The Very Long Baseline Array



Jim Braatz (NRAO)

Atacama Large Millimeter/submillimeter Array Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array Robert C. Byrd Green Bank Telescope Very Long Baseline Array



The VLBA

- A dedicated VLBI array
- 10 identical 25 meter antennas
- Spanning from Mauna Kea to St. Croix
- Baselines 200 to 8600 km
- Sensitive to compact structures with $T_b > 10^5$ K



VLBA Frequency bands and Sensitivity

λ (cm)	v (GHz)	σ (μJy/beam) 4 hrs at 2 Gbps				
90 cm	0.312 - 0.342	277*				
50 cm	0.596 - 0.626	782*				
21 cm	1.35 - 1.75	13				
13 cm	2.15 - 2.35	14				
6 cm (upgrade)	3.9 - 7.9	8				
4 cm	8.0 - 8.8	13				
2 cm	12.0 - 15.4	24				
1 cm	21.7 - 24.1	20				
7 mm	41.0 - 45.0	66				
3 mm	80.0 - 90.0	316†				

2 Gbps recording delivers a bandwidth of 256 MHz with two polarizations.

* Narrower bandwidths† 8 stations

Resolution!



The Megamaser Cosmology Project (Braatz et al.)

Mapping H₂O maser disks to measure H₀ and determine SMBH masses

Fast Response & Monitoring

- Dedicated array with Dynamic Scheduling
 - Targets of Opportunity
 - Monitoring



AGN 1222+216

The MOJAVE project (Lister et al.)

Examining the evolution of AGN jets and their magnetic fields, and the medium into which the jets are expanding

Astrometry

- High-precision parallax and proper motions
 - Instrumental stability and long baselines
 - < 0.1 mas position accuracy is routine</p>
 - ~ 0.01 mas demonstrated in some cases
 - c.f. Gaia at 0.024 mas
 - Allows 1% distance measurements at 1 kpc



The BeSSeL project (Reid et al):

Mapping Galactic structure and measuring fundamental parameters by measuring parallaxes and proper motions of SF regions

 $R_0 = 8.4 \pm 0.6 \text{ kpc}$ $\Theta_0 = 254 \pm 16 \text{ km/s}$

VLBA Correlator (DiFX) Capabilities Spectral Resolution

- DiFX is a flexible software correlator in Socorro, NM
 - 1-8 sub-bands up to 128 MHz wide
 - 4K channels per sub-band is routine; 32K with justification
- Spectral zooming higher resolution in narrower windows.
 Useful for:
 - Masers with in-beam continuum calibrators: wide bands for maximum sensitivity on calibrator + high spectral resolution for the masers.
 - Masers with multiple transitions: wide bands to cover a large number of widely separated maser transitions + high spectral resolution for each transition.

VLBA Correlator (DiFX) Capabilities Multi- Field Imaging

- The sky is almost entirely empty at VLBI resolution
 - "full beam" imaging not needed; rather, many small "fields" (phase centers)
 - DiFX allows many phase centers in one correlator pass
 - Low overhead (~2.5X) is only weakly dependent on number of phase centers
- 200 phase centers require only 20% more correlator time than 2 phase centers.



Middelberg et al., 2011

The High Sensitivity Array





To boost the sensitivity of the VLBA by an order of magnitude

Recent Upgrades and Special Notices

• Recent Development Efforts:

- New wide-band "6 GHz" receivers (4.9-8.9 GHz) cover the 6.7 GHz methanol line
- New recorder systems provide 2 Gbps capability to improve continuum sensitivity (256 MHz in dual pol)
- Phased VLA now part of HSA
- Notices:
 - Resident Shared Risk Observing (RSRO) program available
 - NRAO is soliciting large "Filler" programs
 - Global Millimeter VLBI Array (GMVA) proposals accepted through NRAO PST

