NOTE 200 – VLBI REQUIREMENTS FOR AIPS++

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1 Introduction

This document outlines the requirements for Very Long Baseline interferometry (VLBI) to enable data from the world's major arrays (EVN, VLBA, APT, CMVA, JNET) to be reduced within AIPS++. The primary instrument models for software development in AIPS++ have been connected–element (CE) arrays like the VLA, WSRT and ATCA, although much care has been taken to adopt a formalism that is not tied to any specific instrument or type of data (the Measurement Equation). There are, however, specific requirements for (VLBI) that should be identified and incorporated into the software development at an early stage, including special measures to allow for astrometric and geodetic VLBI data processing as well as Space VLBI. The purpose of this document is to outline those requirements. No attempt has been made to separate the specific VLBI requirements from those that are already defined for other interferometer data processing. However, it is clear that the requirements for VLBI presented in this document do not form a complete set of functionality either; for many detailed and non VLBI specific functions we have assumed that the equivalent of AIPS tasks will be available. We think it is understood that these things will be required if AIPS++ is to replace AIPS eventually.

In discussing VLBI-specific requirements, parallels to existing or developing AIPS routines will be drawn. Of course, some fraction of the requested functionality is not available in AIPS, although in some cases (notably for Space VLBI) it is under construction.

The final list of possibly interesting functions for AIPS++ has become quite lengthy. It is clear that some of these tasks will not emerge without specific effort from the interested parties, but we feel it is important to list all of them, in order to prevent that the future implementation of some of these is made difficult (or impossible) in design decisions.

This document has been produced after discussion with NRAO, EVN, JIVE and ATNF staff, and draws on previous documents such as AIPS++ Note 185, various AIPS++ Consortium User Specifications, a draft document by Tony Beasley (NRAO) on VLBI requirements, and a draft of Post-Correlation Data Processing Requirements for the Enhanced EVN by Dave Shone (Jodrell Bank). A draft version was discussed at a Workshop on VLBI Requirements for AIPS++ held in Alcala de Henares (Spain) on 22 October 1996. Participants included, besides most of the authors, Francisco Colomer, Carla Fanti, Mike Garrett, Leonid Gurvits, Kari Leppänen, Maria Massi, Jan Noordam, Richard Strom and Peter Wilkinson.

Our approach is to follow the data path from correlator to image (or other final product) in AIPS++ (Figure 1), and point out the specific VLBI requirements, including those for Space VLBI, along the way.

2 General Considerations

2.1 Programmability

Most of this document deals with required functionality of AIPS++ "tasks". However, the VLBI community is also very concerned about the programmability of the package. Traditionally, many VLBI astronomers have (necessarily) been involved in algorithm development. And it is clear that this is a continuing effort in all aspects and stages of VLBI processing. It is recognized that classic AIPS has imposed a high threshold for non–specialists to test and implement new methods.

In AIPS++ there are many layers of increasingly complex software. It is hoped that the user interface and script language (Glish) will provide a platform for simple data operations and straightforward processing. However, it seems unavoidable that at least some fraction of algorithm implementation by VLBI astronomers requires the use of compiled code. Because of the large datasets involved in VLBI processing, speed is a consideration for these projects. Easy access to class libraries, interfaces to C and FORTRAN, and documentation on the appropriate level seem to be required to ensure programmability. Skeleton tasks, tutorials and even training courses should be considered.

2.2 User Access to Data

There need to be flexible and simple ways for the users to manipulate their u,v datasets, for example:

- The user should be capable of using the host system's capabilities and utilities to manage his/her datasets. The datasets should use a normal file name, and the user should be able to use the host directory hierarchy to best organize the data.

- Tasks should generally take multiple input u,v datasets where this makes sense. For example, the map making program should be capable of taking multiple input datasets, all of which contribute to the output images with user defined weights.

- There needs to be a flexible way for the user to select the particular subset of data, in a dataset, to be processed. As well as selection based on time, antenna number, frequency, subarray, etc, it should be possible to select based on the values of other data (including monitor data).

