Onwards

Yesterday was my last day at the University of Southern Queensland.

I won't miss the reminders to change passwords every 90 days, or the travel forms where you have to sign each line, number each receipt and staple them all to bits of paper. I am mildly disappointed that I won't get to try out the new End Of Journey Cycling Facilities which have been sitting there for months looking nearly complete but as I always said, arriving to work at USQ every day was only the start of my journey.

I will miss the teams I have been working with for the last decade or so in Toowoomba – first with NextEd and then with USQ. Except that I won't miss them really, because all our work is open and we'll still be collaborating on the same code-base and the same big themes around content-aware repositories and sharing the same world-wide office we did last week, even if the view from my 'home office' will be of the chaos the new puppy has wrought on our back garden rather than the calm of the manicured USQ lawns and the Japanese Gardens.

Today I will try to clear all the ukuleles, cameras, Lego, bulldogs clips, conference swag, religious relics, medicines, tools, compact disks, cables, cassette tapes, broken jewellery and pens and so on off what is allegedly my desk, make an effort to put in last year's tax return and get ready to start work on the JISCPub project.

Yesterday I had lunch with the Software R&D team. It's gratifying to have someone tell you that this is the best workplace they've ever had and I appreciate the bottle of 18yo Glenlivet and the socks, and the advice that I should wear said socks with my black work shoes. Thanks Bron, I had no idea. I tried to read out what you had all written on the card to my partner last night, while I sampled the top couple of centimetres of the whisky but I couldn't do it without sobbing (although that may have been the talking card, not me). People thanked me for supporting them and giving them opportunities, if I managed to do that, then it was because of the environment created by the likes of the late Alan Smith, and Jim Taylor, who gave us space and time to work on important projects. I will continue to try to live up to Alan's coaching, enabling style of management.

Some of those open source projects have just matured to the point that they are poised to have a major impact on USQ like the ICE project I brought into existence six years ago, with members of the software team in the old Distance Education Centre. The ReDBox research metadata repository has a chance for local adoption as part of an effort to improve practice in managing research data for code-compliance and reuse. The media repository which shares 90% of its DNA with ReDBox has been approved for more pilots, managing and transcoding video and audio, and could play a major role in supporting the changing face of course materials at USQ in a potential post-ICE USQ, not to mention its potential as the open source repository-of-choice to run alongside the Moodle Learning Management system, which lacks a scalable back-end content store and transcoding facilities. And the Creative Arts repository which can manage complex relationships between works and exhibitions has impressed its stakeholders and the outside world, just as the policy library did. All those are the result of lots of coordinated effort towards a common technology platform that gives USQ more reach than many other organisations. I'm proud of my part in resourcing and leading all that, and proud of the team who did all the hard work.

Tomorrow, I'm looking for, but yet not desperate for, a senior job in the scholarly technologies arena, anywhere in the world, preferably somewhere I can continue the push towards web-based scholarship we've been making at the Australian Digital Futures Institute.

Right now, if you want to consult me on web publishing for the academy, how to make web documents using word processors, electronic book formats, institutional repositories and metadata repositories for research data or the new Scholarly HTML movement then (a) drop me a line and (b) get in the queue – what with the East Coast Blues and Roots festival, the Toowoomba Show Holiday, maybe a trip to the only capital city in Australia I have not yet visited, to talk about courseware publishing, the aforementioned JISCPub, and threatened trips back to the UK and possibly the USA for more work on Beyond the PDF / Scholarly HTML my card is rapidly filling.

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