marcantonio, P., Ehrenreich, D., Figueira, P., González Hernández, J. I., Herrero-  
152 Cisneros, E., Martins, C. J. A. P., Santos, N. C., Seidel, J. V., ... Udry, S. (2024). The  
153 obliquity and atmosphere of the hot jupiter WASP-122b (KELT-14b) with ESPRESSO:  
154 An aligned orbit and no sign of atomic or molecular absorption. *A&A*, *691*, A120.  
155 <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/202450938>
- 156 Zechmeister, M., Reiners, A., Amado, P. J., Azzaro, M., Bauer, F. F., Béjar, V. J. S., Caballero,  
157 J. A., Guenther, E. W., Hagen, H.-J., Jeffers, S. V., Kaminski, A., Kürster, M., Launhardt,  
158 R., Montes, D., Morales, J. C., Quirrenbach, A., Reffert, S., Ribas, I., Seifert, W., ...  
159 Wolthoff, V. (2018). Spectrum radial velocity analyser (SERVAL): High-precision radial  
160 velocities and two alternative spectral indicators. *Astronomy & Astrophysics*, *609*, A12.  
161 <https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/201731483>