

User Support Issues

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Introduction

- We are extremely short of people doing user support.
 - Many experts are on the atlas-sw-help list but no one feels ownership.
 - There are lots (37!) of Savannah bug groups but some reports remain unanswered for extended periods.
 - The training coordinator position has been unoccupied for over a year and there is not an obvious candidate.
 - Many groups are sponsoring tutorials but this happens in a largely uncoordinated way.
 - Some aspects of the software probably are overlooked and never covered in any tutorial.
 - In spite of this being a huge experiment with thousands of participants, there is not a dedicated user support person belonging to Atlas at CERN.

Short Term Solution

- I have been helping with user support requests.
 - I watch atlas-sw-help and atlas-sw-developers lists for help requests and problem reports. If something is not followed up, I redirect them to a (hopefully) appropriate person.
 - I try to move help requests from atlas-sw-developers to atlas-sw-help.
 - I should move true problem reports to Savannah but I normally don't.
 - Davide has been a big help in this effort.
 - I also watch parts of Savannah:
 - I have been monitoring the new Atlas Bugs (central bug reporting) group and assigning reports to appropriate groups.
 - Emil and I watch the Software Infrastructure group.
- Doing this monitoring takes me perhaps half an hour a day that I don't really have.
 - There really is no backup when I am unavailable.
 - And finding a backup isn't easy - whoever does it has to be familiar with the Atlas software environment to be effective.

More on Atlas Bugs

- In response to requests, DavidQ created a new Savannah group called “Atlas Bugs” last February.
 - The Atlas Bugs group is for use by people who don’t know which Savannah group to report a bug to. A human monitor (currently me!) looks at the bugs and reassigns them to an appropriate Savannah group.
 - Di has put links to the bug submission page for the Atlas Bugs group on all of the obvious web pages.
 - This group is now used several times a week.
- Clearly if the number of bugs reports increases to several per day or more this will quickly become unmanageable for me...
 - As we say in the grid world this doesn’t scale.

Long Term

- It is urgent for Atlas to get some sort of user support structure in place at CERN.
 - Given the lead time to doing this, we need to start now.
 - If we don't do something soon, we risk being overwhelmed during startup.
- Whatever support we provide must be lightweight for the users and responsive to the users.
- The situation is complicated by the need to provide support not only for using the software but also for using the grid-based the computing infrastructure.
 - We currently have 3 grids each running in its own way.
 - Users don't care where the problems are, they just want answers to get answers fast...