

File 20110603.0820: Notes from meeting with Dr Martin, 0745 this morning. I sent Chapter 1 very early this morning. Dr Martin had read it by the time I talked to him.

Note for future reference: he looks at time stamps.

I asked about the ethics of reusing prose I have written for other papers, published and unpublished. Dr Martin was of the opinion that if you wrote the words, they are yours and you can use them any way you want. It would be a little weird not to cite a published paper of your own, but only a little weird; unpublished papers are absolutely fair game for copying even paragraph after paragraph of prose—if it's been written and polished already, then use the words straight up.

I was surprised by what Dr Martin said next. When I demurred that parts of it are well written, which I know because I spent hours going over them polishing the prose, I thought they were embedded in crap. That is not the case. (Specifically, there is some material missing from this chapter because I was unsure whether I could just wholesale copy and paste it from a paper written for ACSAC—but not accepted—and a paper published at VALID.)

This chapter is in a state that you could give to your assessors for confirmation and they would think it fine. Don't spend any more time on it. Go write the next chapter now. It is a little abrupt in the first paragraph, could do with another paragraph near the front, but it is definitely in a good enough state for now. It does NOT need work. It is good enough for the dissertation.

The historical section is good as is. It is just the right length. Do not make the historical section any longer.

I asked whether the thesis statement ought to be called out specifically. Dr Martin told me it is traditional to give the thesis statement, or research problem, or whatever you call it, its own heading. However, at this time, put the heading in only and move on. Do not spend time polishing it or three months from now you still won't be done.

The first paragraph is written in an elevated prose style. It is very good but I might have difficulty maintaining that standard throughout. I related that I try hard to find one word that will do to replace three words, and he said it shows. I asked about length of sentences. Dr Martin advised that writing in a slightly more mundane style would be less tiring (for the writer), that short sentences are good, but too many of them will annoy the reader. The problem, I said, with choosing the right one word to replace three is that it sometimes leads to very long sentences, something I want to watch out for. Generally, however, my sentence structure and length are right on and I have hit the desired style. Keep it up.

I mentioned the article in the latest issue of *IEEE Security & Privacy* about SCADA systems. 'The vulnerabilities we're talking about are legitimate product features', said the article, 'which makes it a hard problem.' [1].

We talked about RSA, and the fact [not for redistribution] that Lockheed went with the same vendor (RSA) for the tokens. At least to the present time, nobody ever got fired for buying RSA. I wonder who paid for the new tokens and all the express shipments; whether the contract specified that RSA would pay for the tokens but the customer paid for distributing them. If it's not in the contract now, said Dr Martin, it will be next time! I will look in the 10-K and annual report of Lockheed come January for a footnote referencing that little expense.

Summary: the pressure worked! I got a whole chapter written and it's already in a state that I could give to the assessors for confirmation in good conscience. Now do it again, also in a week, with chapter 2.

Next meeting in one week, 10th June 2011 at 14.45 BST. It is on the calendar.

References

- [1] Gary McGraw. Silver bullet talks with Ralph Langner. *IEEE Security & Privacy*, 9(3):9–14, May/June 2011.