Contribution ID: **235**   Type: **Talk**

HEP-Help: a first-stop helpline for particle physics software

Monday 21 October 2024 17:27 (18 minutes)

If a physicist needs to ask for help on some software, where should they go? For a specific software package, there may be a preferred website, such as the ROOT Forum or a GitHub/GitLab Issues page, but how would they find this out? What about problems that cross package boundaries? What if they haven't found a tool that would solve their problem yet?

HEP-Help (hep-help.org) is intended as a first-stop helpline for questions about particle physics software. It is not intended to replace established venues, but redirect users to the best place to ask their questions, and possibly help them frame their questions in better ways, such as distinguishing usage questions from bug reports and constructing minimal reproducers.

This project has two parts: one technological and one social. The technical aspect involves collating existing documentation, tutorials, and forum archives to produce a dataset to train an LLM as a first responder. The social aspect involves building a community of part-time responders, people who take shifts (help-a-thons!) to correct or follow up on the LLM's initial suggestions. This community includes tutorial trainers, developers of particle physics software, and experienced users, all of whom are already invested in helping new users and stand to benefit from a more organized support system.

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Session Classification: Parallel (Track 8)

Track Classification: Track 8 - Collaboration, Reinterpretation, Outreach and Education