

USER ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Kathleen Nasta

User Administrator

The User Administration Office at the NSLS coordinates site access for all of our users, covering everything from processing appointments to ensuring safety compliance and issuing badges. We also facilitate the general user proposal program, maintain beamline agreements and data, record and interpret statistical data, and plan and organize meetings and workshops, including the annual Users' Meeting.

2006 Activities

User Statistics

During Fiscal Year 2006, 2105 users performed experiments at the NSLS. **Figures 1 and 2** detail the affiliations of our users and their areas of scientific research, respectively. There were 656 new users that joined us in 2006, indicating that the NSLS user community continues to be very dynamic. Roughly half of our users are U.S. citizens, and about 75% are male. A little more than half of the users from the 399 unique institutions came from U.S. universities. Other institutional categories included foreign, academic, BNL (non-NSLS), U.S. industry, U.S. laboratories, federally funded institutions (non-DOE), non-federally funded institutions, foreign national laboratories, and others. About two-thirds of the users came from institutions located in the northeastern United States, and one third of those were located in New York (**Figure 3**). Scientists, faculty members, and professional staff made up 44% of those users performing experiments, while 37% were graduate students and 13% were postdoctoral students.



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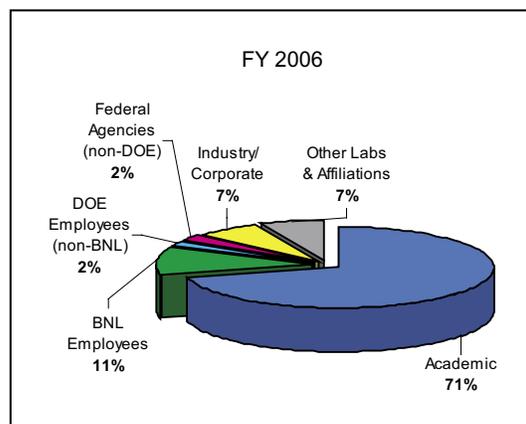


Figure 1. NSLS users by affiliation

Four percent were undergraduate-level students. Reviewing users' fields of research, almost half (45%) perform experiments in the life sciences area. The next largest group, at 29%, lists materials science as their research area, and 13% of the users are in the environmental and geosciences fields.

User Access Procedures

The web-based Proposal, Allocation, Safety and Scheduling (PASS) system was used for the first time for the fall 2004 operations cycle. PASS allows numerous actions to be taken care of in one system, including creating and submitting proposals, conducting feasibility and peer reviews, allocating and scheduling beam time, performing safety reviews, and maintaining beamline information.

During 2006, work began on prerequisites to create a framework for developing a system for Rapid Access to beamtime. A Principal Investigator (PI) can now name a delegate for a PASS form (for example, a professor can name a student). This delegate is another PASS user and s/he can prepare, submit, and receive status updates. In addition, a system of Envelope Safety Approval Forms (SAFs) was established. At this time, Macromolecular Crystallography users are asked specific questions prior to a full SAF. If answers indicate the experiment meets the criteria of a predefined Safety Envelope, no further SAF information will be required, and approval of the SAF is greatly expedited. Several meetings were held to gather input on the design and flow of the Rapid Access system, and it is expected that during FY 2007 the system will be operational.

A new Proposal Oversight Panel (POP) group was established prior to the Fall 2006 beamtime cycle. The POP is comprised of a small number of scientific personnel with broad subject-matter expertise. The first face-to-face meeting of the group was held in order to address any general user proposal

