

I Introduction

A substantial increase in the number of users and experiments is expected due to the implementation of the Upgrade Programme of the ESRF and its neighboring institute, the ILL. The objective of this work package is to address the feasibility of a single entry point for the User Community to the ESRF and ILL facilities. A single entry point could help in managing users, experiments, tracking results and publications and could act as a foundation for a broader impact with an EU-wide user database. The ESRF and ILL are planning forthcoming partnerships, where a single user management system would help in smoothing operation between the two institutes. The question of joint applications for both neutron and photon experiments for scientific areas will also be addressed.

The first task consists in using the expertise and experience available in the User Offices and User Organizations of both institutes to outline the goals of an ideal access system. On May 29, 2008, a workshop run as a brainstorming was set up with the Users Organizations, Users Offices and key ESRF/ILL operational staff. The goal was to define the main criteria for a user single entry point. Moreover, definition of the criteria for a common user and experiments database was addressed.

II Preparation of the workshop

Since January 2008, ILL and ESRF met regularly to set up the agenda and the list of people to be invited. The workshop programme was set up as a mix of presentations and discussions. The morning was dedicated to presentations from local user offices and invited institutes. The afternoon focused on existing infrastructures, subject to improvements. A large slot for discussions was reserved at the end of each half-day.

*Deliverable 7.1:
Report from the brainstorm on the criteria for a single point entry system,
held on May 29, 2008, at the ESRF*

III Agenda of the workshop


ESRF UP WP7 Workshop
User single entry point to ESRF and ILL
Organized by G. Cicognani, ILL, Grenoble; D. Porte & J. McCarthy, ESRF, Grenoble
Thursday May 29, 2008
Programme

Morning sessions (ESRF auditorium) - chaired by J. McCarthy & G. Cicognani	
08:15 – 09:00	<i>Registration & welcome coffee</i>
09:00 – 09:15	Opening, welcome and introduction on ESRF-UP R. Dimper, Computing Services, ESRF
09:15 – 09:30	Work package 7 presentation D. Porte, Computing Services, ESRF
09:30 – 09:50	Current procedures and future needs at ILL G. Cicognani, Communication and Scientific Support, ILL
09:50 – 10:10	Current procedures and future needs at ESRF J. McCarthy, User Office, ESRF
10:10 – 10:30	<i>Coffee break</i>
10:30 – 11:00	In vivo example: User single entry point at PSI Stefan Janssen, User Office, PSI
11:00 – 11:30	Partner institutes feedback F. Fraissard, SOLEIL & A. Menelle, LLB, CEA-Saclay R. McGreevy, CCLRC
11:30 – 12:00	Observations from Users Community ILL & ESRF users representatives
12:15 – 14:00	<i>Lunch in the H2 off-site restaurant</i>
Afternoon sessions (ESRF auditorium) - chaired by D. Porte	
14:00 – 14:30	Special requirements for Safety ILL & ESRF Safety groups J. Tribolet and G. Rochex, ILL; P. Berkvens, ESRF
14:30 – 14:50	Site entrance - Current procedures and future needs H. Guyon, ILL Reactor Division
14:50 – 15:10	IT infrastructure: future developments (including link with WP9 European Project) J.F. Perrin, IT Services, ILL
15:10 – 15:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15:30 – 16:20	General discussion
16:20 – 16:35	Summary & conclusions D. Porte, Computing Services, ESRF
19:00	<i>Dinner in the on-site ESRF/ILL restaurant</i>

IV Presentations

The “Opening, welcome and introduction on ESRF-UP” presentation described the whole project showing all work packages, deadlines and financial aspects.

The work package 7 was introduced with a short description of the strongly linked work package 9 (“Feasibility study for a new Scientific Management Information System (SMIS)”).

ILL and ESRF users’ offices presented their day-to-day activities, their difficulties and their wishes for future improvements.

Partner institutes presented their organisation and one detailed its system, implemented in three internal facilities.

An active discussion concluded the morning session.

The afternoon was first dedicated to ILL & ESRF presentations. Safety, site entrance and information technology were addressed.

A general discussion followed by conclusions closed this very exiting workshop.

