Surveys for Wednesday 15 September 2010

Uid 11

I was on holiday in Crete - specifically on 15th September, I was in Paleohora and spent most of the day on a sandy beach.

Uid 12

I am writing this diary on the 16th as I was out all day yesterday and missed doing the survey. I spent the day at a conference and masterclass on coaching and leadership, which involved around 8 hours travelling for 5.5 hours at the conference – perhaps not the best ratio. This may not seem on the surface to have much to do with teaching either but the reason I went was that we are working on developing coaching as an approach to student support and wanted particularly to hear the two keynotes: David Megginson and Jenny Rogers, both of whom have written some fascinating stuff about coaching.

The keynotes did not disappoint – though I found myself getting frustrated with the first as he spent a lot of time getting views from the audience which meant he had to skip his case study almost completely! Interesting that although I would full support interaction in presentations, my frustration came from that – the fact that in doing that he had sacrificed the opportunity to tell us about the meat of the work he had been doing. Second keynote was much less interactive but a very helpful reminder and challenge on some of the myths that we perpetuate about coaching – and already I have found myself referencing it several times in conversations with colleagues today and in a staff development session we were running this morning on coaching for learning. Need to spend more time working out the implications of what she said for our work.

Interestingly a recurrent question at the conference was whether coaching could be used to support students in their learning and academics in developing their teaching – both areas we are focusing on but which seems not yet to have hit the radar of the coaching community as such. Encouraging in that we know there is interest out there – more to do on promoting what we are doing!

On the train on the way down I had an hour or so reviewing with the colleague I was travelling with over our progress so far on the project and where we needed to set our priorities in the second half of the project. Very productive exercise both in highlighting the progress we have made (more than I thought) and the areas that still need work. We basically just reviewed core sections of the project plan but in the process surfaced issues and areas for development and things we had overlooked. Probably should do this more often. Far more useful than looking at it on my own.

Uid 13

I'm not teaching any regular classes this semester, but am advising three students. Two are my own, and one I've inherited from a faculty member on leave this year. So my diary is about my interactions with them, as a graduate teacher.

L.N. is doing really well. She's doing a qualitative thesis, where she's collected a TON of data, and is working backwards through it. She knows her bottomline, and is trying to show now how the end result occurred. She's not making as much progress as I'd like, but she's distracted by her GRA responsibilities. (Her dissertation and Graduate Research Assistantship overlap by about 80%.)

M.H. is getting ready to propose. Our meetings are mostly about helping him get his story straight and speaking to his audience. We not only discuss the research story, but also how Faculty Member X would respond, and how Potential Future Employer Y would think about things. Framing a dissertation is a challenging proposition.

C.G. is my inherited student. She has a draft of most chapters, so she's in good shape to end this semester. What I find is challenging, though, is making sure that SHE'S clear on her story. I find myself reviewing her chapters then asking her, "What does this have to do with your title, your thesis, your research questions?" Usually, the chapter \*does\* relate, but she's not doing a good job of drawing the connecting lines. My advisor used to say that the challenge of the dissertation was staying on-message for 100-200 pages.

Uid 14

6:00am Awakened by screaming baby. Lovely spouse handled it. Tried to sleep for a while.

6:30am Out of bed, to the computer to process email, read and “liked” Mark Guzdial’s blog post in Google Reader, on the topic of test banks.

7:30am Read Jesse Heines’ post on SIGCSE mailing list re: philosophy of technology. Looked at my unviersity’s philosophy department’s offerings, noticed Philosophy of Science, emailed chair for more info.

7:55am Arrived on campus. Looked over to-do list, started some menial paperwork.

8:00am Service curriculum committee meeting. Discussed security minor, what other programs require our service courses, potential revisions to these courses, implications of staffing and budgets on these changes.

9:00am Office hours start.

9:10am Processed email; deleted unwanted messages from both AAUP and ACM’s junk mail filter

9:10am Started paperwork to request funding from Student Curricular Activities Fund to support three students who are coming to regional conference for programming competition.

