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Wits event workshops big data

22 Jan 2014 by Editor | Filed in [People 'n Issues](#)

Leading physicists and engineers from South Africa and around the world will converge on Wits University next week to workshop one of the biggest challenges all scientists face this century: How to deal with big data output?



More than 100 researchers in fields such as physics, astronomy, geosciences, anthropology, photonics, applied mathematics, electrical engineering and information technology - as well as graduate students and representatives from industry - will attend the [2014 High-performance Signal and Data Processing workshop](#) hosted by the Wits School of Physics.

The workshop is jointly funded by SKA Africa and the University of the Witwatersrand and is hosted in collaboration with the University of Cape Town, the National Research Foundation/Themba Labs, Stellenbosch University and SA-CERN.

Workshop Co-chair, Professor Bruce Mellado from the [High Energy Physics Group \(HEP\)](#) in the School of Physics at Wits University, says it has become a necessity for scientists in many fields to master the techniques of high-throughput signal and data processing.

"Science is becoming more complex and detailed," says Mellado. "The amount of data now available and used to describe an object is growing very fast. This does not only apply to big sciences like CERN - where the SA-CERN team works - and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project, but to most modern sciences. It is now of strategic importance for the development and advancement of scientific research in South Africa that we develop our own electronics and computing architecture designs - to develop and build our own, affordable, supercomputers."

One of the key drivers in this development is the synergy between sciences. Mellado, also a member of the SA-CERN team, says CERN has a strong background in signal and data processing and has been dealing with these big data questions for the past 20 years. "Synergy between the SA-CERN community and other science communities, in particular the SKA is essential to establish a strong base in signal and data processing in South Africa. SA-CERN is already assisting the SKA to liaise in areas of interest where CERN is leading innovation," Mellado adds.

The workshop is themed [Challenges in Astro- and Particle Physics and Radio Astronomy Instrumentation](#), but the development of high-throughput computers, also known as supercomputers, will also have a revolutionary impact on data processing in all fields of science, such as medical sciences, palaeosciences and engineering.

"Engineering underpins much of the instrumentation being assembled by our colleagues in science, and we are very pleased with the range of engineering topics that we have assembled for the workshop," says co-chair, Professor Michael Inggs of the University of Cape Town. "We are confident that the exposure of the technology from the particle physics and radio astronomy projects at one venue will inspire collaboration."

The workshop includes plenary sessions for in-depth presentations and knowledge sharing between delegates will be in lecture format, as well as a classroom environment for hands-on hardware training. General overviews and in-depth presentations will be given.

The event takes place from 27 to 31 January 2014 at the Wits Professional Development HUB, 92 Empire Road, Braamfontein.

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