

File 20110208.0928: Notes from meeting with Dr Martin:

I met with Dr Martin on Tuesday to discuss progress, reading and plans for my next trip. I reported that in all the reading I have been doing on grounded theory this week, sources are beginning to repeat themselves—I keep coming back to the same references to certain papers, books and articles. This is an indication that I am getting to the bottom of it. I have been playing with the software tool, ATLAS.ti, trying out different ways of coding sentences, phrases and attributed quotations. The methodology seems to be ‘keep coding smaller and smaller units of interpretation until a new class of links suddenly becomes obvious.’ I think I am getting close to understanding the idea behind grounded theory to the point where I can apply it.

I brought up the problem of connecting remotely to the ISPP seminars. OII was supposed to make it easy to record and stream video, but it has not worked so far. Yesterday’s seminar was recorded; Dr Martin sent me a link to the audio; I will be able to listen to the lecture. I am grateful not to miss it; Professor Sasse is one of the people suggested for my external examiner. I will review the lecture tonight or tomorrow morning. The mailing list for reading group has not been working; I forwarded information on the error to the support desk at Dr Martin’s suggestion; they were able to fix the problem. We talked about external examiners for a while; Angela Sasse is a well-known user of grounded theory in software engineering, at least since 2001–2006, and a lot of the introduction to it I have obtained from papers by her and collaborators.

I did not have much research progress to report this week because of interactions with the Air Force sponsor who is responsible for most of my funding on the Probabilistic Redaction project. Last week the sponsor called to ask for a great deal of information on testing, metrics and status; I was provided with a PowerPoint template and spent hours helping craft slides for a presentation he had to give today. By Friday the sponsor was very happy with the technical content and told us so. I was surprised, then on Saturday night when he called very upset, saying he was unsatisfied with our progress. I worked the weekend on a list of questions to satisfy the internal reviewers, and by last night the sponsor was once again happy with the result. This was my first experience dealing directly with a funding sponsor, and it ate up a lot of time. The only research work I got done in between was reading.

Dr Martin warned to beware of the point of diminishing returns when reading; there is always one more thing to read. We discussed the trip I have coming up in March, and what finished writing I can bring with me then to get some assurance I am on the right track. I will write up a schedule and send to Dr Martin by Thursday of this week.

Update: the Air Force sponsor contacted me later in the week to relate that the Technical Council review went very well and the metrics were accepted. He is happy with us again and my funding is stable through September.

References