30 minutes meeting with contract faculty to discuss assessment of service courses w.r.t. the new core curriculum. Also discussed other philosophy of teaching issues, rubrics, grading, and clickers.

9:45am Typed and distributed the minutes from the morning’s meeting.

9:55am Finished travel funding paperwork, started revising syllabi based on assessment needs and compliance with CS2008 and ABET accreditation criteria (we are not accredited but seek to be at last accreditable).

10:30am Responded to student emails about JHM project (25 students in 300-level course working via Scrum to collaborate on one big project, which project was designed last Spring and Summer), specifically about communication across student teams of which there are four.

10:55-11:05am Talked to sysadmin about a request the JHM students sent him regarding lab machines and departmental servers. Discussed how I was intentionally making the students owners of the project, so they have to solve the problems, rather than asking me to do these thigns (though I did /a ton/ of work setting up the experience over the Summer). Main problem is that students are not being clear enough in what the problems are, and we concur that giving a good bug report is actually hard. I add that I think students tend towards ambiguity because specificity leads to accountability, and students (people?) like to avoid that. We decide that I will talk to the students a bit about professional communication and the need for specificity in such situations. I consider doing this during the afternoon’s meeting but decide against spending time on that, since it’s a “pure” project-based course, and I opt to talk to students when I have the chance or send a message through the mailing list.

11:12am Emailed colleagues from other departments about getting lunch, since I didn’t have time to pack mine.

11:12-11:22 Emailed JHM students about problems with the Sprint 2 backlogs. Include instructions on what needs to be fixed, point out that I also sent instructions over the weekend that were either unread or misunderstood.

11:45ish Revised syllabus for a Web programming course.

11:54am Called hotel to change my travel plans for upcoming conference. Staying one less day than originally planned.

11:57am Started designing a 1-credit “social and professional issues” course, again with an eye towards satisfying CS2008 and ABET. The syllabus, once finished, references CS2008 explicitly and cherry-picks from the learning objectives of the SP knowledge domain.

12:20pm No word from colleagues, so I go home for lunch.

1:00pm At home, check email on smartphone, see that an alumna posted a link to my blog post about being frustrated with students’ tardiness and specific individuals’ rude behaviors in class.

1:10ish Back on campus, read the link shared by the alumna on my blog.

1:15 Open google reader, check out Alan Kay’s guest post on Guzdial’s blog, a retort of assumptions in Moti’s ACM article. Much love for Kay.

1:25 Watched Zero Punctuation review of Mafia II. Contemplated sandbox vs story in games briefly.

1:55 Just before class, a student tells me that his unit has finally released the campus map application for Android. It was released for iTunes ages ago and has been in development for Android since start of Summer. I download it and check it out, razz him a bit about HCI since he took my HCI class. It’s actually pretty good, though with some bad design decisions that he was forced by others (non-Android folks) to include.

2:00-2:55. Class. This is the project-oriented course. I sit quietly at the front of the room while teams have their daily stand-ups, then they take some time to fix their backlogs in accordance with my email from earlier. I stay in the room, about 50% of the time answering questions, for 20 mins or so, then head up to the lab, where many students have relocated. Talk to students here and help them with their tasks for about 90% of the time I’m in there.

3:00-3:20. Review 1-credit Social and Professional Issues course design with the chair. He has some recommendations but generally likes it.

3:20-3:30. Sysadmin comes back up to ask what I know about mindmapping software. I tell him that I prefer paper mindmapping and, generally, have loved mindmapping since reading Pragmatic Thinking and Learning by Andy Hunt. Recommend book to him, send him the link, briefly discuss how I’m younger than he thought I was --- made me a little self-conscious. He always very deliberately calls me “Dr. MyNameHere”, but I think of him as more of a friend than anything. I appreciate the formality in one sense, but it is also weird in another. But I digress.

3:30-3:45. Students show up to demonstrate their task from the JHM project. It’s quite good, and they put a little humor in that gave us a good laugh.

3:45-3:53. Discussed with our contract faculty member who manages our dual-degree program with China. He fills me in on some of the things going on there. I used to do his job before this semester. He’s doing it much better since he actually has the administrative release time to do it, and an understanding of Chinese culture and language that I lack.

