ATUC Report to the Director - May 2010

This meeting of the AT Users Committee was held at the ATNF Headquarters from 26th – 27th May 2010.

Attendance: Sarah Maddison (Chair), Stacy Mader (Secretary), Tara Murphy, Andrew Walsh, Hayley Bignall, Chris Springob, Indra Bains (via telecon), Elizabeth Mahony (student representative) and Aquib Moin (student representative).

Apologies: James Urquhart and John Dickey

Date and Format of the next meeting:

The next ATUC meeting is scheduled for 20 & 21 October 2010.

Thanks:

The committee wishes to thank out-going members Andrew Walsh, Indra Bains, Elizabeth Mahony, Aquib Moin and Stacy Mader for their invaluable contributions and service to ATUC.

Commendations and Successes

- ATUC would like to commend all observatory staff for their continued support at the telescopes and excellent service that they provide to users. Mopra users are particularly appreciative of Balt Indermuehle's amazing support and dedication.
- ATNF students commend administrative staff for the excellent organisation of their travel and accommodation bookings, which makes ATNF visit totally pain-free for the students.
- ATUC congratulates the ATNF on the success of Diggidumble in the first ASKAP test.
- Parkes 5-6GHz. ATUC congratulates ATNF on getting the C-band 5GHz receiver operational for the high-ranking LBA proposal.

Matters arising from the October 2009 ATUC report

1. Matters Arising #4: ATUC is pleased to see progress on fast mapping with Mopra and would now like to know if this mode is available to users. If so, it should be advertised and website updated accordingly.

2. Recommendation #1: ATUC is pleased to see progress with zoom modes. To ensure that users remain informed of the latest progress with CABB and associated Miriad updates, ATUC recommends that ATNF create a CABB "What's New" page, and suggests that the current CABB webpage be

reorganised so that it is clearly a one-stop-shop for all CABB-related issues, including obvious links to the atcaforum, the CABB-Wiki, and MIRIAD updates. ATUC also strongly recommends ATNF move atcaforums (which is an excellent resource) to an ATNF website to avoid inappropriate advertising.

3. Recommendation #4: ATUC notes that initial results of ATCA single-dish mode tests (conducted as part of the MALT-45 project) are encouraging, but understands there are a few problems that need to be addresses before this capability can be offered as a general user mode (such as the ability to do fast pointings and ensure a data format that can be used by single-dish processing software like livedata/gridzilla). ATUC looks forward to an update from ATNF (with input from Andrew Walsh) in May 2011.

4. Recommendation # 6: ATUC recommends that ATNF install an all-sky webcam at Mopra (like the APT webcam at Coonabarabran) with an active cross which traces where the telescope is pointing. Given the plans to move to remote observing at all ATNF sites, and given the current frequency of remote observations being conducted with ATCA, ATUC strongly recommends the installation of such webcams for all sites.

5. Recommendation #9: ATUC looks forward to seeing the Parkes continuum/ polarization software being made available for general access.

6. Recommendation #13: ATUC recommends ATNF publish accepted proposal abstracts to ADS. Currently only users with OPAL accounts can access successful proposal abstracts. Advertising successful projects on ADS will provide wider visibility of the research being conducted with ATNF facilities and aide in fostering international collaborations.

7. Recommendation #16: ATUC understands the winmail.dat attachment to CASS staff emails is not under the control of CASS. However, as this issue affects a large number of ATNF users and external collaborators of CASS staff, ATUC recommends CASS raise the issue with CSIRO IM&T.

ATUC Recommendations [ATNF response requested]

Marsfield

1. ATUC understands that many visitors are having trouble accessing the Marsfield wireless network RPL-WLAN. Issues include DHCP leases not renewing and also connection timeouts. ATUC notes the problem is seen on both Windows and Mac platforms. ATUC urges CASS to investigate the matter.