- It should be possible to extract a subset of data from a dataset and manipulate it in some powerful command language. This would include displaying the data and optionally replacing it in the dataset (e.g. multiply the amplitudes for some antenna by an arbitrary factor).

- It should be possible to extract a subset of data from a dataset in a variety of formats (e.g. FITS or plain text) in order to transfer the data to other programs or packages. It should also be possible to read the modified data back into AIPS++ using the same formats.

- For applications where the built–in tasks and command language features are insufficient, there needs to be a program interface to allow the casual programmer reasonable access to the data. Some flexibility and efficiency can be sacrificed in making this interface comparatively simple. FORTRAN programmers should be supported.

2.3 Documentation

Another point we want to emphasize is one of documentation for non–specialist users. Our users often have no previous experience in synthesis imaging and start directly with VLBI. They need a cookbook–like introduction as well as tutorials.

2.4 Portability

For the VLBI user community it is of great importance that AIPS++ is portable to all systems that have significant support in the global VLBI community. At the moment these are mostly UNIX systems; besides Solaris and SunOS, especially DEC Alpha, HP/UX and Linux platforms are popular around the VLBI world.

2.5 Examples of VLBI Experiments

To get a feel for the possible data types that VLBI processing has to take into account, we list below possible VLBI observations for which AIPS++ processing and/or application development should be possible.

The first part of this list concentrates on data types that we consider part of (future) standard VLBI practice:

- continuum observations in single or dual polarization
- spectral line observations in single or dual polarization
- observations in which polarization, frequency, and/or pointing centre may be rapidly switching in time.
- simultaneous observations in multiple frequency bands (e.g. for observing multiple lines simultaneously or multi–frequency synthesis or S/X), with variable numbers of channels within each band
- pulsar-gated data
- mosaiced observations with several/many pointing centres (e.g. large line sources, gravitational lenses). This must be supported at both the u,v dataset and image dataset level
- polarization data with unequal uv–sampling, where all four polarization parameters are not available simultaneously, as might occur for networks with inhomogeneous polarization sampling or time-switching of the recorded polarization

- combination of data from different observations that have different (but overlapping) spectral sampling
- time–series data of profiles and visibilities (e.g. pulsar data with bin number as a data axis)
- multi–array datasets (e.g. MERLIN+EVN)
- multiple correlations from multi–field centre observations, for which the calibration should be identical (e.g. gravitational lenses)

More specialized dataset types which could be taken into consideration in the design of AIPS++ are:

- space VLBI observations
- observations during which the source changes structure (e.g. SS433)
- cluster–cluster data (e.g. WSRT–VLA multi–antenna VLBI)
- burst sampling for mm–wavelength VLBI
- triple correlation (including the case where one of the visibilities has a different frequency)
- combinations of the above (e.g. pulsar gated data in cluster–cluster mode)

3 Data–Loaders

3.1 Correlator Output

We think that ideally data loaders for specific observatories and correlators should not be required; data output from various places should use a common format and data content to allow transparent access by the users. The goal of the FITS standard is to establish this. However, with the complexity of VLBI correlators and specific requirements for calibration of certain observations, we fear that such a wish is not realistic, and data loaders for the various correlators (VLBA/MkIII/JIVE/SHEVE/K4) will be required. Note that the Canadian S2 and Japanese VSOP correlators will use the VLBA FITS binary table format. Furthermore, the JIVE correlator also intends to use the FITS binary table format. For the ATNF LBA this would