V Outcome from the discussions

Discussions were intensive and constructive. Rapidly it appeared evident that we should go ahead with the project of establishing a user single entry point. The following summarizes the main remarks, proposals and ideas.

They have been sorted in three categories:

- 1/ Organization: comments on the way ILL and ESRF manage users’ matter.
- 2/ Software application: necessary improvements in software applications already setup by each institute.
- 3/ External links: connection and necessary links with other systems.

1/ Organization

- About 10 % of scientific visitors use both facilities. In addition, technical infrastructures of a specific institute are scarcely used by users of the other institute. This situation could improve if in-house scientists would assess which scientific areas could benefit from having both facilities on the same site. Then, they could advise and promote such advantages due to the common site.

- There are more and more proposals that need several time slots on different experimental stations. Administrative procedures and organizations should take this into account. Beyond the stricto sensu ILL-ESRF issues, cross-laboratories proposals need a closer look.
- Some users suffer from the apparent lack of communication between institutes to decide on experiments schedule and proposal submission deadlines. Therefore, more frequent proposal submission rounds would help.
- So as to obtain common specifications, common implementation, and a common evolution, we first need a strong organization, discipline in such a common project, and strong support from the top Management. Simplicity, transparency and standardization are recurrent requirements.

2/ Software application

- Each institute has its own web site. Contents and services offered are different. It would be helpful to have a common portal grouping both institutes. However, it is uneasy to forget each institute's specificities, as they want to keep their identity.
- Collaboration between institutes to provide a common application to users should focus discussions on interfaces first. Ideally, for a common subject like the management of personal data, an identical interface should be defined. This implies a strong collaboration between institutes with the commitment of each of them to follow rules defined by others. Committees like the Review Panels should also be taken into account.
- Software applications managing experiments, tracking results and publications are different. The ESRF application was initially a clone of the ILL software application, but products have diverged and are now totally different. Other institutes see the same phenomena. As soon as a clone application is installed in a partner institute, for many different reasons products diverge. A strong organization would be necessary to keep clones identical. The Work Package 9, "Feasibility study for a new Scientific Management Information System" will have to focus on this issue. The specifications that we have to write in the Work Package 9 must be general-purpose ones. All the scientific areas (MX, soft condensed matter....) must be addressed at the same level.
- A User single entry point application should also deal with topics like having a unique ID number for users and staff members. Badges and procedures should also be identical. Having such convergence, ILL and ESRF would avoid mistakes and lack of understanding due to duplication.

3/ External links

- Links with external systems like the proposal system to ISI Web of Science should help. Links with accommodation and travel booking system would also facilitate the experiment organization.
- Sharing common data would be really helpful. A common user database would avoid discrepancies between different databases and ease users' life. Others topics could be shared, the work package 9 will certainly provide more ideas. More ahead, a common European user portal could be envisaged. European facility proposal/experiments calendars could be managed commonly. Setting up a common "peer review" database or system could also help.
- A common, generic SMIS application would be great but certainly difficult to achieve. An incremental approach is certainly more realistic. The application also needs to be designed in a modular perspective. For example, the old scheme based on: 1 user/1 beamline/1 proposal belongs to the past. A cross-system involving multiple institutes, linking users to several experiments is now necessary.
- The PSI product (DUO) is an interesting study case. The fact that it is spreading in Europe, based on clones installed in institutes, could be a good starting point for the future SMIS system.

VI Conclusions

This report corresponds to the first WP7 deliverable.

Input from external users and staff from partner institutes was fruitful and essential. It was made clear that we should go ahead with the project of establishing a user single entry point. For ILL and ESRF users, it means trying and avoiding duplication of infrastructures and software applications. Even if the communication between the two institutes is good, it could be improved and be more formal. Users insist that things change in a more cooperative way.

Based on the outcome from the workshop, we now have to discuss in detail the main criteria stated by the workshop participants for a user single entry point. A working group composed of people from both institutes is going to be setup.

Linked with the outcome from the WP9, this working group will also discuss the criteria for a common user and experiments database up to the pan-European level. Planned for the month 22, a study report (corresponding to the second WP7 deliverable) will present the feasibility of a European-wide user and experiments database.