Proposing for VLBA/HSA







	ele Authors Av	ailable Organizations								Friday 31 May 2
Validate Print Submit	VLBA/HSA	RESOURCES							« «	Resources
Options	Order	Name	Wavelength		Processor		Observing	Mode	Session	
My Proposals ULBI/11A-007 ULBI/2013-04-002			3.6 cm	\$	Socorro-DiFX	\$	Standard	\$		
		Stations		Obconvi	ing Paramotors	Correlation Para	notorr	Enor	ial Features	
- D General			KP 🖂 LA 🖂	Observing System	DDC System \$	Number of Correlator Pas	ses 1	Full Polarizatio	on 🛛	
 Science Justification Sources 		MK NL OV	PT SC	Bandwidth	(128 MHz \$	Integration Period(sec)	2.0	Pulsar Gate		Save
Resources Sessions	HSA 🖂	GBT AR EB	VLA-Y27	aseband Channels	4 \$	Spectral Points/BBC	256 \$	Output Format	Mark4	Delete Cancel
Print Preview VLBA/2012-06-048	VLA	Y1		Polarization	Dual 🛟	No. of Phase Centers per Pointing	1]	I	
- C VLBA/2012-01-016 - VLBA/2009-01-110	Geodetic			Agg. Bit Rate Mbits/sec)	2048					
		N								
				Stations						
			BR 🗖 FD	Stations	KP a LA a					
		VLBA 🔒	BR 🛛 FD MK 🔒 NL	Stations HN OV	KP LA . PT SC .					
		VLBA	BR FD MK NL GBT AR	Stations HN OV EB	KP LA PT SC					
		VLBA HSA VLA	BR BR FD MK NL GBT AR	Stations HN OV EB	KP _ LA _ PT _ SC _ /LA-Y27 _					

M	y Proposals Avai	lable Auth	ors A	vailable Organization	5								Fri	day 31 May 2013
	a 												Copy R	Resources Help
Validate	Print Submit	VLBA	A/HSA	RESOURCES									Resource	es >>>
	Options	Orde	er	Name	Wavelengt	h	Processor		Ob	bserving Mo	de	Session		
My F	Proposals				3.6 cm	\$	Socorro-DiFX	\$	Stan	ndard	\$			
	VLBI/11A-007 VLBA/2013-04-002													
II Fr	General			Statio	ns	Observ	ving Parameters	Correlatio	on Parameters	5	Spec	ial Features		
	Authors Science Justification	VLB	A 🗆	BR FD HN	E KP LA	Observing System	DDC System \$	Number of Correla	tor Passes 1	F	ull Polarizatio	n 🗆		
	Sources			MK NL OV	PT SC	Bandwidth	128 MHz 🗘	Integration Period	(sec) 2.	.0 P	ulsar Gate			Save
	Sessions	HSA		GBT AR EB	VLA-Y27	Baseband Channels	4 \$	Spectral Points/Bl	3C 2	256 🗘 😋	utput Format onversion to I	Mark4		Cancel
	Print Preview VLBA/2012-06-048	VLA	\	¥1		Polarization	Dual \$	No. of Phase Cent Pointing	ers per 1					
	VLBA/2012-01-016 VLBA/2009-01-110	Geo	detic			Agg. Bit Rate (Mbits/sec)	2048							
	VLBA/13B-334									I				
	Obser	ving P	aram	eters					Ob	serving	g Parame	eters	0	
	Observing Sy	stem	PF	B System 🛟	_				bserving	System		o oystem ,		
	Bandwidth		32	MHz 🛟				Ba	andwidth	n	128	MHz 🛟		
	Baseband Ch	annels	16	÷				Ba	aseband	Channe	els 4	•		
	Polarization		Du	al 🛟				P	olarizatio	on	Dua	al 🗘		
	Agg. Bit Rate (Mbits/sec)		2048	3				A: (1	gg. Bit Ra Ibits/sec	ate c)	2048			

Polyphase Filter-Bank (PFB) 16 channels, each 32 MHz wide Coarse tuning **For continuum science** Digital Down-Converter (DDC) 1, 2, 4, (or 8) channels, each 1- 128 (or 64) MHz wide Finer tuning capability **For continuum and spectral line science**

