First SCHED Forum telecon, 4th of May 2017, 15.00 CEST

Present

Dwingeloo: Bob Campbell, Mark Kettenis, Des Small, Arpad Szomoru
Socorro: Amy Mioduszewski, Brian Glendenning, Hichem Ben Frej
Somewhere (?) Walter Brisken
Perth: Cormac Reynolds

Agenda

– aim of project
– role of forum, need for additional members?
– inventory of functionality to be improved
– inventory of desired non-existing functionality
– station/equipment configuration, responsibility for updating information
– geodesy...?
– aob
– date next meeting

– Arpad and Des start with explaining the aim of the project. Not so much rewriting the code or implementing a wish list of features, but rather modernise parts of the code such that it will become easier to make changes to SCHED. A wish list is needed though, with priorities.
action Arpad: send out an email to the forum requesting input for this.

– The role of the forum should be to give feedback on the proposed changes, making sure that the engineering viewpoint does not diverge too much from what users actually would like to have, and that no changes get implemented that would conflict with the needs of the other stakeholders. No real need is seen to involve additional members, although Amy mentions spectral line observers; Andreas Brunthaler has plenty of expertise in that area.

– Des and Arpad had a meeting with the JIVE support scientists about their use of SCHED, they mentioned they would like a way to use SCHED without having to specify frequency setups, which already is possible. They also asked for a way to make plots in non-interactive mode.

– Cormac mentions optimisation modes. Would be very useful if these modes could be exposed to the users, and if it would be made easier for the users to make their own optimisations. Using Python would surely lower the barrier for such additions.

– Everybody agrees Python is the way to go.

– Amy (I think?) asks whether the interface also will be renewed, this is certainly the intention.

– Some discussion about the way SCHED is used at JIVE, which is rather not in the way it was intended, which is caused by the recent rapid changes in hardware and firmware versions.

– No-one thinks the stations should be responsible for keeping configuration information up to date. Of course, they have to provide the information, but the catalogs/databases should be the responsibility of whomever is in charge of SCHED. Part of the information gathering might be automatable.

– No-one thinks it a good idea to try to include geodetic scheduling.

– Brian raises the question of provenance, ownership, software licenses, incompatible forks of the code. Obviously, it would be ideal if the whole code base would fall under GPL. This is likely not the case right now, but maybe we could decide it is from now on (and always has been). Legal objections from any of the involved parties seem somewhat unlikely, Another issue is the use of pgplot, we need to know what the status of that is. ***action*** Brian: ask Craig Walker about this.

– Some discussion about maintenance and forking, it seems that neither NRAO nor LBO intend to invest much personpower into maintenance, only deal with upgrades when new equipment makes this necessary. Arpad states that the risk of making incompatible forks of the code should be mitigated by this forum.

– In order not to only depend on the members reading and responding to their email (we all get way too many), we will have regular telecons, especially during the early phases of the project. A date has not been set, but, depending on local progress, Arpad will send out a doodle for a follow-up telecon before the summer.