File 20101110.0642: Dr Martin and I chatted for a bit on Wednesday via Skype. I have not heard from my assessors yet about a viva date for confirmation; I need some lead time to buy plane tickets and the assessors might not be aware of that constraint; Dr Martin will send a note to Dr Fléchais to let him know.

I found a new tool that looks like it does exactly what I need: Simscape (an extension to MATLAB). They do not offer a student licence, so I am trying to find out the price so I can buy it. The tool is an expansion pack for Simulink that allows direct modelling of physical systems. Dr Martin suggested trying to get an academic licence instead of a student licence. I will keep looking into it.

Dr Martin sent me a link to a BBC article about procedures for destroying the UK ID card database. We talked about it for a while, ranging into such other subjects as CCTV cameras and video storage. It is now possible that the MTBF of a disk drive will be reached before you can succeed in filling it with streaming video; so who is keeping all that data? We talked about backscatter x-ray machines, radiation dosage and airport security. I get more exposure from the radioactive bricks in my house than I do from x-rays, although he pointed out that backscatter x-rays are interesting because they do not penetrate—is the total dose absorbed in a few hundred microns of thickness more than the bulk dose that would be expected? I should do some calculations on that and find out.

It's another thing I do not have time to chase down right now. We talked about keeping a database of ideas for papers that no one has time to pursue at the moment; some of them are timely ideas and ought to be explored, but you are busy with immediate tasks and lack time to work on them. For example, the idea I had of a comparison of cost-per-experiment between the LHC, biotechnology, civil engineering (or materials) and software engineering. Certainly from CERN it ought to be possible to get accounting data down to the penny along with good numbers for experiments, trials, number of PhDs generated (Dr Martin's idea) and papers published. I suspect it would be possible to learn some surprising things from a study of it. But I do not have time to look at it now. We talked about carving out some space in the wiki (or elsewhere; the wiki is world-readable) for an exchange of ideas where anyone could deposit ideas for new papers and other people could comment on them, or contribute, or just take an idea and run with it. Ideas could be tagged as in the Creative Commons system (Dr Martin's idea again) as freely available, or please-acknowledge-this, or I-want-coauthorship-and-half-the-Nobel-prize-money-if-this-goes-anywhere. Security researchers are a pretty competitive bunch, so I wonder if this would be accepted or not. I am not aware of any similar systems with the possible exception of the half-bakery (not science-oriented) and efforts within Lockheed to get people to generate new ideas (also not quite the same thing).

We talked for a while about next week's Security Reading Group paper on eScience, the Common Criteria, TCSEC/ITSEC, and why CMW was never adopted outside the defence community. I told how a teacher of mine once got undergraduates to read the literature for the first time by assigning every week the task of reading one classic paper from the literature and writing a one-page summary of it. That was the best class ever; I plan to use the same technique some day.

Regular meeting planned for Friday this week at 3:00 p.m. Oxford time.

References