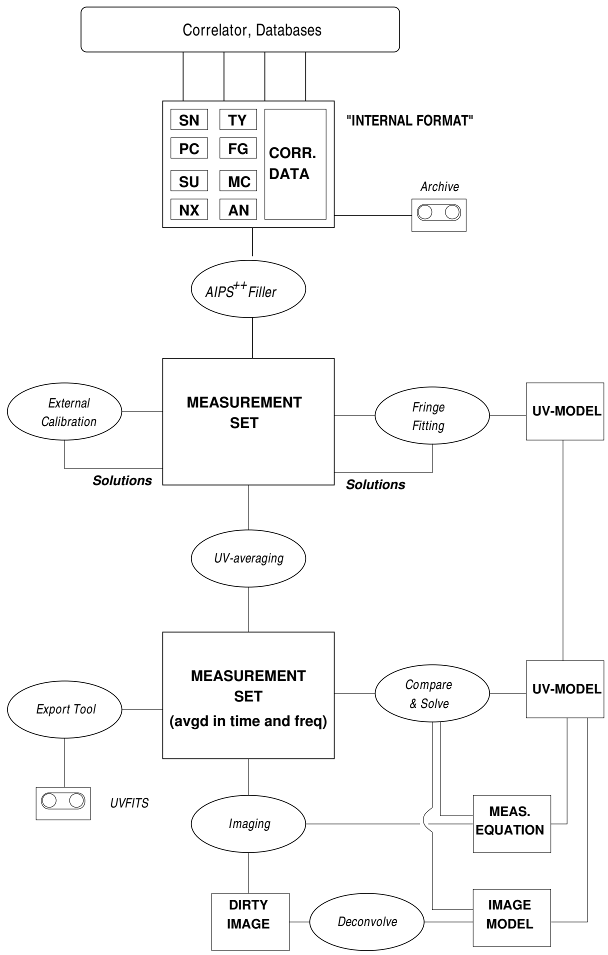

Figure 1: *A possible model for data flow for VLBI data in AIPS++. The correlator specific format may contain all the calibration data. Examples of some of these are denoted in this figure by their classic AIPS table two letter codes: e.g. PC for phase cal data, SN for amplitude calibration for example based on state counts, TY for system temperatures, FG for flagging, MC for correlator model components. Standard reduction has a specific VLBI part which involves calibration based on external data and fringe fitting. This allows the Measurement Set to be averaged in frequency and time. Following this, standard imaging and (self)calibration techniques are available to improve the image quality and the model of the source and sky.*

be RPFITS (as in ATLOD), MkII correlators produce UVFITS. However, FITS readers for VLBI are not only a matter of data format, but in particular a matter of information content, providing an instrument specific path to convert the data (content) to a data set with extension tables suited for the calibration tasks. At least all the required data loaders should be separate individual tasks, not part of any generalized FITS readers (see section 3.2).

It is part of the AIPS++ consortium requirements that the code can be used for on–line data reduction, e.g. at correlation time; this requires that it will be possible to develop data loaders for internal archive formats at various correlators.

AIPS++ must be aware of any additional data carried in MkIV, VLBA, MkIII, S2 and VSOP format before correlation. Support, in this context, may be no more than maintenance of an awareness of the contents and structure of this data. In principle, these different formats should not have any impact on post–correlation data formats; in practice, we should be aware of additional data which are carried in these or any new formats, since these may become relevant to some aspects of off–line data–processing (e.g. the fixed phase offset between upper and lower sidebands in MkIII and MkIV).

Some correlators (notably MkIII) are known to produce redundant data; to obtain all baselines in a specific experiment multiple correlator passes are necessary and sometimes data on certain baselines is produced more than once. Data readers for such data should allow the user to select a certain correlator pass or store redundant data (see also section 4.7).

3.2 Calibration of Correlator effects

Individual correlators will introduce different digital signal processing effects which will need to be corrected; one example of this is the FFT artifact in VLBA data. State count corrections (if not performed by the correlator) are another example. Ideally we think it is the responsibility of the correlators to deliver data in which such specific calibration has been applied. However, the AIPS approach for VLBA data has been to apply this correction on input, by means of the data loader (FITLD). Separate tasks for each correlator, each of which potentially requires correction templates or additional information, will be needed. (AIPS equiv: ACCOR, sections of FITLD).

