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BoF - Python in Astronomy

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Abstract. This BoF will be chaired by Paul Barrett and will begin with an introduction to Python in astronomy, be followed by reports of current Python projects, and conclude with a discussion about the current state of Python in astronomy. The introduction will give a brief overview of the language, highlighting modules, resources, and aspects of the language that are important to scientific programming and astronomical data analysis. The closing discussion will provide an opportunity for questions and comments.

1. Summary

The Python Bof was held on Monday afternoon and was a rather ad-hoc session. The audience appeared to have about 50 people and I estimate that about 50% of them had no previous experience with Python. Therefore, after a brief introduction by the BoF organizer, Paul Barrett; David Beazley gave an introduction to the Python language which lasted about 35 minutes. David was followed by Rick White who spoke for about 25 minutes on PyRAF. Rick's talk slowly degenerated into a question-and-answer session about the merits of Python for astronomical research and why the Science Software Group at STScI chose it as their language of choice. After Rick, Paul Barrett spoke for about 10 minutes on his FITS module, giving a few examples of its use. The Bof closed with a general question-and-answer period which lasted about 10 minutes.

Given that Python is still a rather novel language to the astronomical community, the primary aim of the BoF was to elevate the awareness of Python in the astronomical community. I feel that we achieved this objective and have laid the foundation for a better and more comprehensive Bof next year.

For information about using Python in scientific research, see:

Computing in Science and Engineering
    `http://www.aip.org/cip`
Python Matrix SIG mailing list
    `http://www.python.org/sigs/matrix-sig`
Astronomical Python mailing list
    `Majordomo@STScI.Edu`
    `subscribe astropy`