

File 20110225.0344: Weekly activity report 0177:

weekly activity report 177 (loughry)

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Sent: 25 February 2011 03:44

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Weekly activity report no. 20110224.1932 (GMT-7) sequence no. 0177, week 6 HT

I had a long telecon Thursday with my Air Force funding sponsor at which we briefed the current status and new technical approach of the probabilistic redaction project. The sponsor came away pleased once again. I have asked the project manager for some schedule relief; that project has been taking way more than its share of time and I am getting run ragged.

When reading Burton's (1993) book on government procurement over the weekend, I started to get a strong sense of dj vu when he started talking about the fighter mafia again. This is another good indication that I am reaching the bottom of the primary references on the topic.

I have another invitation to the UCDMO conference in August, this one through my Air Force funding sponsor, and hence much less likely to be cancelled at the last minute like last year because of a claimed shortage of funding at Lockheed. I plan to go and talk about my results on the grounded theory of CDS certification and accreditation testing.

I met with Dr Martin over Skype while he was in Turin, at 1500 GMT Tuesday. I told him I was stressed, but persevering. I am trying to balance all the calls for my time. I knew going in that doing this degree would be hard, but I never knew it would be this hard. Further to that, I have been taking some specific measures to minimise the impact of other work on my school work, and I described some of the specific measures to Dr Martin.

I am continuing to work on the grounded theory of the R'' case study. It is frustrating, primarily because I do not know completely what the grounded theory is yet. I am following the methodology, coding and categorising and interpreting the written records from conference call after conference call, but the underlying grounded theory is still vague. It is supposed to be that way at this stage---the methodology depends on continually refining a theory that is never quite wrong, just incomplete, until the next data appear. When the theory stops changing on receipt of new data, it is done. My difficulty may be a result of trying too hard not to let preconceived notions influence the development of the theory---something the literature warns strongly about; but all the methodology books say that a theory will converge when enough data have been applied to it. Dr Martin asked a question about the GT methodology; is it to be expected that that is the way the methodology behaves? Answer: yes, all the methodological discussions I have read say it works this way; you analyse lots of data for a long time, until the theory stops changing and stabilises, or crystallises. I am waiting for the crystallisation to occur.

Still working on detailed outlines of Chapters 2, 3, 4. My funding sponsor in the Air Force has been asking for more time again (see above).

I asked whether Monday's seminar (on 'Defining Cyber Warfare', with

Prof. Peter Sommer of the London School of Economics/The Open University) had been recorded; I learnt that Cornelius captured HD video of the seminar but the file is too large to transfer. I talked with Cornelius but decided to wait until Dr Martin gets back and can strip off the audio to MP3 for me. I will listen to the seminar when I can get the audio-only file. I appreciate their time spent in recording the seminars so I can hear them.

Per last week's guidance, I am trying to limit my reading and to do more writing. This past week has been a bad week for getting writing done, because of worrying about finances and pressure. I have had to be in a number of meetings related to the specific measures I mentioned earlier, but hopefully those measures will take effect soon, and the funding crisis will be past. I should know more about it by next week.

I asked for another meeting as early as possible next week; Dr Martin offered one Monday morning. I will try to have those chapter outlines done by then. Dr Martin said I sounded stressed. He asked if there were anything he could do to help. I will talk with him again on Monday at 0800 MST (1500 GMT), not so stressed this time.

Dr Ashbourn called Wednesday for the College Advisor Graduate Consultation interview that is done every Hilary term. She formally asked for an update on my progress, estimated dates for confirmation of status and submission, and if I had any problems in college. I reported that I am enjoying the new methodology and really getting into it. I have a few questions about the methodology itself---there is not really one GT methodology; in fact there are several varieties and part of my reading has been for the purpose of exploring the whole range of the methodological variation so I can discuss it as part of the literature survey. Dr Ashbourn asked whatever became of the question between Dr Martin and me of which research direction I should pursue, my first proposal or the grounded theory approach; I replied that I am firmly resolved to following the assessors' recommended approach to the letter this time. She said that was wise. I do intend to further develop the first idea some day, but first I have to get this research on the raw data settled. I decided to yield to the assessors' assertion that a stable and solid foundation is a better thing to have established first, before going ahead with the more abstract model. It is important to accomplish the present work first.

I described in some more detail to Dr Ashbourn the specific measures I have taken recently to avoid certain distractions that have been keeping me from making progress as well as I would have liked. Finishing successfully is my only priority, and I have moved some important things around in view of it, financially. As for dates, I want to do confirmation of status as late as I can possibly get away with in Trinity term (so, September) followed by submission in January.

Regarding the GT methodology, I recalled some advice that Dr Jirotko gave me back in December: to write the initial chapters of my dissertation in such a way as to lead the reader to an inevitable conclusion; by the end of the first chapter the reader must be convinced that the only reasonable thing to do is a grounded theory analysis on three case studies, and following which, exactly that sort of analysis is presented. I am working on those chapter outlines with the assessors' advice in mind. As I mentioned above, I have a few questions about the methodology, and this time I asked Dr Ashbourn if she thought it would be appropriate to contact Dr Jirotko directly about it. I don't want to risk invalidating the assessor relationship. Dr Ashbourn asked a few questions about who in Oxford and elsewhere nearby are GT experts,

then suggested I email Dr Jirotko and ask, carefully. I have done that now, and got back a reply saying 'fire away'. Dr Ashbourn also asked if I have talked with Shamal Faily regarding use of GT. I related that I have, and he was kind enough to give me some samples of his raw data together with some of his final results, but nothing really in between. That is where I am stuck. Shamal is pretty busy right now writing up; I did not want to bother him too much.

We discussed plans for consultation in March when I will be in the UK on travel. I said I would bring the draft chapters 2--4 and my GT database, hopefully to meet with Dr Jirotko for a few hours when I am there. I am feeling confident and enthused with the new methodology, but I desperately do not want to get off-track again like happened last time; I am seeking a partial validation of preliminary results this time in the new methodology. Not enough results yet to show off; I am working on that with all energy.

I offered to help set up before the lecture on the 14th. I hope to meet with people in the department as much as possible the week I am in Oxford. Finally, Dr Ashbourn asked if I felt like I was making good progress and on track to finish in time; I said yes.

GSS reports are due in a week.

My current tasks, in priority order, are:

1. Detailed outline of Ch. 2, 3, 4.
2. Update the literature survey with references on grounded theory and Qual. research.
3. Import remaining R'' case study source material into ATLAS.ti.
4. Figure out a way to make event traces in the H. unit linkable [on hold].
5. [Staring] Figure out if I can use the chronological record in my lab notebook as a source for the 'memo writing' activity that occurs later [the answer appears to be yes; in fact the format of my notes is nearly ideal for the purpose].
6. Plot tasks on a new Google Calendar as blocks in a 168-hour week. Establish limits on non-thesis work times. [Still not done, but I have got the Air Force project to back off a little.]
7. Survey article needed for summer [not started yet].

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End of WAR 0177.

References