3.3 Auxiliary data

Similar to CE interferometers, VLBI uses a large number of associated data sets for calibration and data flagging. VLBI is different in the sense that this

information is not always available/applied during correlation and needs to be appended to the data product. Below we list a number of such data sets that possibly need to be read from external sources. Because it can not be anticipated beforehand which calibration method will be used for a certain project (e.g. which ionospheric model), this requires in some sense that the Measurement Set can be flexibly extended.
Examples are:

- meteorological data (e.g. for tropospheric correction)
- GPS timing data
- phase calibration data based on pulse cal detection at telescope or correlator
- amplitude calibration based on state count statistics
- ionospheric data of various sources (e.g. TEC monitoring)
- accurate total power measurements to monitor phase excursions for mm VLBI
- specific data associated with record and playback processes
- for Space VLBI additional information will be carried along with the data (e.g. satellite parallactic angle, sensitivity, orbit, downlink information, "delta–t" tables etc.), and tasks to read, process and apply corrections based on these data will be required

4 Data structure

4.1 General Requirements

First we list the some general data system requirements. These are probably already included in the infrastructure development for CE data in AIPS++ and required for VLBI.

- the data system file format(s) should be accessible from all supported machines without conversion
- simultaneous sub–netting should be supported
- coordinate handling must be very general and allow different coordinate systems and ephemeris information to be carried along

- support for data with non–regular increments in coordinate axes is required (e.g. non linear velocity axis)
- near field imaging should be supported
- it will be necessary to merge data sets
- support for data errors should be fundamental to the data system, providing a basis for support of data error handling in a variety of applications:
  - easy generation of error models
  - error propagation through a series of tasks
  - error images associated with astronomical images
  - plotting error bars on spectra and profiles
  - automatic warning if contour levels are below noise
  - error–based blanking in display of results
  - properly formatted errors when data are extracted for tabulation
- a processing history should be maintained for each data set that can be reviewed by the astronomer, using an easy to use browser, which allows sorting and editing
- the user should have access to both data values and the "header" values that govern the interpretation of the data.

4.2 Quantities

All quantities such as antenna position, sky position, time, earth orientation parameters, delay and rate should have sufficient precision for VLBI purposes (including Space VLBI), requiring a double in most cases. There should also be ID strings attached to them to specify the coordinate system they refer to. It will be insufficient, for example, to demand that all AIPS++ antenna positions will be IERS XYZs. The VLBA uses USNO terrestrial/celestial frames and EOPs, while the JIVE correlator is likely to use IERS frames. These differences are important for VLBI observing, particularly for astrometric/geodetic experiments.

For Space VLBI it is necessary that AIPS++ supports the motion of an orbiting antenna.

It would be advantageous (and possibly required for use at some correlators) that AIPS++ allows data to be stored in the lag domain.

4.3 Version Typing

All programs should enter and/or pass complete version information concerning any (correlation) model applied to the data (e.g. geometric, tropospheric/ionospheric, source structure) to enable complete reconstruction of the total delays measured. Ideally, it should be possible to update a specific component in the model (e.g. take out and replace the geometrical model).

4.4 Multi-File Datasets

The short integration times and abundant channelization required for VLBI data (due to weak phase stability) leads to large datasets, particularly for spectral-line experiments. The ability to transparently address large datasets spread across many disks or tapes is of growing importance for VLBI data reduction, and should be implemented in AIPS++.

The data system should support the merging of correlation data and calibration data from different correlators.

4.5 Inhomogeneous Arrays

In the calibration (and imaging) steps it should be possible to treat inhomogeneous arrays in which not only antenna characteristics vary widely (e.g. antenna size, system temperature), but also feed specifications are quite different (e.g. linear or circular feeds and equatorial or alt–azimuth mounts). Moreover, calibration procedures can differ between different telescopes (e.g. single dish vs. phased arrays).

4.6 Variable Integration Times

In the case of space VLBI or wide field imaging, the ability to have different integration times on different baselines will be needed. This should be possible in the AIPS++ table system.

4.7 Redundant Data

Some correlators produce redundant data when particular baselines are correlated more than once. Robust handling of these cases is desired. Some users will choose to resolve these redundancies at the data loading stage, but there are many advantages to allow these redundancies to be incorporated in the data structure and to be resolved during processing. This would also allow AIPS++ to be used at these correlators to manage their data products.

