

Interactive comment on “Chromatography related performance of the Monitor for AeRosols and GAses in ambient air (MARGA): laboratory and field based evaluation” by Xi Chen et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

Received and published: 18 June 2017

Review of Chen et al. Chromatography related performance of MARGA.

This paper is mainly concerned with showing the improvements in data quality through the use of a software tool as an alternative to the standard MARGA data analysis package provide by Applikon.

This paper in within the scope of the journal.

The authors report that their analysis using alternative proprietary software improves the accuracy of peak identification and corrects for a low bias in anions reported by the standard MARGA analysis. The comparison is grounded by a series of full system calibrations using standards of ammonium nitrate and sulfate. The two chromatogram

analysis methods were also compared in the field.

Inflexibility of MARGA tools for the analysis and quality control of chromatograms.

The main issue that authors highlight is the inflexibility of the software tools supplied with the MARGA system for the post-processing of data. This is especially problematic with field instruments especially those deployed over extended periods in the field. The authors note that this inflexibility is problematic when dealing with changing instrument performance such as when the column begin degrading with age. In addition to the issues regarding the usability and utility of the MARGA software tools the authors report that the MARGA itself is a useful tool for the studying the relationships between the gas a particle phase composition in the atmosphere. I would say that obviously this has been shown before and data sets and validation of the instrument performance have been published by a number of authors.

My major recommendation for this paper is to add an explicit set of recommendations as if they were providing advice to other users or software developers. A number of issues with the data analysis and flexibility or lack of have been identified by the authors (and in my experiences have also noted their existence and the difficulty in post processing of MARGA datasets adequately). In my opinion this instrument could do with far more manufacturer/user group interaction and Applikon may find that if researchers are given permission and the tools to modify and develop the software tools ad far more powerful instrumental technique will be developed.

Interactive comment on Atmos. Meas. Tech. Discuss., doi:10.5194/amt-2017-68, 2017.

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Discussion paper

