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weekly activity report 104 (loughry)

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Attachments:

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Dr Martin and I met by video teleconference on Thursday. We discussed the Air Force request for information (RFI) number EVSC1000. This RFI, published early last week, contains a list of requirements for a new certification and accreditation (C&A) tracking system for DIACAP---itself a newly adopted C&A standard within DoD. I have been in discussions all week with managers at Lockheed over writing a response to this RFI that might lead to funding for my research. The deadline for responses is 16th October, although effectively the deadline is 10th October because of the time needed for internal review. I am writing the response now.

I am excited about this RFI for at least three reasons. Firstly, regardless of what happens, it is a published document of the U.S. government that I can cite as validation of a real set of requirements for a C&A support tool, written by experienced users of such a system. This forms a solid basis for my second case study. The new case study is significantly different (in a useful way) from the first case study in that the new case study applies to DIACAP, not Common Criteria. DIACAP is an entire C&A programme and software development life cycle, unlike the CC which is only a set of assurance criteria. The RFI lists 86 requirements, including comprehensive reporting events that I would not otherwise have discovered without more experience. These are requirements of practising accreditors who need to be able to handle 200 simultaneous accreditations and want to keep track of previous ones. It validates my thesis and is going to be extremely useful no matter what else happens. The second reason I am excited about this is that a successful RFI response could lead to a formal Request for Proposal (RFP), and if that in turn provoked the offer of a contract (between the U.S. government and Lockheed), it would constitute guaranteed funding for long enough to finish my research. The potential gain is worth the risk of a minor detour in my research plans. Finally, if a contract were to be let, it would mean that a Lockheed project manager would be assigned to...encourage...me to finish deliveries in a timely manner. That would directly contribute to finishing my dissertation as well.

Dr Martin and I discussed the Crosstalk journal article. Because of the short deadline for RFI responses, I have put off the Crosstalk article until at least 10th October---only a week and a half. I am trying to write the RFI response in such a way that I will be able to submit essentially the same words as a journal article, minimising any necessary rework. There is a potential risk that managers at Lockheed will object to having the RFI response published, although I assess that risk as low for two reasons: first, the RFI process is public; secondly, my managers are already aware of my plan to submit the Crosstalk article soon, and they encouraged me to write it. The difference is that before now I was planning a CC-centric article; now I am writing a DIACAP-centric one. It matters little to Lockheed, who have to work within both of these C&A programmes---in addition to others---regardless.

Lockheed managers are all tied up in ISO audits this week, so I am working on my own without much support from there.

Participant interviews for the first case study remain eager to talk to me about it, but that is on hold whilst I write the RFI response, because the deadline (which is not much time at all, but entirely typical for these sorts of things)

is more urgent.

I have had some success with writing this type of response in the past, and some experience with the branch of the government that is asking for it. Last time they responded extremely positively to a research-heavy proposal, and that is what I plan to do again this time.

Dr Martin says there is plenty of cross-fertilisation here with Common Criteria and it will add to my thesis. He asked, though, if this increases the scope too much, making the thesis problem too large. I said no, I don't think so. I think it goes back neatly to my original proposal for scoping this to C&A programmes in general, not just the CC. DIACAP is new, the AFI 33-210 is extremely new, and DoD is still getting used to DIACAP. People in the field need this tool very much. As long as it's not commercially focussed, the DoD internal process aspect seems not to be a problem.

Dr Martin says I need to show the Air Force that I have a head start on other people, in my response to the RFI.

I am going to try reading David Allen's (2002) book on Getting Things Done and try using a set of folders to organise every piece of paper related to each project. I have enough unrelated papers on my desk, and enough commitments (two Comlab Student Conference submissions to review, a paper on subset maths, the RFI response due soon, a quarterly progress report for my primary work assignment---another Air Force research project, annual performance reviews at Lockheed, my thesis interviews, and so on) to make it worth while spending the time to investigate it.

I feel I am making good progress towards my dissertation this week.

Next scheduled meeting is after Reading Group on 8th October at 0630 local time.

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End of WAR 0104.

References