5 Calibration

5.1 General Comments

We start with a list of features that the VLBI community thinks are useful for calibration strategies in general:

- Calibration, like flagging, should be reversible, with the ability to store calibration information and apply it “on–the–fly”. However, it should also be possible to apply the derived calibration in order to create a new, calibrated data–set.
- Calibration should be made as generic as possible; site specific/instrument dependent code should be kept to a minimum.
- Calibration of data should be possible from derived tables of instrumental parameters such as system temperature and gain vs. elevation. It should be possible to derive such tables from calibration observations (e.g. derive gain–elevation tables).
- The calibration process should include flexible interpolation and averaging of calibration data under the control of the user.
- Redundancy (including u,v crossing points) should be used whenever possible, as an additional constraint on calibration and self–calibration.
- Cross–calibration of different instruments should be possible, (e.g. flux density scale, pointing) particularly where data from different arrays are to be combined.

5.2 Amplitude Calibration

Amplitude calibration of VLBI data is generally accomplished using measured data from all the antennas, typically system or antenna temperatures, sensitivity estimates (Jy/K), opacity corrections based on tipping runs and CE estimates of source flux densities (e.g. the phased VLA). There exist at least two fundamental log formats containing this data (e.g. MKIII/MKIV and VLBA). Amplitude calibration tasks capable of processing one or more of these external input formats will be required. (AIPS equiv: ANCAL, ANTAB/APCAL).

In many spectral line VLBI projects amplitude calibration can be derived by applying the system temperature and gain for a single element in the network, and comparing the autocorrelation spectra on all elements (AIPS equiv: ACFIT).

5.3 Spectral Response

Not only for spectral line purposes, but also for high dynamic range continuum VLBI, it is necessary to calibrate the (complex) spectral response for separate BBC channels of each telescope. In some cases one has to rely on autocorrelation data to obtain the amplitude filter shape. In other cases one can solve for phase and amplitude with respect to the average amplitude and phase on each baseline, or derive the bandpass by comparing to a source model (point source, model components or map) (AIPS equiv: BPASS) or by fitting Chebysev polynomials (AIPS equiv: CPASS).

Line VLBI is traditionally done with fixed frequency settings. To do the Doppler tracking, necessary to get optimal spectral sensitivity, resolution and correct labeling, one must shift each cross–spectrum according to an accurate model of the antenna motions and the earth geometry. This task also requires knowledge about the correlator model that was used to take the data. It is required that the user can run this task (AIPS equiv: CVEL) in AIPS++ without the necessity to supply detailed information about the observing conditions.

Spectral line VLBI requires the ability to change the spectral sampling both by simple averaging, as well as by Fourier filtering. Cases where this is needed are for example efficient fringe fitting, optimal detection by matching line width, or combining data with different spectral sampling. It is hoped that AIPS++ will store information about spectral resolution as well as the spectral sampling.

5.4 External Delay & Phase Calibration

Most VLBI antennas inject tones into the signal path which are extracted downstream to assess the varying electronic delays between IFs. Routines to read, process and apply these corrections to data are needed (AIPS equiv: PCLOD, PCCOR).

Information such as weather information, total-electron content measurements, WVR data, CALC/SOLV output etc. may be available in many cases. There is a need for tasks to read all these (section 3.3). General tools will be needed to display, edit and interpolate such data. Furthermore specialized tasks are required to apply the corrections to the VLBI data.

Space VLBI may also require specialized external data. For instance, complicated phase corrections can be imagined to be necessary for intrinsic satellite effects (e.g. delay flutter, frequency variations). These can possibly be derived from external data; often these will depend (in a complicated way) on the position of the spacecraft.

5.5 Fringe Fitting

The weaker phase stability of VLBI data makes this the main area requiring additional development compared to any AIPS++ CE data path. Robust and sensitive fringe fitting can in some cases be an important factor for the detection threshold of VLBI. Fringe fitting is a calibration task similar to other AIPS++ calibration requirements, but it is slightly more complex in that it requires the data to be Fourier transformed to delay/rate. Further investigation is required to determine how best to incorporate fringe fitting into the Measurement Set formalism, with particular reference to the separability of individual calibration factors.

