File 20100312.0637: Weekly activity report 0127:

weekly activity report 127 (loughry)
Joe Loughry
Sent: 12 March 2010 06:37
To: Niki.Trigoni@comlab.ox.ac.uk; Andrew Martin; Joanna Ashbourn
Cc: otaschner@aol.com; andrea@hpwtdogmom.org; Joe Loughry; mmcauliffesl@comcast.net
Attachments:
Weekly activity report no. 20100311.2036 (GMT-7) sequence no. 0127, week 8 HT

I met with Dr Martin by video teleconference today at 7:15 a.m. I had
a large number of small items I wanted to talk about. I reported that
I did not have the 2nd International Conference on Advances in System
Testing and Validation Life-cycle (VALID 2010) conference paper written
yet; I wanted to have that for today's meeting but I did not get it
done in time. I am working on it urgently; the submission deadline is
20th March. Dr Martin offered to look the paper over before submission,
an opportunity I will definitely take advantage of. I hope to have the
first complete draft with figures in EPS done tomorrow (Friday).

Next I reported that the GSO.17 form would probably come to him for
signature. Dr Martin replied that he had already seen it and signed it.
Julie Sheppard is efficient; I need to thank her for that. Update:
after today's meeting I heard from Julie that the retroactive suspension
of status for last Michaelmas term was approved and is done. Now, I
need to send in a GSO.17a form right away to acknowledge and un-suspend
status for the current term. Fortunately the new form does not require
so many signatures. I am waiting for an email from Julie Sheppard first,
but I will get the GSO.17a form transmitted tomorrow.

Back to research. I reported on a series of conversations I have been
conducting with people at Lockheed regarding the certification progress
of Radiant Mercury (RM) version 5.0. The programme manager and systems
engineering lead are in Washington, D.C. this week negotiating yet another
part of the certification. Interestingly, there are two people in the
certification agency who are working at cross purposes; one lady has
been blocking it on <unspecified technical issue>; another gentleman
is championing the product and advocating from within for approval.
This interaction will definitely appear in my write-up when I write
my dissertation. I reported to Dr Martin that I have been listening
in to telecons and doing informal interviews with people, watching the
certification process without participating in it. The programme manager,
systems engineering lead, and IV&V lead have been my best sources so far,
in addition to a former project manager whom I consult with regularly
and another former project manager whom I respect highly. I have
been saving emails and sitting in on a few in-person meetings as well.
Mostly, I learn from listening to conference calls. I have been taking
good notes and beginning to map the roles that various people are taking,
in contrast to the roles that they ostensibly are supposed to be doing.

I talked to Dr Martin about a possibly unrelated series of events that
have been happening lately on programme: the DOD 8570.1 certification
requirement. I explained that 8570.1 is a DOD policy that all persons
(be they government, military, or contractor) with privileged access
to defence computer systems (ie root) must hold one of a short list of
commercial security certifications, CISSP being preferred. Interestingly
from my perspective, Lockheed seem to be dragging their feet on this
requirement; the government itself reports that their own compliance
rate is somewhat behind schedule---and they recently postponed the
deadline for full compliance from end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 to end
of Calendar Year (CY) 2010---but the corporation does not appear to be

doing a sufficient amount to achieve full compliance with 8570.1 by the
end of December 2010. I estimate 40--60 people on programme who need
certifications, only ten or so have it now, and the cost to certify this
many people will approach US$100,000.00. The programme has recently
experienced funding difficulties for <details not included> reasons.
Where are they going to get that much money? Worse, what if a scenario
I fear may happen actually does happen and the Contracting Officer (COTR)
writes 8570.1 compliance into the contract at contract renegotiation time.
The department could suddenly find itself in the position of needing
to get all 50 of those people certified before the end of CY 2010 and
only three months to do it. Again, this interaction between government
programme office and contractor is relevant to my dissertation and will
be included in the writing up. Funding problems directly affect the
progress of the RM 5.0 certification effort; already they are going to
miss the 15th April target date. What could they be thinking? (Update:
after this morning's meeting with Dr Martin I learnt that funding was
restored last night and is now assured through end of FY 2010.) I have
a call into a trusted source for another opinion on the issue.

Finally, I asked Dr Martin a few questions about the mechanics of
submitting a paper to a journal or conference: is it normal to submit
in double space? I thought that was no longer done, but I ran across a
submitted paper in double-space format the other day and began to worry.
Dr Martin said he has never seen a submission double spaced, and if
they don't ask for it, don't do it. The CFP said maximum six pages, and
that implies normal spacing. He pointed out that IEEE and LNCS formats
vary by a factor of two in how many words they can fit on a page, so
I should measure the previous year's conference proceedings and mimic
their preferred style for my submission.

I reported that Lockheed has asked me to give four more talks in coming
months. They must like my talks. Dr Martin seemed pleased at that
and told me to go ahead and do those talks. They provide a beneficial
imposition of structure and deadlines and thereby encourage progress,
as long as the talks are all different (and they are). Dr Martin told
me to try to make each talk correspond with a chapter or section, as a
way of getting leverage from the extra work.

Finally, I have been corresponding with Tracey Wells in the Careers
Service, helping them out with an article about international students.

Reading group yesterday discussed Chapter 1 of a book Shamal found on
cyber warfare. I told people of an article in Comm. ACM about experiences
using the static analysis tool Coverity in real-world programming shops;
apparently programmers in the wild commonly disbelieve the language
specification, and managers hate it when a new, improved version of the
bug detector shows more bugs in the code even after they fixed all the
ones the older version of the tool found.

Next meeting not scheduled yet. I am introducing a paper at next week's
reading group, so I will definitely talk to Dr Martin then, but probably
earlier, as soon as I finish this conference paper which is due in about
a week.

Current list of tasks in order of priority, highest priority first:

1. VALID 2010 paper (based on preliminary results from first case study)
due 20th March 2. Methodology chapter to be finished by 31st March.
3. Crosstalk journal paper (based on methodology chapter and my talk
in Oxford) to be submitted by 15th April. 4. Dissertation outline
(needed for confirmation of status). 5. Begin writing progress report for

```
confirmation of status.  6. CT&E practitioner survey (I need to have data
and preliminary interpretation by end of summer).  7. Update the schedule.
8. Apply for confirmation of status.

Joe Loughry
Doctoral student in the Computing Laboratory
St Cross College, Oxford
```

End of WAR 0127.

References