

31 Oct. 2009: New Package: Loflm

Hi all,

we have had some experiences in the past where people had great difficulty getting all the software available for imaging on the LOFAR offline cluster to run. Often mismatches have occurred between versions of LOFAR, casacore, pyrap, etc. This was caused, mainly, by some newly introduced dependencies between these packages and some changes in the interfaces of these packages.

Since these packages will become even more interdependent in the (near) future, we have chosen to adopt a different strategy for building and deploying these. We now have a new package, called LofIm (Lofar Imaging). This package consists of:

1. casacore
2. casarest
3. pyrap
4. LOFAR
5. askapsoft

We build all these packages directly from the code repositories in a single go each night. Version mismatches will thus be almost impossible. As all these packages are in a development phase, it can occur that a build will fail. To still allow users to use a working version, we have decided to keep a 'buffer' of a week of previous builds. These can then be activated and used until the build is successful again.

How to use this:

Users with an account on the new cluster can issue the command:

```
> use LofIm
```

This should set all the environment variables to use the latest nightly build of the Loflm package. To use a previous build (in case of problems) you can add a day to the command. e.g.,

```
> use LofIm Wed
```

will activate the build done last Wednesday. Do not repeat these commands for different days within a single shell, as this will screw up your environment settings.

The drawback is that if a build problem is not solved in a week's time, we will have no working version anymore. Problems should therefore be reported asap. That can be done to me or to Ger van Diepen.

In due time, when the software stabilizes, we can start thinking about 'stable' releases. In the current rapid development environment, we do not believe this to be very useful.

Now that we have released the Loflm package, we will discontinue the regular builds of LOFAR, casacore, pyrap, askapsoft outside of Loflm.

You can find all information in the LOFAR wiki: [see here](https://www.astron.nl/lofarwiki/)

Cheers,

Arno Schoenmakers

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