My Proposals	Availabl	e Authors	Available Organization	5								P	riday 31 May 2013
												Сору	Resources Help
Validate Print Submit	1	VLBA/H	SA RESOURCES								« «	Resour	ces > >>
Options		Order	Name	Waveler	ngth	Processor	r	Ol	bserving M	lode	Session	1	
 My Proposals 				3.6 cm	\$	Socorro-DiFX	\$	Stan	ndard	\$			
VLBI/11A-007	02								_				
General			Statio	ins	Obse	erving Parameters	Correlatio	on Parameters	s	Spec	ial Features		
Authors	ation		BR D HN		Observing System	DDC System 🗘	Number of Correla	tor Passes 1		Full Polarizatio	n 🗉	_	
- Sources			MK NL OV	PT SC	Bandwidth	128 MHz \$	Integration Period	l(sec) 2.	.0	Pulsar Gate		_	Save Delete
- Sessions		HSA 🗆	GBT AR B	VLA-Y27	Baseband Channel	s 4 🗘	Spectral Points/B	вс [2	256 \$)	Conversion to I	Mark4		Cancel
Print Preview OK OK	48	VLA	Y1		Polarization	Dual 🗘	No. of Phase Cent Pointing	ers per 1					
- D VLBA/2012-01-01 D VLBA/2009-01-11	16	Geodetic			Agg. Bit Rate (Mbits/sec)	2048							
- C VLBA/13B-334													
Correlation ParametersNumber of Correlator Passes1Integration Period(sec)2.0			If both zoom	h wide band ing are desi	lwidth a red, this	nd sp woul	ecti Id b	ral e 2					
Spectral	Poin	ts/B	вс	256 \$	Up to	32768 spec	ctral cha	annels	S				
No. of Ph Pointing	ase	Cente	ers per	1	For m	ulti-field im	aging						

VLBA/HSA Sessions in the PST

« <

Sessions > >>

SESSIONS

Session	Number of Sessions	Separation (Min. Start GST	Max. End GST
	1	0	00:00:00	24:00:00
		day(s)	(HH:MM:SS)	(HH:MM:SS)
				EVN Exposure Calculator
Constraints:		Comments:		Save Cancel
Source Groups	Resource	IS	Time/Session (hrs)	RMS Noise (mJy/beam)
•	 			
Note: Adding Source Groups to a session will automat all sources, within the group, to the session.	ically associate			

VLBA/HSA Sessions in the PST

~ ~

Sessions

> >>

SESSIONS

Session	Number of Sessions	Separation	Min. Start GST	Max. End GST
	1	0	00:00:00	24:00:00
		day(s)	(HH:MM:SS)	(HH:MM:SS)
				EVN Exposure Calculator
Constraints:		Comments:		
				Save
				Cancel
Source Groups	Resource	es T	me/Session (hrs)	RMS Noise (mJy/beam)
 	•			
Note: Adding Source Groups to a session will automat all sources, within the group, to the session.	cically associate			

http://www.evlbi.org/cgi-bin/EVNcalc

EVN Calculator

EVN e-EVN VLBA GLOBAL GMVA	RESET GO			
Observing band & data rate [Mbit/s]	On-source integration time [min]			
L - 18cm	150			
Ef W1 Hh Ka Gb ✓ Kp Mc Nt My Ny Y1 ✓ Pt On Sh Km Tc Y27 ✓ Ov Tr Ur Sv Pv ✓ Sc ✓ Br Jb1 Mh Zc Ro70 ✓ Hn ✓ Mk Jb2 Ys Bd Ro34 ✓ Nl Cm Sr Wz Pb ✓ Fd Wb Ar Sm Go ✓ La	The image thermal noise is estimated to be 21.27 uJy/beam (1 sigma) using natural weighting.			
Number of spectral channels, integration time [s], and maximum baseline length	Number of polarizations, subbands per polarizations, and bandwidth of a subband [MHz]			
16 ch ‡ 2s ‡ 10000 km (Full EVN) ‡	2 pols			
The field of view limited by bandwidth-smearing is 2.475 arcseconds (assuming 10000.0 km for the maximum baseline). The field of view limited by time-smearing is 16.70 arcseconds. These values are calculated for 10% loss in the response of a point source, and they give the FoV radius from the pointing center.	 32 MHz subbands are not available operationally at the EVN yet. The resulting FITS file size will be about 427.24 MBytes. This combination of channels and polarizations results in an aggregate bit rate of 2048 Mbps, assuming 2 bit sampling. 			
	RESET GO			

