

Minutes of SHUG Executive Committee Meeting of April 2, 2001

Summary of discussions at the ORNL meeting of April 2, 2001 – SHUG executive committee meeting with SNS and HFIR management.

The Executive Committee met Sunday night for dinner followed by a “closed” discussion session at the SNS building on Scarboro road. The committee reconvened around 8:30 AM Monday morning at the SNS facility and heard presentations from Thom Mason and Jim Roberto on the status of their respective projects. Jim Roberto, Herb Mook, Thom Mason and Al Ekkebus asked for some immediate guidance on specific issues. The rest of the morning and lunch saw a vigorous discussion over a range of issues of concern to SHUG. There is clearly a need to balance a variety of concerns and the discussion provided a good foundation. With no final decisions being reached by the end of the working lunch, the committee agreed to examine the two key issues for which management would like some immediate guidance plus a related issue brought up by the committee itself. Three individuals were appointed to lead the discussion/research on those items. The committee was encouraged to send their thoughts on the issues to the entire committee via email during the next few weeks in preparation for a conference call meeting in which the committee could come to a consensus on the recommendations to be made.

Request for input:

HFIR: Herb Mook indicated that he does not have a good feel for what the user community wants the HFIR proposal system to look like. He needs some input fairly quickly as HFIR hopes to have its first instrument back in the user program by December of this year.

SNS: Thom’s biggest need is to settle the question of the minimum amount of time to be available to the user community on a given instrument, which affects the maximum time available for IDTs. He needs to finalize what the boundary conditions are so that he can begin serious negotiations with a number of groups interested in providing IDTs. The initial draft of the IDT guidelines would indicate that 75% of the time would be available to the fully funded IDT. EFAC however recommended that number not exceed 60%, thus he would like our recommendation. He also needs feedback on the overall user guidelines, IDT guidelines etc.

Some of the issues:

- Questions were raised about whether 25% time being reserved for the facility on IATs was too much. Thom indicated that included more than just instrument scientist “personal” time. A breakdown was requested. In particular whatever fraction that is instrument maintenance and upgrade should be separated out. Time for helping develop new users should not end up resembling an in-house mechanism for controlling research efforts on the instruments in the manner in which some facilities have operated in the past.
- All time allocated whether in the user program or not should be public and easily accessible to ensure fairness.
- The issue of how (and whether) to create a system in which internal staff do not have any advantage over external users when a hot new topic arises. This led to a discussion of recent problems in the situation surrounding MgB2, including what some regarded as unacceptable behavior on the part of some of the US neutron sources.
- On the other hand, another point expressed was that having easy immediate access to the instrument might be considered one of the perks for doing the often onerous job of instrument scientist.
- That brought up the issue of what is required of an instrument scientist group vs a purely science group and how the differences in funding between SNS and HFIR might affect HFIR’s ability to be a true “user facility” (as opposed to the “collaborative facility” it has mostly been) and thus reach its potential of 700–800 users/year (vs. 2000 eventually anticipated for SNS). A suggestion was floated that HFIR follow the ILL model of hiring “young people” for fixed 5 year contracts to be the instrument scientists who would then go on

to universities and thus grow the community. This was supported by some, but was not greeted with much enthusiasm by others.

- On the question of how much the user program for HFIR and SNS should be one and the same, the facilities appear to now be taking that for granted, while the committee seemed divided with some thinking it clearly should be a single “program” and others arguing that the facilities are too different (partly harking back to the previous question). One item that seemed to be universally accepted was that general radiation training should not have to be repeated if working at both facilities (however Thom pointed out that SNS will not be rated as a nuclear facility and thus will have different training requirements).
- It was generally agreed by everyone that an independent fast access proposal mechanism needs to be in place, but there are different views on how this should be implemented. In particular, the facilities view is that it should simply be the director’s discretion while many on the committee seemed a bit uncomfortable with that for different reasons.
- To some extent this ties into the answer to one of the questions brought up by SHUG with respect to the proposal review panel. The facilities feel strongly that the panel is just like all the other panels: it is appointed by management and is advisory only. The feeling is that the advice would always be followed, but the director should maintain the right to ignore the advisory panel if he/she decides that is the right course. In the end “the director is responsible for the facility and that responsibility requires authority.”
- On the subject of IDT’s the primary concern was what level of “guaranteed” beam time is required to provide enough incentive to teams to find the funding and build the instrument. Thom pointed

out that so far all the interested groups want to build the instrument, but would like SNS to operate it. Since operation is about the same cost as the construction the IDT would only have half of 75% or 60% (i.e. 37.5% or 30%). On the other side it was argued that 30% of an SNS instrument is a LOT of beam time .. and maybe more than enough if the team only provides half the instrument cost. Other suggestions such as reviewing regularly to determine if the science coming out justifies the guaranteed time and the possibility of “graduating” the guaranteed time (40% the first 3 years then drop to 30% for x years etc..) were discussed.

- It was noted that one of the IDT’s brings money from outside the US to build an instrument for which there is no real US expertise to build. This group would rather spread their x% over all the instruments. Some thought that money being brought in from outside (i.e. not from the same pot that all the users are also competing for money from – DOE, NSF etc.) should perhaps be treated differently (preferentially?). Thom doesn’t think that giving different groups different time for the same financial contributions sets a very good precedent.
- A strong statement was made that the review panel should be by discipline rather than by instrument (similar to ILL’s colleges) to minimize the number of proposals getting rejected because the science they do is foreign to the majority of the committee. It was suggested that in the beginning only a few would do, and more sub panels could be added as the programs grew.
- A suggestion was floated that perhaps the proposal program could work on a rolling, continual basis until instruments begin to be oversubscribed (good proposals not getting beam time).

