

VDFS-WSA Quarterly Report: 2004 Quarter 2 (April - June): Narrative

1. General

The SSA was released on April 23 and has remained on-line apart from one spell when the database was corrupted (apparently) by disk problems and a couple of power outages affecting the whole site. As a prototype for the WSA, it has been used by members of the UKIDSS consortium and users' comments have informed modifications on the interface. As reported last month, IAB resigned with effect from June 30 to take up a post at Massey University, NZ. We are therefore currently recruiting for two posts: an Astronomer-Developer to replace IAB, and a more experienced Software Developer, the new post in the VEGA proposal. The closing date is July 31. NCH and PMW attended the first meeting of the VDFS User Committee in Cambridge in May; NCH attended the UKIRT Board meeting in Durham in May and the SPIE Meeting in Glasgow in June; NCH giving presentations at all three. We have studied and provided input for the development of the UK VISTA User Requirements document.

2. Hardware

The Catalogue Server ("ahmose") holding the SSA has been mostly stable and we have been benchmarking an alternative configuration, based on a two-channel RAID adaptor, on "amenhotep". After tests and reconfiguration it seems that the SCSI cables are the source of the instability problems. Eclipse is now reconfiguring amenhotep's JBOD with minimal cabling while we continue to soak-test the main chassis. Until we are completely satisfied with the stability of the Catalogue Server systems, we are holding off previously planned purchases of further disks. The pixel and web servers have behaved very satisfactorily.

3. Software

IAB's impending departure sparked a "blitz" on documentation and also a revision of the work plan to allow ETWS to shadow him for a month, making sure he could run all IAB's code using the documentation recorded. We have developed DB-driven tools for creating and updating merged catalogues for newly ingested data. A potential gotcha with unsupported data types in the interface between Unix and the DBMS was fixed. Work has continued on the user interface and benchmarking of DB2 as an alternative DBMS to SQLServer (cf. V2) has begun. Progress is summarized in the project plan; more details are in the weekly minutes.

4. Plans for 2004 Quarter 3

Project management: priorities are preparation of documentation (Je-S 1) to release the WFAU's portion of the VEGA award to the University to allow staff contracts to be placed and renewed, and short-listing, interviewing and appointing the new staff. Hardware: following current tests by Eclipse, reconfiguration of the Catalogue Servers, and installation of further disk space on them and the Web server. Software: continue with Curation and User Interface tools with some refactoring following revision of WSA database schemas. Work will begin on provision of remote access to catalogue search tools (# 11) but we are also liaising closely with the AstroGrid deployment team who are on the point of "publishing" the SSA. We may have to re-evaluate the remote access tasks if their functionality can be better provided via AstroGrid and, in any event, will continue to work closely with AstroGrid staff.

PMW

13 July 2004