

Editorial

Life, Variable Stars, and Everything¹

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1. Introduction

Thanks to John Percy for the introduction. I am excited and grateful for the invitation to assume the editorship of *JAAVSO*. I look forward to working with the Editorial Board and with the Board of Directors. I thank Stella Kafka, Bert Pablo, John Percy, Mike Saladyga, Owen Tooke, and Elizabeth Waagen for help in getting started and for handing me an active, well-run operation. Most of all, I am eager to learn a lot more than I already know about variable stars!

2. Observations

I joined the AAVSO about twenty years ago. As Director of Ritter Observatory, I subscribed to *AAVSO Alert Notices* in order to identify targets of opportunity for spectroscopic observation, in addition to our regular programs. A bright nova helps keep up observers' interest amid routine observations—although, it must be said, we could always look forward to the possibility of new features in the spectra of our regular variable-star targets each night. As a user of AAVSO data, it made sense for me to join.

3. Discussion

Since then, and especially this year, I have learned a lot about the AAVSO. “The mission of the AAVSO is to enable anyone, anywhere, to participate in scientific discovery through variable star astronomy.” Publication is essential to research, as it is a major way of informing the community about results and receiving feedback. The role of the *Journal* is to enable variable-star researchers to let others know about their results.

In the aftermath of the very successful Las Cruces meeting last October, I received a letter from a senior professional astronomer (Smith 2019) about the importance of AAVSO publications to him as he began the study of variable stars. At first, there were only the meeting abstracts, which gave tantalizing hints about the contents of talks at the meetings. When the first issue of the *Journal* arrived, he began to receive an education in variable star science at an understandable level, and he was inspired to undertake his own research. He urges that the *Journal* be, or continue to be, at the top of the reading list for all AAVSO members. To make up for the lost impact of each hard-copy issue arriving in the mail, he said, the on-line issue should endeavor to convey the same impact. I embrace this challenge.

4. Conclusions

While the *JAAVSO* has evolved since those days and must continue to evolve along with the field of scientific publication, our basic goal of advancing variable-star research remains. As a first step, I am working on enlarging the pool of referees and, in the future, authors. I hope readers will encourage others who are doing research to publish in the *Journal*, where they will experience a collegial editorial process. Meanwhile, we will continue to publish quality articles on interesting research. As always, highlights will be noted each month in the Editor's Research Highlight in *AAVSO Communications*. I'll provide updates on new developments in later editorials. I'm looking forward to journeying with our readers through the universe of variable stars.

Reference

Smith, H. A. 2019, personal communication.

¹ Apologies to John Percy and to Douglas Adams.