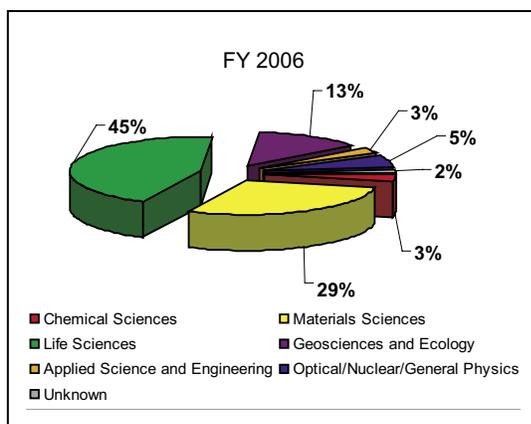


Figure 2. NSLS users by field of research

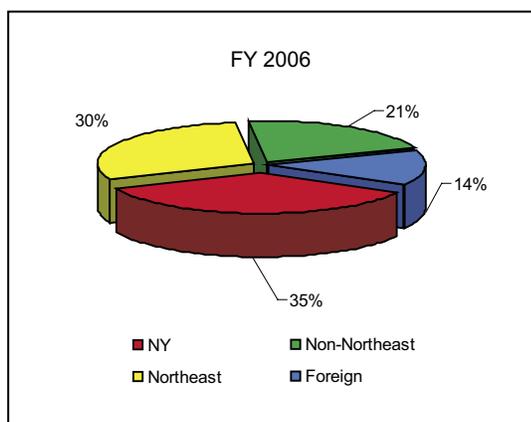


Figure 3. NSLS geographical user distribution

issues, such as appeals based on score differentials resulting from the initial peer review. Work is continuing to develop and streamline the role, responsibilities, and reporting of the POP. Related to this initiative was initial planning to adjust the current guidelines for rating proposals in an attempt to create a more efficient, more quantifiable way of scoring.

User Satisfaction Survey

The Department of Energy requests that all users complete a user satisfaction survey at the close of each experimental run. At the NSLS, this is called our End-of-Run survey. These surveys revealed that more than half of the respondents would communicate their research results through publishing in peer-reviewed open literature. About half said they would present findings at a professional society meeting, and three users indicated they

would acquire a patent. Additional benefits gained according to feedback from most of our users included:

- obtained access to unique facilities
- facilitated collaborative interactions (such as stimulated new ideas for future experiments, increased multidisciplinary work, or enabled a new approach)
- created an opportunity to train students (undergraduate through postdoctoral fellows)

The End-of-Run survey form was revised during 2006, and is now available online. Changes were made to limit the number of questions and simplify the information gathered so that users can complete the survey more quickly. Further changes are planned to allow access for particular beamline staff, through the PASS system, to view the responses to the survey directly and as often as they wish. Further, a tracking system will be created so that users can view the issues brought out through End-of-Run surveys, and what is being done to resolve the issues. It is anticipated that this will ensure more timely feedback and/or resolution for problems identified. The survey will continue to remain anonymous, unless a user wishes to provide an email address for an individual follow-up response.

BNL Research Support Building

In 2006, plans were created to provide a more convenient and simpler check-in process for the users and guests of all facilities on the BNL site. These plans included moving all users' services to the new Research Support Building. Located on Brookhaven Avenue diagonally across from Berkner Cafeteria, the Research Support Building opened in October 2006 and currently provides part of the envisioned "one-stop shopping" model for visiting scientists and guests. The housing, travel, rental car, and transportation offices as well as the Ronkonkoma Train Station Shuttle and Teachers Federal Credit Union are already functioning in the new location.

Currently, NSLS users still need to check in at the User Administration Office on the second floor of the NSLS upon arrival at BNL. But in 2007, the new Guests, Users, and Visitors' (GUV) Center will also open in the Research Support Building, eliminating the need for NSLS users to visit two buildings upon their arrival on site. When the new GUV Center becomes operational, it will allow all guests, visitors, and scientists (not including contractors) to complete their physical check-in process and fulfill other needs, such as picking up a key for an on-site dorm room, in one location. The hope is to provide weekday coverage from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. with some later hours on weekdays and Sundays to accommodate users and guests who cannot arrive during normal working days and hours. Once the GUV Center is open, NSLS users



The User Administration Group (from left) Kathy Nasta, Gretchen Cisco, Mercy Baez, and Liz Flynn

will be able to go there to complete the check-in tasks that would normally be done at the NSLS User Administration registration desk. After this transition, the NSLS User Administration Office will remain in place to pre-process registrations prior to physical check-in, and for other user functions as mentioned at the beginning of this article.

Meetings and Workshops

The User Administration office has taken a more active role in the past year to help plan and organize major meetings and workshops at the NSLS, such as the RapiData course held every April and the Crystallization workshop, which is held in June. Of course, our largest effort in this area is the annual Users' Meeting, which in May 2006, was the first held jointly with BNL's Center for Functional Nanomaterials (CFN). Although there are always improvements to be made, most of the 416 participants of the meeting were pleased with the joining of the two user communities, the main meeting and workshop programs, and logistical arrangements. There were six workshops offered: two concentrated on NSLS user interest, two focused on CFN interest, and the remaining two workshops were of interest to both communities. There were 34 vendors in exhibition and 47 posters displayed. New ideas brought out by participants that we hope to implement for the 2007 meeting include holding workshops and/or special times for NSLS/CFN technical staff to meet with vendors for product discussions, and holding a working luncheon to gather Proposal Review Panel members.