

Electronics Pool Technical Advisory Board - 8

Report on the Eighth Meeting, 3 May 2006

Reported by C. Parkman, 4 May 2006

Refer to the agenda and attached documents at:
<http://indico.cern.ch/conferenceDisplay.py?confId=1648>

Present:

J. Buytaert (PH-ED, LHCb), A. Ceccucci (PH-N48, Fixed Target), M. Hansen (PH-CME, CMS), C. Moine (PH-ESS, Electronics Pool Operations), L. Musa (PH-ED, ALICE), C. Parkman (PH-ESS, Chairman), P. Farthouat for S. Hass (PH-ATE, ATLAS)

During the introduction by C. Parkman and the presentation by C. Moine, the following points were raised:

1. Invitations to EPTAB meetings and other discussions

Such invitations are sent to the EPTAB mailing list (for board meetings) and in addition to the electronics pool user list and the "cern-electronics" list for discussions with manufacturers or other product presentations.

For the latter discussions, the members of the board were asked whenever possible to nominate someone having expertise in the topic to be invited, if they, themselves, are unavailable or do not have the relevant personal expertise.

2. Laboratory instruments purchased in PH Department

The suggestion made in a previous EPTAB meeting that PH-ESS maintain a list of laboratory instruments purchased in the department (eventually at CERN) was raised. This has not been done owing to lack of time, but Catherine Moine has been appointed as "Materials Specialist" for the relevant activity codes as such is "in the loop" for relevant purchases for the whole of CERN. The aim was to facilitate common purchases and to promote the use of the Electronics Pool whenever feasible. However, the possibility to intervene as Materials Specialist comes at a very late stage in the ordering process, when choices have been made and commercial negotiations done.

Action will be taken to establish a list of relevant instruments for information to the community. Whether these instruments would be available for loan would be the responsibility of the owner.

The possibility of a tender action for the supply of 'scopes will be discussed with Purchasing with the aim of removing the restrictions placed on the current ordering process.

3. Modular electronics

The Board confirmed the policy of concentrating the available support on NIM and VMEbus-based modules, with CAMAC being phased out as quickly as possible.

Given the relative lack of resources for testing and verification, the Board discussed whether a more draconian policy of suppressing CAMAC could be implemented. Catherine Moine pointed out that in any case the majority of the remaining CAMAC is treated under the "Reduced Support" regime, and is only allocated where there are specific needs. Following the ending of the "freeze" agreements, a large return of equipment is expected from the NA experiments when the opportunity will be taken to declassify as much CAMAC as possible.

The Pool's legacy equipment is useful for the small user who has existing software, cables, etc. However, the cost of maintaining the old equipment needs to be examined in terms of the available financial and human resources.

The possibility of a campaign to replace CAMAC and older VMEbus functions with a new purchase of a coherent set of equipment in VMEbus was discussed. The full implications of such an action needs careful thought considering the consequent need for software and associated infrastructure (cabling, etc.).

More statistics on the demand for modular electronics are required.

4. Electronics Pool financial resources

The Pool's prudent purchase policy of the last few years and the better than expected income during 2006 has allowed a small surplus to accumulate. This was useful in the justification of the hiring of technicians paid by Pool funds. This surplus could now be used for increased procurement of equipment, to reduce the rental fees or to improve the Pool's ability to provide technical consultation and support by hiring additional technical staff.

The consensus of opinion was towards improving the Pool's technical support role.

5. Future meetings

It was suggested that to improve the functioning of EPTAB a regular schedule of formal meetings be established such as three topical meetings on technical issues and one financial and technical review meeting per year. Ad hoc product presentations and technical discussion will be organised as in the past.

Suggested dates:

Technical discussion – Wednesday 13 September, 2006 at 10:00 in 4-R-017

Technical discussion – Wednesday 13 December, 2006 at 10:00 in 4-R-017

Technical discussion – Wednesday 14 March, 2007 at 10:00 in 4-R-017

Review meeting – Wednesday 9 May, 2007 at 10:00 in 4-R-017