

10/16/2009

Dear colleagues interested in brain imaging:

This note describes the progress on establishing the CMU brain imaging center, and invites you to an open meeting where your input and your questions can be addressed. As you probably know, there will be a new MRI scanner located at Carnegie Mellon which will be operational in the spring of 2010.

Our best guess is that the BIRC scanner will end its operations close to June 30, 2010. The reason for the ramp-down is that it will not be economically feasible for BIRC to continue operations when many researchers move their scanning to the CMU center. We want to make sure that everyone is aware of the impending changes and makes provision for them.

At the same time, we wanted to tell you that a transition path is being developed to make the change as painless as possible, and to provide additional benefits in using the new scanner.

The new center at Carnegie Mellon, open to both CMU and Pitt investigators, is expected to become fully operational around March or April, 2010. It will house a Siemens Tim-Verio scanner, which has very similar operating characteristics to a Tim-Trio.

Here is some information about the Carnegie Mellon scanner:

- The scanner, funded by a grant from NIH, is intended exclusively for research purposes.
- The new scanner will be located in Wean Hall (in an area adjacent to Baker/Porter), with convenient direct access from the Wean parking lot.

- The main determinant of the *date* of the start-up of the new scanner is the duration of the renovation process of the space in Wean Hall.
- BIRC staff will be recruited to operate the Carnegie Mellon Center, so the interaction with investigators and their staff should continue smoothly.
- Ancillary equipment (e.g. eyetracker) and computer protocols will be as similar to BIRC's as possible.
- There will be two lab rooms for extra-scanner behavioral testing (e.g., for screening tests) and pre-scanner training on tasks. There will also be a simulator room. There will be space for researchers to do computational work associated with their scanning.
- A free parking spot in the immediately adjacent lot should be available to you while you are scanning.
- The choice of scanner, Siemens Tim Verio, was made after making detailed comparisons of data from the Trio and the Verio.
- The Verio has a larger bore than the Trio (70 cm vs 60), providing substantially more psychological and physical comfort, particularly for children and for larger participants.
- The Verio will have the same 32-channel coil that fMRI researchers at several universities are very pleased with.
- In a dataset of the same person performing the same task on these two scanners, the fMRI (EPI-BOLD) data were almost indistinguishable.
- The hourly charge on the new scanner has not yet been determined. The annual costs of operation at the new center (to be distributed over all users) are expected to be lower than at BIRC, but the level of demand, another major determinant of the hourly charge, is not currently known.
- Efforts are being made to make the facility especially comfortable for children and their families.

The center's activity will be guided by an executive committee consisting of a subset of the brain imaging researchers who use the facility, including representation from the University of Pittsburgh. These include John Anderson, Tom Mitchell, Tim Keller, Walt Schneider, and me. There also will be a broader User's Committee to provide input and administrative help and a Safety Committee. It will be a center of and for investigators and their co-workers.

To provide further information, there will be **a town hall meeting on Thursday, November 12, 2009 at 4:30 PM in BH 336B**. In addition, please feel free to contact me with your specific issues.

We hope that the slogan "Temporary Inconvenience, Permanent Improvement" will apply to this transition from BIRC. We are optimistic that fMRI research will continue to flourish here as the new scanner is put into service.

Best wishes,
Marcel Just

D.O. Hebb Professor of Psychology
Director, Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging
Psychology Department
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
email: just@cmu.edu
tel: 412-268-2791
fax: 412-268-2804
CCBI website: <http://www.ccbi.cmu.edu>