

File 20110826.0856: Notes from meeting with Dr Martin: we talked about confirmation of status and the argument I should be making in conversation with the assessors in a couple of weeks: that I am on track to finish and they should give me more time. If the assessors say I should have more time, the faculty can't really argue. I started off by saying I wish I could delay this, as I am not satisfied with what I have written yet. But the University is pressuring me, and I have this deadline, and I'm coming to talk to the assessors.

You should see my lessons learnt file—I have learned a tremendous amount. I just wish I were further to the right on the learning curve, past the knee in the sigmoid curve where it flattens out, which is when you should be writing. Dr Martin wondered out loud what advice he didn't give me at the appropriate times, and I related that I have written agenda and minutes from every meeting we ever had, so it would be possible some day to go back and look and see exactly what advice Dr Martin gave me in 2007 and whether I followed it or not.

Dr Martin said 'there is always more time'.

I said this will be a conversation with the assessors, more than last time when I walked in, quickly realised that something had gone horribly wrong, shut up and listened. This time, I have a good these, reams of data, a good analysis, just not as much writing as I wanted to have. I need to spend the next two days documenting my contributions and my thesis argument, so they can't say I don't have one. I want to improve the description of those two things in Chapters 1 and 2.

Dr Martin cautioned again to get the gist of everything in there, but not to polish it until later. Have something for the assessors to discuss, so they don't spend any time on saying, 'you should move these words around'.

Task for while I am in Oxford: see Julie and ask for two more terms.

Discussion of [1]. It is really a poorly written book, terrible copy editing. There are one or two good points in it about subversive stakeholders that I want to use, but I bought the book to write a review of it. I have pages and pages of notes on editing mistakes in the book.

Discussion of BlackCloud. I described it as providing primarily high availability and guarantees of service level agreements. We discussed forensic seizures of cloud providers' hardware, whether the FBI might want the provider to stay up after they've siezed the information, for covertness, and how prickly American librarians are in the face of National Security Letters. I still think cloud providers ought to market a cloud service that is designed to stay available even after Law Enforcement have seized a copy of the information. LE's primary goal, I think, is to sieze a forensically accurate snapshot of the data without corrupting it; they may or may not have as a secondary goal to prevent others from using the service. Although, U.S. authorities do seem to want to shut down on-line poker playing sites. There, they want to deny access, at least to American players.

We dicussed single points of failure, the Sun Ultra Enterprise 10K lockstep operation that could be done over dark fibre, and how microcomputer makers are re-learning the lessons of virtual machines that IBM fully worked out in the nineteen-seventies. The F-35 certainly has an interesting single point of failure in the IPP: it does everything from electricity to run the control surfaces to bleed air for cooling electronics and oxygen for the pilot, plus starting the engine and battery backup for the electricals. Lose the IPP in flight and you've suddenly lost eight percent of your control authority. Interestingly, it cools the electronics by dumping waste heat into the fuel cells, a handy on-board heat sink that works for a while, anyway.

Discussion of revocable biometrics. I am not sure this is going to work. I think there is an attack possible against the protocol. Dr Martin liked the idea of the indirection of the authentication decision being sent to the owner of the biometric, though. And he was struck by my example of the FBI's fingerprint database; there, the owner of the biometric is the FBI.

I should send my chapters to Dr Martin to look at before I send them off. No need really to Fedex; Dr Martin could print them for me, and offered to do it and deliver them. I said it would be a few hours; Fedexing the printed material is a show of respect.

Dr Martin will email the assessors to get them to set a date and time.

More advice on the chapters: get the gist of it all in there, more than polish. Include all the details. It is certainly appropriate to discuss schedule with the assessors.

I should send my chapters to Dr Martin ASAP. I said it'd be a few hours.

Call ended 0844.

Afterwards, I discussed the call with Andrea. I brought her up to date on plans to try to get the assessors to give me more time. My strategy is to convince them that it's their idea. Maybe three or four

months. Dr Martin said one or two terms, and it's always better to have headroom than not to have it. Andrea requested that I avoid St Patrick's Day. Dr Martin said there is always more time, although it might be tricky to get the University to agree to it. I pointed out to Andrea that there is no funding body drumming its fingers, as I am self-funded. Everyone in the business knows that PhD requirements have been getting longer and longer; that's why there is so much pressure by departments on their students to finish sooner. A PhD used to be a two-year effort; now it's 6.2 years in the sciences and 11 years in the humanities. Andrea wanted to know why the difference.

I hope to get the assessors to conclude that it's easiest for them to confirm that I am on track and proceeding towards finishing with a good research product, but to demand more time. Everyone in science knows that you can't dictate the speed of research; sometimes it takes longer. I wish it were two years ago, or six months ago, but it isn't and I have to adapt to reality. But it would be in the assessors' best interest (I hope) to confirm me, get me off their plate, and not have to acknowledge that everyone's time has been wasted for the past four years.

I asked her if I should bring up the fact that it's costing me a lot of money to fly back and forth across the Atlantic like this all the time. She said NO NO NO NO. You might, if you require one last argument to make your case, bring up that you are self-funded and your wife left her job to run the household full time to support you, but do not risk looking like a petulant child complaining of how hard it is to fly back to Oxford; the assessors would likely react by saying you should have been living on Oxford the whole time. They are giving you an exemption that way. Don't push it.

I need to write contributions and a clear statement of my thesis arguments.

## References

- [1] Johann Rost and Robert L. Glass. *The Dark Side of Software Engineering: Evil on Computing Projects*. IEEE Computer Society Press, Los Alamitos, California, 2011.