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Title

lightsources.org: An Internet Site for Light Source Communication

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lightsources.org: An Internet Site for Light Source Communication

Research at the world's accelerator- (storage-ring and linac) based light sources is one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing fields of science. It frequently results in direct benefits to society, thereby demonstrating the value of the research with very concrete examples, but this is not widely understood or appreciated outside of the immediate user community. Our growing group of light source communicators from facilities in Europe, Asia, and the Americas began meeting in April 2003 to develop ways to work collaboratively to the benefit of all the light sources. Inspired by the Interactions.org Web site created by high-energy (elementary-particle) physics communicators, we concluded that a light source community Web site (lightsources.org) would be the best tool for establishing effective collaboration between the communications offices of the world's light sources and to maximize the impact of our efforts.

Our hope is that efficient communication—through the media, through education, and through information to funding agencies—will create awareness, leading to increased public and financial support for the facilities and the research conducted at them. We envision lightsources.org to serve as a one-stop-shopping site for information about all aspects of light sources and the research they make possible. Audiences to be served include science communicators, the press, policy makers, the light source community, the wider scientific community, the science-interested public, and students and educators. Our proposal has been sent to the world's light source facility directors by J. Murray Gibson (APS) and William G. Stirling (ESRF). As a result, lightsources.org is now being supported by a growing list of facilities from Europe, North America, and Asia. We hope to launch lightsources.org before the end of 2004.

On a formal level, the light source communications collaboration consists of three bodies:

(1) The Light Source Communicators Group consists of up to two persons from any accelerator-based light source facility, either operating or under construction. Financial participation is not a prerequisite for facility representation. The members of this group are responsible for submitting news and information about their facilities to the lightsources.org Web master.

(2) The Management Group consists of members of the collaboration whose facility provides financial support of the lightsources.org Web site. This group meets via conference call at least quarterly to discuss issues related to the overall management of the Web site.

(3) The Editorial Board consists of seven persons drawn on a rotating basis from the Management Group. This group meets electronically frequently to make broad-based Web-site editorial and content decisions and to provide input to the Web master, who along with a representative of the Web developer, also sits on the Editorial Board in an advisory capacity.

We identified three general categories of audiences and content to serve these audiences: news, education, and light source users and facilities.

News is a broad category with multiple audiences. An important element is a "News Flash" consisting of news releases from facility and user institutions and related announcements to

which anyone can subscribe. Subscribers will receive news via email as it is announced. In addition, news will be posted and archived on lightsources.org. Other news-related features include clippings of light-source-related stories from the media, a repository (image bank) of graphics, a collection of articles and presentations under the heading “light sources and society” that demonstrate the value of light sources, and several collections of resources, such as links to Web sites of institutions whose scientists use light sources, light source facilities, technical societies, technical publications, media contact persons at the institutions, etc.

Initially, we will not develop educational materials about light sources for students and the general public; however, the Web site will provide links to many science educational sites, thereby serving as a resource for individuals interested in learning more about light source basics. Developing more explicitly educational content (e.g., videos, animations, hands-on activities) with the help of professional educators is a future option. This would also be a valuable resource for members of the media who may be reporting stories related to synchrotron radiation.

Content for areas related to light sources and users will be coordinated with user administration and outreach offices. Many light sources already have extensive Web sites devoted to user issues ranging from access and proposal submission to technical capabilities of beamlines and experiment stations, and links to these sites will be the first step. A long-term goal might be to devise an effective means to direct users to the facility that provides the capabilities they need for their research, such as a master “matrix” of research applications, research techniques, and beamlines at the various facilities.

In addition, networks of collaborating facilities, such as the well-established European Round Table for Synchrotron Radiation and Free Electron Lasers and the new European Integrated Infrastructure Initiative: Integrating Activity on Synchrotron and Free Electron Laser Science (I3/IA-SFS), exist or are forming. In the United States, the Department of Energy’s user facilities have established a National User Facility Organization consisting of user administrators and user committee representatives. We are just beginning to explore ways to coordinate with them.

Funding for start-up and annual operation is coming from the sponsoring facilities. Xeno Media, Inc., Hinsdale, Illinois (USA), the company that developed the Interactions.org Web site, will provide the same content management system for lightsources.org. Annual Web site operations include Web-master (Amaya Muñoz) salary, site development, and site hosting. Based on the estimated start-up and annual operating cost, we are seeking \$4,500 each year from sponsoring facilities. The present roster of sponsoring facilities: ALS (USA), APS (USA), CLS (Canada), Elettra (Italy), ESRF (France), HASYLAB (Germany), NSLS (USA), NSRRC (Taiwan), SSRL (USA) and SURF (USA).

For lightsources.org to be successful, it must be properly marketed to its various target audiences. Marketing goals include both obtaining subscribers to the News Flash and making lightsources.org known as a timely, complete, useful, one-stop shopping center of choice for news and information about light source facilities and science. This article is one step in our marketing plan. In the meantime, please send comments and questions to us at info@lightsources.org.

Light Source Communicators Collaboration

[Figure Caption]

The lightsources.org logo superimposed on a map of the world graphically emphasizes the global community envisioned as lightsources.org serves the worldwide light source community.