4:00. Responded affirmatively to a request from the VP of Technology to be on a task force on the future of higher education. It was sent only to me, so I don’t know who else was invited. The mission for the task force is basically impossible: full SWOT analysis of all the pressures on my institution w.r.t. teaching and a vision of what education will look like in ten years. The administration’s plan --- according to the mission statement --- is that this will lead into the next strategic plan in 2013.

4:00 Came home. Talked to family. Played some games on the computer, processed some emails, bought a hard drive from newegg, felt really guilty about not being able to think of something good for my spouse’s birthday. Current plan: take some time off during the day tomorrow to bike downtown and get something at the fancy kitchen shop or some pottery at the art shop. I can get a good espresso while I’m downtown, and I can bring my laptop to do some work offcampus where no one can find me. Today had even more interruptions than a usual day, I think... but I’m not sure since I don’t log all this every day.

5:00-5:20 or so. Type up this day log from the notes in my pocket notebook.

Some good down time.

Around 9:15, processed email and set up two appointments as requested by students

Around 9:45, did my nightly Ignatian examen and considered my own behavior with students as well as with colleagues in the committee meeting.

Uid 17

Daily Activity Log

Wednesday 15 September 2010

BACKGROUND

On the assumption that someone will be reading these diaries longitudinally, let me set a little bit of context. I teach at a newer campus of a large, multi-campus public research university. My campus has about 25,000 students. Our computer science unit has about 65 faculty including five non-permanent teaching faculty (two of whom are half-time) and two permanent teaching faculty, of which I am one. At my university, permanent teaching faculty have full faculty rights: We vote on everything, including the promotion cases of full professors; on attaining senior status, we're paid at the same rate as (at least the lowest-paid) full professors; we serve on Faculty Senate committees, both on campus and systemwide.

Most of the teaching in my 30-year career has been at the introductory level, for majors and non-majors, but I also teach upper-level courses (in programming languages, HCI, and technical writing), train teaching assistants (in a graduate-level course), and occasionally teach a graduate course in my somewhat esoteric interdisciplinary specialty area. As time has passed, I've been more and more involved in administration. I currently serve as vice chair for student affairs in my division of our computer science unit; those duties include leading some orientations, advising the occasional student (to supplement our professional advising staff and PhD students' individual graduate advisors), conducting the annual graduate student review, coordinating applications for extramural fellowships, assisting with forming the teaching assignments (for faculty and TAs), and coordinating curriculum changes, especially at the undergraduate level. I am also just beginning a year-long term as chair of the universitywide Faculty Senate committee on educational policy. This committee provides faculty input into university governance, which will be particularly important this year as our university deals with severe continuing budget shortfalls and considers proposals for various potentially radical changes in how the university operates.

This term I am teaching one 60-student section of one version of CS 1, a seminar for new graduate teaching assistants (which will probably have 20 students in it), and, with a colleague, an orientation seminar for students new to the university (which may only have 15-20 students; it's optional).

I live at some distance from my campus, so I telecommute when possible and I rely on my carpool so I don't have to be behind the wheel for the hour-long commute more than about once a week.

WEDNESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2010

I read some Email in the morning (see below) and go off to the dentist for a check-up.

TODAY'S MAIN PROJECT

My term starts next week, so I'm preparing for my classes. This term I'm teaching a variant of CS 1 to about 60 students. I've decided to use a different, new textbook, which requires that I rearrange all my assignments and the order of topics on my syllabus. The latter is my main project for the day, and it's complicated by the fact that my teaching is unscripted (by PowerPoint or otherwise); I react to students' questions, I do live coding in class, I try to be spontaneously engaging. This makes formulating a lecture schedule in advance more difficult, because I don't really have a precise record of what I covered day by day in the past (even though I know pretty precisely what I covered over the whole course) and I don't really know in advance how long it will take to cover a given topic this time (especially since different topics have different levels of coverage in the new textbook than they did in the old).

