

**EM Community “Town Hall” Meeting
on Infrastructure and Training Coordination
Wednesday 9th April 2014
Royal School of Mines, Imperial College London**

Meeting attended by 53 people – see attendance list for details.

It was agreed that all presentation slides would be circulated to all attendees.

Summary of the Meeting

Pete Nellist outlined background and purpose to the meeting – principally to obtain feedback on the proposals put forward by the EM Working Group and to formulate an Electron Microscopy Roadmap.

Dan Emmerson from EPSRC outlined the potential capital funding available in the near future and the need for RCUK to have Community Roadmaps to help bid for this money. He also reviewed previous capital spending and also capital wish lists from recent Chemistry and 8 Great Technologies Calls.

A concern of the meeting was the need to ensure that sufficient recurrent costs are in place to support capital equipment.

Jason Swedlow described the background to the BioimagingUK network and the EuroBioimaging project for community driven scientific infrastructure. In terms of Bioimaging UK he highlighted the success of the Wiki and also the recent bid to BBSRC for £100k network funding. He also highlighted the desire to expand this to other academic and also commercial communities.

The meeting noted that there was considerable overlap between the Bio- and Physical Imaging communities and the potential models proposed and that a combined Imaging UK network may have more impact with RCUK and beyond. If the BBSRC network was indeed funded perhaps EPSRC could match fund this for the Physical Sciences.

Rik Brydson outlined the current Ecosystem for EM in the Physical Sciences including analysis of the Working Group of the Lab. Leaders and the User surveys conducted in 2013.

The meeting suggested that it would be useful to have some critical analysis of the previous Equipment Access schemes funded by EPSRC as it appeared only one or two (including EBL) had been continued.

Pete Nellist outlined the proposals of the working group for Networking and an Equipment Sharing Hub.

The meeting agreed that a catalogue of facilities hosted by the RMS would be a good outcome.

The meeting endorsed the idea of the formation of a formalised (and funded) network - possibly at two levels – a lab. Managers network and also a lab leaders network meeting say annually. These could share best practice, monitor operation of networking and coordination, maintain evidence of impact record and update roadmaps.

The meeting had considerable discussion of the proposal for Centres of Excellence (Tier 2 in the Pyramid/Layer cake model). What exactly does Tier 2 mean and what would happen to EM Centres which were not awarded Tier 2 status ?

Overall should this sharing be a User/Demand-driven approach (i.e. a ticket-based system) or a Centre retaining control and offering free at point of use access ? Arguments were put forward for both approaches involving user interactions, flexibility, value for money and future planning but clearly the strategy needs to be clarified.

It was suggested that sample preparation and also data handling/processing be included in the list of potential Tier 2 sites/requirements.

It was suggested that the components at and between the individual levels/tiers be coordinated properly.

Richard Baker outlined the proposals of the working group for Coordination of training.

The meeting had considerable discussion of whether solely PhD-level level (as opposed to for example as taught Masters) training and the numbers requested were the most appropriate vehicle for training. It was agreed that some form of distributed training and CPD network via a Virtual Learning Environment and a Distributed Training Infrastructure would be extremely useful but this training had to be funded adequately, produce a trained cohort and had to lead to expertise which was retained in the networked system and was accessible to microscopy users. The relationship between this training network and recently funded CDTs was also discussed.

Angus Kirkland outlined the proposals of the working group for Prioritising New Technologies and a tentative list was circulated.

The meeting discussed the mechanisms for formulating a priority list of desired new technologies– is it what is out there internationally or is it more user/problem driven based ??

It was suggested that we conduct a survey based on the existing proposed list (add/delete suggestions) and that the list should also be expanded to include the Biocommunity. It was agreed that a TechWatch meeting be held periodically (perhaps located at the mmc conferences series) to consider suggestions made (including those through any online surveys) and to gauge the convergence of view of the community.

OUTCOMES

- Joint Imaging UK meeting at MMC 2014 in Manchester on Monday 30 June
- Proceed with plans for a catalogue of Facilities hosted by RMS – agree a joint form.
- Investigate potential for joint network funding from both BBSRC and EPSRC.
- Conduct a survey based on the proposed list of desired new technologies.

RB 11/4/2014