

ESNet Conferencing User Experiences

Alan Sill

Texas Tech University / Fermilab

Initial Environment

- Physics experimental meetings of all kinds (of course!)
- First application: database organization for CDF - H.323 system still new at that time.
- Much active interaction w/ people at remote sites via phone and video.
- Without ESNNet, this would have been impossible.

Present use

- CDF SAM, Grid, offline operations meetings
- Daily 8:45 am - 9 am meetings for CDF SAM/Grid
- Texas High Energy Grid meetings
- Informal ad-hoc code debugging discussions

Essential features

- Ability to dial in via a number of methods (telephone, room video, ViaVideo, etc.)
- Normally, GnomeMeeting system most stable!
- Telephone backup VERY important.

Observations

- Insufficient support is being given to Linux and other (e.g. MacOS X) alternatives.
- ESN Net H.323 system normally has high audio quality, reasonable video => OK.
- VRVS lacks telephone dial-in => prefer H.323. (Telephone dial-in essential!)

Other equipment

- Room-based Polycom Viewstation
- Two Polycom ViaVideos
- Unfortunately, these systems are for institutional reasons in the building on campus with worst network connectivity.

Demo of OhphoneX

- `xmeeting.sourceforge.net` => downloads
=> ohphonex version 1.3
- Based on same `pwlib/openh323` stack that drives open source H.323 software
- Includes H.263 capability

Other Observations

- Local audio and video quality is important!
(Heard this from another speaker also)
- We use echo-cancelling microphones and “real” video capture wherever possible
- Audio levels from remote systems are not all uniform (cell phone, etc) => hard to stabilize in practice.

Final words

- Thank you!!
- Make it compatible with dial-in to VRVS if possible
- Otherwise, keep this service and expand alternative platforms (esp. Linux!!)