The three issues and their “point person”

1. IAT – is 25% time for the facility reasonable – Rob McQueeney
2. IDT – is 40% the right minimum for the user community – Takeshi Egami
3. HFIR proposal program (how should it work) – Costas Stassis

Of the 11 committee members 8 were present. The members in attendance were:

- Dave Belanger
- Paul Butler
- Takeshi Egami
- Robert McQueeney
- Scott Mixture
- Costas Stassis
- David Vaknin
- Angus Wilkinson

Representing SNS:

*Thom Mason – Assoc. Lab Director for SNS

*Al Ekkebus – User Program Manager

Representing HFIR:

*Jim Roberto – Assoc. Lab Director

*Herb Mook – Neutron Scattering Section Head

The meeting ended with a tour of the SNS site which is far more impressive up close than in any of the pictures.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Butler

SHUG Secretary

Minutes of SHUG Executive Committee Meeting of January 18, 2001

The Executive Committee convened by conference call at 10:00 AM EDT on January 18, 2001. Of the 11 committee members 8 were present. The members in attendance were:

- Meigan Aronson
- Dave Belanger
- Paul Butler
- Robert McQueeney
- Costas Stassis
- John Tranquada
- David Vaknin
- Andrey Zheludev

The first item of discussion, not on the original agenda, was the announcement the previous day that SNS director Dave Moncton would resign from the SNS effective March 1. A number of concerns were aired ranging from questions regarding the reason for Moncton's departure, to why the SHUG E.C. was not directly informed (only a few members of the committee with ties to ORNL had heard of the announcement) much less given an early heads up that something of this magnitude was about to occur. Of most concern was the question of succession: what type of person might be chosen (an administrator with experience building large projects or someone with a technical background and an understanding of the scientific contributions of neutron scattering) and what should SHUG's role be. Several on the committee expressed their concern over the dearth of qualified people (particularly if one eliminates those unlikely to take the job). Further it was noted that a number of top management positions are being vacated at DOE neutron facilities around the country (Dave Moncton at SNS, Bruce Brown at Argonne, and Roger Pynn and Joyce Roberts at Los Alamos). After much discussion it was clear that very little information was yet available and it was resolved that:

- a. Dave would call Dave Moncton and Thom Mason to get some answers to our questions and would then email the committee with a brief report.

- b. Dave would draft a letter to Bill Madia, ORNL Lab director, expressing our concerns and indicating the importance of looking for someone with a strong scientific background to lead this project to completion. Dave would circulate the draft to the committee for comment before officially transmitting it.

Next, Dave asked Meigan to share her concerns with the group over the proposed increase in the number of IDT's in the wake of the new cost pressures in the SNS project discussed at last meeting, and by Moncton and Mason when they spoke to the group in December. IDT's are effectively CAT like instruments which would have serious repercussions for the user community. The time available to users of course could be dramatically reduced. Furthermore, the APS experience shows that such instruments can often be designed too flexibly so that a substantial amount of beam time gets wasted at each experiment essentially "building" the instrument. There are also questions of how the choice and designs may or may not be carefully overseen to guarantee a proper mix of available instruments and integration into the overall facility. User support and who is responsible for providing it could also be an issue for whatever time is made available to the user community. There was general agreement that this was an issue SHUG should follow very closely.

The rest of the agenda was dealt with relatively rapidly. First the issue of location of the NSSA/SHUG meeting was discussed in view of the fact that the SNS central lab and office building which was initially planned as the venue will most certainly not be ready at that time. Given also the receding schedule on the HFIR side the question was raised as to whether the meeting should be held in DC again. After some discussion it was agreed that the conference should be held in Knoxville or Oak Ridge anyway.

Next Dave asked for volunteers to work on coordinating the NSSA/SHUG meeting and offered himself since he will be stepping down from the chairmanship in the fall of this year and therefore have more time to devote to it. Dave is also on the NSSA committee. Rob McQueeney volunteered as well. Nobody else offering to help, Dave suggested he didn't really know how many would be needed but that two might be sufficient. Paul Butler then suggested that if necessary he'd be willing to work on it as well since he is located in Oak Ridge/knoxville.

Dave then asked if there were any reports from the special committees. Rob McQueeney, Chair of the SNS special committee indicated he was working on contacting Al Ekkebus, SNS user program manager though the two had not yet successfully connected. Costas Stassis, chair of the HFIR special committee,

indicated difficulty in obtaining any response from HFIR. A suggestion was made that perhaps the special committees, particularly the HFIR special committee, should convene. Costas indicated he believed that was necessary, but that he did not think HFIR would pay for our trip to ORNL for such and indicated he did not believe in starting conference call meetings until such an onsite meeting at occurred.

Next, Paul indicated that he had failed in meeting his self appointed deadlines for getting the web pages ready for approval and the straw man user procedures. He apologized and told the committee that he'd work on them in the next few weeks* Finally Dave mentioned that we need to begin planning for the Fall elections. There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Butler

SHUG Secretary

*After the meeting Paul met with Al Ekkebus for other reasons and discovered that Al had almost completed a draft of user procedures which he wanted to circulate to the SHUG E.C. soon. Paul informed Dave by email that he planned to hold off work on his "straw man" at least until the SNS draft showed up unless there was some serious objection. Dave agreed.