As a minimum, the fringe fitting in AIPS++ must have a similar functionality as the combination of FRING and BLING in classic AIPS. BLING offers a baseline–based fringe fit, FRING offers global fringe fitting. The AIPS version has the capability to fit simultaneously for single and multi–band delay or to treat all IF bands separately (e.g. for "manual phase cal"). This is required for fringe fitting in AIPS++ too, as well as the possibility to average different Stokes data and to fringe fit in rate only for spectral line VLBI.

Fringe fitting should be robust in the absence of some of the IF bands or in the case that some frequencies are flagged (e.g. due to interference). It should offer flexibility in setting the search windows and report clearly about the computational resources requested by the user. Spectral averaging before delay searching is required in order to allow large solution intervals for data sets with many channels. Different solution intervals for delay and rate could be a useful option. It should be possible to display the data in the two dimensional Fourier domain. In many cases the efficiency and sensitivity of fringe fitting could be enhanced by (automatically) limiting the search windows after an initial detection has been made.

Moreover, there are many enhancements requested over the functionality of current AIPS fringe fitting. For detection of phase offsets between hands of different polarization, fringe fitting of cross-hand data is required. For polarization calibration it is also required that the task retains carefully the phase difference between the two hands at the reference antenna.

In order to take full advantage of the sensitivity of global fringe fitting, it would be advantageous for the program to have a–priori knowledge of the sensitivity of the fringe search. With the source model and basic knowledge of the elements involved in the network it should be possible for the algorithm to pick a reference antenna and work out the optimal way to acquire solutions for all elements. The AIPS++ task should allow control over which antenna is second in line when the reference antenna fails to yield solutions. It should be easy to determine the coherence time for individual baselines.

There is a need for implementing incoherent fringe fitting which is used in millimeter VLBI. Fitting second order phase slopes (acceleration) and other complex fringe-fitting routines will be needed for Space VLBI. These include fringe prediction methods that can be used to extrapolate fringe search windows forwards and backwards in time and the possibility of phasing up the ground array separately to improve sensitivity. To overcome the problem for many spectral line projects of inaccurate knowledge of the spacecraft position, a special fringe fitting routine could possibly be anticipated which allows the derivation of the delay from a multi component spectral line cube.

5.6 Geodesy and Astrometry

AIPS++ must allow VLBI data to be subsequently exported to geodetic or astrometric packages such as SPRINT and CALC/SOLV. This requires full accountability of AIPS++ in order to derive "totals" from the correlator model and the result of fringe fitting. Data writers for these formats are required. (AIPS equiv: CL2HF/HF2SV/HFPRT).

For astrometric developments it must be possible to recalculate the geometric model. It should be possible to replace part of the model with different components (e.g. replace one tropospheric model with another). It should be possible within the AIPS++ environment to derive antenna positions from interferometer data.

6 Data Display and Editing

The order of calibration, data display and editing is not fixed in VLBI. In many cases flagging is done within the self–cal and mapping cycle, after a first fringe fit, but applying a–priori flags is often the first thing done after data loading.

In the area of continuum data inspection a good model for functionality is provided by the DIFMAP package. We hope that AIPS++ can come up with a similarly quick and intuitive way of inspecting and editing data.

6.1 U,V–data display

In general VLBI has a strong demand for powerful tools to display the data. Because of the large number of visibilities, each composed of many IF bands and spectral channels, a lot of the time can be involved in checking the data. A list of functionality that is expected in this area is given below.

- display of data aggregated in various ways (e.g. averaged over a number of spectral channels).
- displaying amplitudes and phases baseline by baseline
- displaying estimates of amplitude bias in amplitude plots
- displaying both closure quantities: closure amplitude and phase
- taking arbitrary cuts (e.g. circular, radial or a user–defined locus) through the u,v–plane interactively
- setting windows in space and/or time interactively
- expanding aggregates (e.g. clicking on an averaged multi–channel visibility to show the component spectrum).
- plotting of spectra and correlation functions (for different phase centers)
- display of fringe rate spectra (AIPS equiv: FRPLT)
- display of model data against observed data, for diagnostic purposes it should be possible to treat simulated data in a similar way

6.2 Flagging Requirements

Flagging will start with incorporating telescope based information that is based on the log information. It is often augmented with a–priori flags provided manually by the astronomer. In the calibration and imaging cycle, further flagging is performed.

