

User Services and Outreach

The User Services and Outreach (USO) group promotes awareness of the W.R. Wiley Environmental Molecular Sciences Laboratory (EMSL), leading to its increased use and impact to science, and facilitates and documents this use for the national user facility and its sponsors.

Capabilities

USO plans, develops, and coordinates implementation of EMSL's outreach strategy to promote the awareness, reputation, and use of EMSL as a national user facility. The USO group is one of the primary points of contact for Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) and external media requests for general information. Outreach activities, which are undertaken to increase local, regional, and national awareness of the capabilities and accomplishments at EMSL, include:

- organizing the EMSL User Meeting and workshops
- providing tours of EMSL
- promoting the facility through local and offsite events
- creating print media, such as brochures, newsletters, posters, fliers, and photos
- developing and maintaining electronic media and websites.

The USO group provides support services to facilitate and promote the effective use of EMSL resources by staff and users. USO oversees those systems that enable users to submit proposals for research and staff to track the users' proposals. The USO group also provides reports to PNNL, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), federal, and state regulators to document the success of EMSL as a national user facility. Activities include:

- production of the EMSL annual and monthly reports
- providing training for the EMSL User System (EUS)
- providing access control for the facility
- distributing proximity cards, computer passwords, and IDs to staff and users
- scheduling conference rooms for seminars, meetings, and other events.

Activities in 2004 included participation in various local and regional meetings, the continued production of outreach-related materials, and ongoing efforts in the areas of user services and the facilitation of access to the facility by users.

EMSL User Meeting — EMSL2004. On June 14 to 16, 2004, the High Field Magnetic Resonance Facility (HFMRF) hosted the EMSL 2004 technical meeting, Bridging Technologies in Structural Biology. More than 60 participants from academia, industry, and other national laboratories attended. The first day focused on how a wide variety of techniques, including x-ray crystallography, cryo-electron microscopy, small-angle neutron scattering, and electron paramagnetic spectroscopy, along with nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometry (NMR) would be needed to tackle future Grand Challenges in biology and

structural genomics. The second and third days focused on user research performed at EMSL in the HFMRP. During the three-day meeting, attendees took part in poster sessions and tours of EMSL and had the opportunity to exchange ideas with the EMSL User Advisory Committee.

Tours. EMSL is one of the main destination points for visitors to PNNL. Each year, nationally elected and appointed government officials, such as cabinet members and members of the Senate and House of Representatives; local and regional elected officials; senior Battelle and PNNL management; and a broad spectrum of members of the national and international scientific community visit or attend meetings in the facility. As part of EMSL outreach activities, tours of the facility are given on a regular basis. Staff members from the USO group organize, assign, and guide most of these tours. More than 150 tours of EMSL (for nearly 1000 people) were given in 2004. Large groups of visitors from various regional meetings, such as the Clay Minerals Society 41st Annual Meeting, were also given tours to highlight the resources and research of EMSL.

Regional Outreach. The USO group organized an informational workshop featuring EMSL's proteomics mass spectrometry capabilities at this year's American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting in Seattle, Washington. The AAAS meeting provided a unique opportunity to interact with researchers performing cutting-edge work in biology who were curious about the utility of proteomics and the applicability of that approach to their research. Four PNNL scientists presented overviews about EMSL facilities, equipment, and specific research examples: George Michaels and Mary Lipton, PNNL, and Gordon Anderson and Harold Udseth, EMSL.

Communications Team. To streamline and enhance the development of highlights, announcements, website content, etc., a team composed of user services and communications specialists was created and has resulted in the production of an increased volume of informational flyers about research, activities, and staff at EMSL. A quarterly newsletter was produced and well-received by external contacts and internal groups, such as PNNL Communications, who distribute the document to visitors.

Access to EMSL. Part of the responsibility of USO includes providing access control and other support services for EMSL. The Front Desk staff members are often the first contacts that users, visitors, and new hires make when entering the facility. These staff members greet visitors, provide information, review requests for access, and process badges and proximity cards. Additional services include distributing various keys to the facility, identification numbers, and computer passwords for new accounts, and providing training for users. A USO staff member also works with EMSL management to coordinate office space assignments for staff and visitors. EMSL has one of the two auditoriums on the PNNL campus as well as a number of conference rooms, and USO staff members are the primary points-of-contact for scheduling these rooms and assist at events in this facility, such as the Center for Talented Youth meeting sponsored by Johns Hopkins University, held November 6, where more than 80 regional middle-school students visited EMSL to learn more about the emerging field of nanotechnology.

EMSL User System. The EMSL User System (EUS), a proposal lifecycle software tool, was developed as part of the EMSL user operations model. Since its release in October

2002, the EUS tracks the lifecycle of a proposal—from submittal, through review and acceptance, to closure. At various stages in this cycle and at completion, proposal authors are asked for updates of the progress of the research and copies of any publications resulting from the work. Reporting of these publications to the DOE's Office of Scientific and Technical Information is mandated by the DOE, and the USO group worked with EMSL groups to develop procedures for meeting these requirements and ensuring compliance, as well as overseeing the incorporation of enhanced features into the software.

2003 EMSL Annual Report. The more than 400-page 2003 EMSL Annual Report was produced and delivered in record time—four months after completion of the calendar year, which is an achievement remarkable among comparable national user facilities.

Future Directions

In 2005, USO will focus on awareness-building of EMSL research capabilities and expertise. Examples of future activities include:

- identifying and establishing relationships with potential strategic users
- outreach to regional institutions to increase advocacy for the facility
- attendance at national meetings
- reporting of research accomplishments and products to sponsors.

Staff

Julia C. White, Technical Lead
(509) 376-1369, julia.white@pnl.gov

Jessica M. Foreman, Administrative Secretary
(509) 376-3412, jessica.foreman@pnl.gov

Amy R. Selch, Administrative Assistant
(509) 376-4452, amy.selch@pnl.gov

Pamela K. Stevens, Administrative Assistant
(509) 372-2567, pam.stevens@pnl.gov

Tobe R. Taylor, User Services Specialist
(509) 376-6520, tobe.taylor@pnl.gov

Gailann I. Thomas-Black, Senior Administrative Assistant
(509) 376-4366, gailann.thomas-black@pnl.gov

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