



# *Working Across Time Zones and International Boundaries in Collaborative Research*

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# Video for Large Projects



- Basic landscape: Working within large-scale science project goals and deadlines does not always translate to a desire for participants to use the most advanced video technology.
- Technological, time zone, and organizational boundaries and factors often intrude. People have restrictions, and preferences.
- When adequate preparation is done, though, the results can be a vast savings in time and productivity for the group.

*How do we optimize for greatest utility?*

# Some Facts of Life



- Not everyone wants to use video (or any given collaborative technology)
  - *They want to use it if it's easy*
  - *They will often use it if "someone else does it"*
  - *They need to have some degree of control*
- Not everyone is in the same time zone
- Not everyone is in the same country or organization
  - *Affects choices, availability, cultures of use*
- Everyone wants to communicate!

# More Facts (& Opinions...)



- It is not practical or affordable to have every single conference controlled or baby-sat by a professional.
- We want to empower and enable people to communicate about the science or topics at hand.
- People like to have options for connecting.

Real world choices of connect-on-demand and alternate connection methods make a difference!

(Examples: H.323 + streaming, video + phone dial-in, web talks archive + audio or audio-and-video, etc.)

# Real-World Examples

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- I'll describe here some examples of videoconferences held that have made a difference in international organizations of various types in which I've worked.
- Some features that have made them work will be explored.
- I don't expect all of your conferences to have the same characteristics or share all of these features. Hopefully some of these ideas will affect your next videoconference, however.

# Category I: The Routine

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- Everybody has these: perhaps they are the rule and not the exception in your working organization.
  - *Fixed time, fixed days of week (perhaps), fixed connection method.*
  - *Plenty of time to work out in advance how to connect and who to talk to if you have problems setting up your connection.*
- Surprisingly, there are many people who still avoid using video for such routine meetings because they are “too much work to set up and to run!” How to make video more popular in this setting?

# Ia: Routine Web + phone



- The phone works OK for many such conferences:
  - *People can put important talks on the Web.*
  - *Connecting by phone is easy and ubiquitous.*
  - *Cost is low for both equipment and connection.*
- Phone + web is the default for many. What's wrong with it?
  - *Can't "see the speaker" (or what slide s/he's on).*
  - *More limited interaction.*
  - *Harder to use for complex charts or topics.*
- I still have many daily / weekly calls that are phone.

# Ib: Daily/weekly video



- One example: a daily coordination meeting for a large-scale data handling operation (CDF SAM at Fermilab):
  - *Held every morning 8:45 - 9:00 am.*
  - *People can call in by video or phone dial-in*
  - *Up to 20 participants, but usually just a few*
  - *Dial-on-demand to handle "unexpected events"*
- We used this for >2 years to get routine operation of the data handling system working and stable. Held special "ad-hoc" meetings as needed.
- Key to making this work was everyone knew how to use it, and it was *tested in advance.*

# II: The Special Event

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- This present conference is an example!
- Have to know your audience, and communicate **CLEARLY** in advance how to use your special system.
- There will be problems.
- Alternative connection methods are a must.
- Interoperation between video methods brings special problems, but sometimes opportunities.

*Always keep in mind the goal is communication!*

# Ila: Event At One Location

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- Sufficient to announce the date, time and schedule at one location.
- In small groups, translating the time and date to local coordinates is helpful and polite, may be necessary to avoid confusion.
- In large groups, simply announcing may be enough.
- Tools: [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com) for both picking a date and time (meeting planner) and translating properly into local time zones.

# IIb: Event at Multiple Locations

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- Real-world example: 48-hour “round-the-clock” workshop held in 2004 between Europe, Asia and the US by CDF at Fermilab in which speakers and topics were timed to be convenient to their time zones, and of interest to participants in at least more than one time zone.
- Covered many topics and was a great success!
- Dial-on-demand and alternative connection methods were essential to this working.
- *(Just as an example of how well it worked: I was on the road at the time and ran it from Taiwan!)*

# CDF Grid Workshop Meeting Planner Timetable: March 10-11, 2005



The table below shows actual time in each of the indicated cities, as well as the corresponding UTC-time. To see the corresponding time at a location not in the table, use the links below "UTC-time." Main Chicago session times are C, D (Thurs.) and G, H (Fri.); remaining sessions are for Asia coordination (A, E) and Asia-Europe overlap (B, F). Intervening time can be used for software installation or any other purpose. A [plain text](#) copy of the agenda is also available for convenience.

