Experiments and measurements – co-operation with MLZ

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As I write these comments a major concern worldwide is pandemic illness caused by covid-19: the first thoughts are for the health of colleagues, collaborators, friends and families. Everyone will certainly be trying to ameliorate the situation for people affected directly by illness as well as the problems associated with enforced isolation. The community working at MLZ – both staff and visiting users will be anxious that scientific know-how and resources are applied in the best possible way for the common good. Important work can be performed to understand the disease and develop appropriate treatments. Advances in other areas of science and technology that are supported by neutrons and other facilities at MLZ are likely also to be of prime importance as recovery will have to be made everywhere from the global impact of shutdowns and travel restrictions.

For MLZ apart from the immediate effect of postponement of operations and experiments, there are other changes. Users from external laboratories have had to rely on electronic meetings, e-mail and telephones to maintain contact with staff at MLZ. People have been busy working from home in many fields. In the longer term there are likely to be on-going changes. Even with some easing of strict lock-down procedures, we may have to become accustomed to some remote access to the facility. This could involve 'mail-in' of samples and participation in experiments from a distance using various networks. Workloads will be different and certainly not less than previously. Suggestions and comments as to how new ways of working can be made to be effective are welcome.

The User Committee, as always, welcomes comments about all aspects of the experience of users from making the application for beam time, through experiment planning and execution to the analysis and publication of results. The resumption of operations in January this year brought more comments than previously, and these are now being discussed in the committee and with MLZ staff. Sharing ideas that can lead to improvements is very helpful and is much appreciated. I look forward to receiving many more in the coming months, either directly or via any of the members of the committee.