2. It has been noted there are regular problems conducting video-conferencing at Marsfield. With projects such as ASKAP SSPs, this will become more of a

problem as more external groups come online to use these facilities. External users have also reported problems uploading talks to the at_meetings lists, with messages being bounced. Indeed, at_meetings is only available to external users with an ATNF account, which causes problems when conducting astronomy meetings. ATUC recommends that:

    i. there be clear instructions to CASS staff on how to book and use the Marsfield tele/video conferencing facilities;

    ii. that the issues with the at_meetings list be addressed and an alternative solution be found to ensure all astronomers who wish to attended ATNF meetings can access and upload talks; and

    iii. that the hanging microphones in the lecture theatre be made operational so that remote meeting participants can participate in discussion sessions.

Mopra Fast Mapping

3. To meet the fast mapping requirements at Mopra, ATUC recommends the default MOPS correlator cycle time be increased from 2.0 to 2.048 seconds. This would have minimal impact on other users and will make fast mapping more seamless for those who wish to use it. ATUC would like to know if fast mapping is now a standard mode of observing, and if so the Mopra website should be updated to both advertise this and inform users of the process.

VLBI

4. ATUC notes it is not clear to (new) user involved in VLBI projects how the data is processed and how long users are expected to wait for their data. ATUC recommends the LBA web pages be updated to include this information, including details of a contact person(s) to whom issues can be addressed.

OPAL

5. ATUC notes there are concerns about the potential duplication of millimetre observations between current large survey projects and smaller projects. ATUC recommends there be an option in OPAL proposals that asks "Have you checked the specifications for large projects to see if your observations can be obtained there?", similar to the current "Have you checked the ATOA?" question.

ATCA

6. ATUC notes large-scale surveys such as MALT-45 require up to 14000 pointings which currently equates to a large number (~9000) of schedule files. To cater for these types of surveys, ATUC recommends ATNF increase the number of pointings that can be done in an ATCA mosaic (currently 500) and

also increase the number of commands. ATUC also notes it is not possible to program the ATCA in galactic coordinates and would like this to be available.

7. ATUC recommends pointing antennas on quick timescales be addressed. One user has expressed concern some antennas could not keep up with six-second pointings. ATUC understands Phil Edwards is aware of the issue which involves motor brushes.

8. ATUC is delighted to see the calibrator database being updated and looks forward to the new data being online soon. ATUC notes the summary, flux history plot and text file of the existing database can give different values for some sources, warranting the rapid deployment of the new calibrator database.

9. ATUC requests that the DA manual for ATCA be updated to include CABB details as they come to hand. ATUC also strongly recommends DA's be properly trained for both Mopra and ATCA.

Tidbinbilla

10. Following from discussions during the ATUC Science Meeting held on 25 May, ATUC sees the need to update users on the current and future capabilities of Tidbinbilla (i.e., the K-band upgrading). ATUC suggests that documentation on current and proposed upgrades be made available on the Tidbinbilla website.

11. ATUC notes with the incorporation of Tidbinbilla into CASS, it is now timely to develop a Tidbinbilla Science Priorities document.

12. It is clear that the science capabilities of Tibdinbilla with be greatly enhanced with OTF mapping. ATUC recommends OTF spectral-line mapping be addressed at Tidbinbilla, and that suitable CASS staff with OTF mapping experience assist the Tidbinbilla staff to making this work.

Other

13. ATUC is pleased to see the concept of survey-archives being discussed in Tim Cornwell's presentation. ATUC strongly recommends ATNF provide services and tools to allow survey projects to release their data projects, e.g. cubes, images and catalogues, in a VO-compliant way on the ATNF website.

14. ATUC notes that some users are concerned with the rate of CABB and MOPS data transfer rates from ATNF to their home institute. ATUC recommends ATNF look at faster transfer protocols than provided by scp and the provision of external hard drives for users to take away or be mailed.

15. Given the rapid rate of development of MIRIAD to accommodate CABB data, ATUC notes users need to be informed of these changes. ATUC strongly recommends ATNF find a suitable way of letting users know what these changes are which might affect and/or improve their data reduction strategies.