The meeting will be held in room FCC1 (Thursday) and FCC2A (Friday) in the Feynman Computing Center at Fermilab. Video connections are by the [ESNET H.323](#) system at meeting ID 8272634. Telephone dial-in is also available at 1-510-883-7860; enter the above meeting ID followed by the # key when it answers. Please use video where possible as the number of dial-in slots is limited. Speakers please post a copy of your talks via the CDF internal [Webtalks](#) pages linked in the "session" columns below, or have someone within CDF do it for you. We will try to mirror the talks to external publicly-accessible pages also later.

Session	UTC-time	<a href="#">Seoul</a>	<a href="#">Taipei</a>	<a href="#">Bologna</a>	<a href="#">Glasgow</a>	<a href="#">Chicago</a>	<a href="#">San Diego</a>
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 00:00:00</a>	Thu 9:00 AM	Thu 8:00 AM	Thu 1:00 AM	Thu Midnight	Wed 6:00 PM	Wed 4:00 PM
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 01:00:00</a>	Thu 10:00 AM	Thu 9:00 AM	Thu 2:00 AM	Thu 1:00 AM	Wed 7:00 PM	Wed 5:00 PM
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 02:00:00</a>	Thu 11:00 AM	Thu 10:00 AM	Thu 3:00 AM	Thu 2:00 AM	Wed 8:00 PM	Wed 6:00 PM
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 03:00:00</a>	Thu Noon	Thu 11:00 AM	Thu 4:00 AM	Thu 3:00 AM	Wed 9:00 PM	Wed 7:00 PM
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 04:00:00</a>	Thu 1:00 PM	Thu Noon	Thu 5:00 AM	Thu 4:00 AM	Wed 10:00 PM	Wed 8:00 PM
<a href="#">A</a>	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 05:00:00</a>	Thu 2:00 PM	Thu 1:00 PM	Thu 6:00 AM	Thu 5:00 AM	Wed 11:00 PM	Wed 9:00 PM
<a href="#">A</a>	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 06:00:00</a>	Thu 3:00 PM	Thu 2:00 PM	Thu 7:00 AM	Thu 6:00 AM	Thu Midnight	Wed 10:00 PM
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 07:00:00</a>	Thu 4:00 PM	Thu 3:00 PM	Thu 8:00 AM	Thu 7:00 AM	Thu 1:00 AM	Wed 11:00 PM
	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 08:00:00</a>	Thu 5:00 PM	Thu 4:00 PM	Thu 9:00 AM	Thu 8:00 AM	Thu 2:00 AM	Thu Midnight
<a href="#">B</a>	<a href="#">Thursday, March 10, 2005 at 09:00:00</a>	Thu 6:00 PM	Thu 5:00 PM	Thu 10:00 AM	Thu 9:00 AM	Thu 3:00 AM	Thu 1:00 AM
	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 11:00:00</a>	Fri 8:00 PM	Fri 7:00 PM	Fri Noon	Fri 11:00 AM	Fri 5:00 AM	Fri 3:00 AM
	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 12:00:00</a>	Fri 9:00 PM	Fri 8:00 PM	Fri 1:00 PM	Fri Noon	Fri 6:00 AM	Fri 4:00 AM
	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 13:00:00</a>	Fri 10:00 PM	Fri 9:00 PM	Fri 2:00 PM	Fri 1:00 PM	Fri 7:00 AM	Fri 5:00 AM
	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 14:00:00</a>	Fri 11:00 PM	Fri 10:00 PM	Fri 3:00 PM	Fri 2:00 PM	Fri 8:00 AM	Fri 6:00 AM
<a href="#">G</a>	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 15:00:00</a>	Sat Midnight	Fri 11:00 PM	Fri 4:00 PM	Fri 3:00 PM	Fri 9:00 AM	Fri 7:00 AM
<a href="#">G</a>	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 16:00:00</a>	Sat 1:00 AM	Sat Midnight	Fri 5:00 PM	Fri 4:00 PM	Fri 10:00 AM	Fri 8:00 AM
<a href="#">G</a>	<a href="#">Friday, March 11, 2005 at 17:00:00</a>	Sat 2:00 AM	Sat 1:00 AM	Fri 6:00 PM	Fri 5:00 PM	Fri 11:00 AM	Fri 9:00 AM