- flagging should be reversible, with the ability to store flagging information and apply this on the fly
- multiple level flagging to cater for different levels of severity of problems or different source of information

- flagging on the basis of monitor/observing log data and tape motion
- flagging from "consistency check" information, in particular redundancy, where possible, or crossing–points in the u,v–plane
- flagging based on autocorrelation spectra
- "intelligent" automated flagging for large datasets (e.g. based on amplitude excursions, polarization)
- baseline by baseline display and editing (including multiple, simultaneous baselines)
- antenna based display and flagging (by interactively selecting baselines that involve a suspect antenna)
- display of $T_{\rm sys}$, rate and delay data together with visibility data per interferometer
- allow the display of flagged u,v data in a different color along with the data and model

7 Image Formation and Analysis

The ability to process CE data implies that the AIPS++ infrastructure development covers several aspects of VLBI processing. Notably phase (only) and amplitude self–calibration routines, coordinate handling, model–fitting, imaging algorithms will become available because of these demands.

7.1 Self–calibration and Imaging

For VLBI processing it is important that (self–)calibration, data inspection/ editing, transformation and deconvolution are integrated closely, as is available in DIFMAP. When implementing such features special care should be taken to warn (novice) users against the dangers of making the "data fit the model". It should be possible to easily "mix–and–match" self–calibration, transformation, and deconvolution tools, for example, using CLEAN to deconvolve in the early stages, and NNLS or MEM later on when CLEAN would begin to break–down. This also demonstrates the need to make self–calibration use a generic model, which may be CLEAN–components, an image, or a Gaussian model, or a combination.

More specific VLBI considerations are listed below:

- it should be possible to edit the list of clean components for self–cal
- the possibility of using CLEAN polygons should be included
- difference mapping should be supported
- complex deconvolution is required to handle "asymmetric" arrays (including telescopes with single polarization feeds)
- fringe rate mapping (AIPS equiv: FRMAP)

7.2 Image analysis and U,V model fitting

Although this strictly not an "image analysis" tasks, we note that model fitting should be possible in both the image as well as u,v–planes using point source, Gaussian or spherical models. It should be possible to use the resultant model in the same way as a CLEAN component model in calibration and self–calibration. Specific items are listed below:

- joint fitting for all four polarization parameters (as is done in the Brandeis package)
- for Space VLBI it is required that model–fitting can cope with sparse u,v coverage
- it should be possible to display model data (i.e. from CLEAN components, fitting etc.) with observed and/or processed data simultaneously as well as data with model subtracted or divided
- there should be tools available to do spectral line profile fitting, in order to derive velocities ands widths
- in contour plots/grey scale plots, choose coordinate system when creating the plot file
- possibly tools for gravitational lens transformation models
- fitting of Zeeman profiles should be possible
- it will be possible to develop tools to do proper motion analysis

In general we think that AIPS++ should improve the capabilities to produce publication quality figures from the data reduction package. For the VLBI community it important to be able to plot maps of sources at different epochs or frequencies in a single figure.

8 Conclusions

We consider the prioritized list below the key to make AIPS++ a success in our community.

- programmability
- development driven by scientific objectives
  - Implement key functionality of existing packages with greater ease of use (as offered by DIFMAP for example)
  - Offer applications that allow new science (e.g. polarization processing)
- a complete path simple VLBI reduction, this involves:
  - fringe fitting
  - data loaders
  - calibration tasks

We think that the work on fringe fitting should not be postponed too long. This work is needed to verify that fringe fitting can be dealt with in the current calibration formalism (the Measurement Equation).

There is considerable interest in the community to use the package in an early stage even when only a small number of functions are available, provided that are documented paths to transfer data from AIPS++ into AIPS and vice–versa.