VLBA/HSA Technical Justification

My Proposals Available	Available Organizations	Monday 06 January 2014
		Save Help
Validate Print Submit	TECHNICAL JUSTIFICATION	 < Technical Justification > >
Options	VLBA Technical Justification	
My Proposals WUBA/2014-00-003	Use this page to specify how the technical set-up requested for your proposal enables the scientific goals to be met. In then enter "NA" into the textbox. The links within each box provide information concerning these technical questions	put is required for all fields. If a field is not relevant for your proposal
General Authors Science Justification	Explain the reasons for the stations requested; specify minimum number acceptable, and note which stations are optional and/or required. If HSA observations are being requested, justify why the HSA is needed to achieve the science, and verify that all stations can sample/record with the same observing mode.	
Sources	https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/vlba/docs/manuals/oss/ang-res https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/vlba/docs/manuals/oss/prop-prep/vlba-plus	
	Explain the choice of receiver(s) requested and whether or not dual polarization is required for each receiver: https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/vlba/docs/manuals/oss/bands-perf	
 GBT/14A-230 GBT/14A-363 GBT/2013-01-040 VLA/13B-184 VLA/13B-340 GBT/13B-157 VLA/13A-234 	Explain scheduling issues including requested weather conditions, dates, and length of scheduling blocks. Specify the weather suitable for a given frequency band. For example - 'I request weather suitable for the 2cm band'. Note that this is not necessarily the observing frequency (since one may request lower or higher frequency weather). Specify preferred dates, or excluded dates, and/or if a series of observations with specified cadence, specify that cadence. Specify minimum length of scheduling blocks (blocks of observing time, which may be different than sessions) that can be observed and a start-time range in Pt_LST; note that shorter blocks are, in general, easier to schedule; if 24-hour blocks are required, indicate whether of not break-points may be installed in the schedule to allow different times.	
GBT/13A-236 GBT/13A-239 GBT/12A-239 GBT/12B-052 GBT/12B-325 ULA/12B-282	Describe correlator set-up requested. Correlation parameters beyond those required for narrow-field continuum or spectral line observing should be justified. For example, use of pulsar processing, multiple phase centers, multiple correlator passes or wide-field phase centers should be explained. These capabilities, used in isolation or in combination, may have an impact on correlator throughput. Also justify the number of multiple phase centers if > 100.	
🗀 VLBA/12B-276	https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/vlba/docs/manuals/oss/correlator	
VLA/12A-283 VLA/12A-294 GBT/12A-297	Note whether the target(s) can be self-calibrated and estimate their flux density. If phase-referencing is required, specify the phase-reference calibrators to be used and their expected flux densities, or whether extra time (on the VLBA or VLA) will be required to find calibrators:	
VLA/12A-377	https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/vlba/docs/manuals/oss/bsln-sens	
ULBA/12A-284	http://www.vlba.nrao.edu/astro/calib	

Important Links

• NRAO Help Desk

https://help.nrao.edu

VLBA Observational Status Summary

https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/vlba/docs/manuals/oss

• EVN Sensitivity Calculator

http://www.evlbi.org/cgi-bin/EVNcalc

Proposal Submission Tool

http://my.nrao.edu

• SCHED – observation preparation software

http://www.aoc.nrao.edu/software/sched/index.html

• AIPS – data reduction software

http://www.aips.nrao.edu/index.shtml



SN1993J, Bartel et al. Image courtesy Michael Rupen