# This Example Shows:

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- Alternate connection methods (phone and video).
- Use of web talks area to host transparencies.
- Explicit announcement of different time zones.
- Accommodation for speakers in different cities and countries.
- Use of <http://www.timeanddate.com> to prepare material for a meeting announcement.

*What could be better?*

# Meeting Planning Tools



- The Indico software from CERN is a wonderful tool for planning meetings and hosting talk copies. It is not supported across as many platforms as it might be, nor very easy to install.
- Here is an example from the international meeting we are holding RIGHT NOW (Mar. 27-30) in Brazil for The Americas Grid Policy Management Authority:

Tuesday 28 March 2006

09:00 Welcome (15')

09:15 SINAPAD, the Brazilian HPC grid (30')

09:45 Argentina Presentation (30')

10:15

Break

10:45 Argentina Review (15')

11:00 Identity validation rules (1h00')

- a. F2F requirements
- b. TeraGrid and OSG requirements

12:00

Lunch

14:00 EELA project (30')

14:30 Charter Review (1h00')

15:30

Break

16:00 Mexico Presentation (30')

16:30 Mexico Review (15')

Others:  
WebTalks  
(Fermilab),  
various bulletin  
boards and  
forums, etc.

# International Collaborations

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- Large-scale international scientific collaborations often make group decisions regarding preferred choices for internal (and even public) video- and other conferencing technology for their use.
  - Examples: VRVS (CERN), Access Grid (TeraGrid), H.323/ESNet (TAG PMA, etc.).
  - Scheduling conferences that go across these boundaries among organizations can be tricky.
  - ESNet includes explicit bridging options to VRVS and phone.
  - VRVS and Access Grid can be bridged
- Clearly more can be done in this area (RCWG, etc.).*

# International Collabs. cont'd



- I spend a *lot* of my time moving across international and collaboration boundaries (TAG PMA, etc.)
- Consistency and interoperability between these methods would be of *enormous* help here! Remote Collaboration Working Group run by Sheila Cisko, with Mike Pihlman, Christian Helft, Brooks Collins, Philippe Galvez, Ed Ritenour, Mary Trauner, etc. has been very helpful.
- Explicit looks at interoperability (e.g. through CERN workshops, ESN Net ECS workshops, EVO working group, etc.) are also very helpful.

# Special Note On Clients:

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- Scientists use UNIX (Mac OS X, Linux, etc.) primarily for their daily work, and other operating systems only secondarily.
- Unix-friendly videoconferencing clients (GnomeMeeting, ohphone, OhphoneX, XMeeting) are of great interest, and their use is growing.
- Communication with MCU and gatekeeper manufacturers (and videoconferencing equipment makers in general) is greatly to be encouraged.
- I have several clients within a short walk: Access Grid, InSorc, PVX, XMeeting, fixed-room H.323, etc., and use them all!!

# A few minor notes:

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- TinyURL can be very helpful to shorten the URLs of your meeting announcements to a reasonable size.  
*Put the following in your toolbar and use it for a one-click tool to make short URLs for your meeting:*  
`javascript:void(location.href='http://tinyurl.com/create.php?url='+location.href)`
- Working with the manufacturers to encourage greater support of cross-platform clients and tools would be useful.
- Becoming known as a videoconferencing expert can be hazardous.

# Conclusions



- Support and use as many clients as possible!
  - *Cross platform*
  - *Open technologies*
  - *Alternate connection methods*
- Announce your meeting with time-zone sensitive tools. (<http://timeanddate.com> works...)
- Pay attention to bridging and phone dial-in.
- Put your transparencies on the web.
- Use video for what it's good for - to promote communication, not to exclude.