In any case, I made a start on this today. I gathered the previous syllabus, my lecture notes for the old text, my synopses of the code I wrote in class last time, and the table of contents of the new text, and started trying to boil down each class day into a handful of words.

E-MAIL EXCHANGES

A large portion of most days is devoted to interacting with my colleagues (and my students), often by electronic mail. Email is one of my favorite modes of communication, striking what's for me an excellent balance between rapid response and the ability to formulate and consider that response. I keep my Email reader open most of the time, and except for bursts of very focused activity, I check my Email frequently and, where possible, I respond quickly. I recognize that this is contrary to conventional productivity advice, and that I'd probably get more done if I just checked my mail twice a day (or even just hourly). But usually responding to Email is easier than the serious work I'd otherwise be doing, so it makes a welcome break.

Over the course of the day, I read or responded to messages on the following substantive topics. (I also get a ton of spam, since I don't use filters because I don't trust them not to delete legitimate messages from people I've never corresponded with before, especially students. But I find it very easy to dispose of the spam quickly.)

-- The colleague with whom I'm teaching the new student orientation sent a message to the associate dean comparing our first-year courses to the first-year courses at his previous institution. He typed the wrong course number at one point in the message, which made the associate dean think my colleague was teaching the wrong things in his courses. I thought the typo was obviously a typo; I wrote to the associate dean to explain this and to reassure him that my colleague is scrupulous about which topics belong in which courses (which the associate dean should have known). I think it's important both to defend my colleague and to educate my associate dean.

-- A member of my systemwide committee responded to my call for subcommittee volunteers, and I replied thanking her (and noting that more than one person had spoken up for that position).

-- I plan to attend Parents' Weekend at my daughter's college in a couple of weeks, so I sent a message to a CS professor there (whom I know), volunteering to give a talk when I'm on campus. That will enable me to use some of my small supply of university funds to pay for the trip.

-- I accepted an invitation to an out-of-town meeting at university headquarters to discuss the development of on-line courses. My university plans to launch an externally-funded pilot program to explore the effectiveness of various forms of on-line education.

-- My CS 1 course is authorized to hire lab tutors to work with the TA in the lab, giving students "first aid" advice to keep them productive. I asked a few good students from last year if they were available for this job; I received some expressions of interest.

-- A colleague who is newly responsible for our weekly speaker series (and the one-credit course associated with it that new grad students must take) asked me for suggestions on how to run the course---whether there should be readings or writing assignments, what kind and how many. I gave her some suggestions (including an idea right off the top of my head that I was pretty proud of: instead of requiring a busy-work "reaction piece" from each student each week, appoint one student to interview the others and prepare a synopsis of their reactions).

-- My dean sent around a message soliciting interest in planning activities for CS Education Week. It turns out that it coincides with our examination week, which I and other message recipients pointed out. Even though that limits the range of activities, I did suggest some things that could be cast as "study breaks."

-- A retreat of systemwide faculty senate committee chairs is planned for Tuesday of the first week of classes. I can't make it---I need the class time, especially because I'll be away on the Thursday of that week---and I had arranged that my committee vice chair attend in my place. (I thought this was not a sensitive time to have scheduled this meeting, but most committee chairs are research faculty with a lower teaching commitment than mine and, perhaps, a more cavalier attitude towards blowing off a class.) Today another message came around for a second meeting later that same day, between the Senate leadership and the university administration. I had to send my regrets for that one, too, and inquire whether my vice chair could attend in my place.

OTHER READING

I read a thread on the SIGCSE mailing list about ethics courses, and a separate thread about policies on academic dishonesty.

Uid 20

It is only one week to the start of a new academic quarter, and the activities on campus have already intensified. With class preparations, research/student projects, committee work, and other service work in full swing, I'm feeling a mix of excitement, anxiety, exhaustion, and uncertainty.

Tomorrow I will lead a full-day training workshop for more than 70 entering graduate students in chemistry and biochemistry, and I am frantically trying to finish the presentations and hands-on activities that will shape the day. I have talked to several colleagues at teaching and learning centers of other institutions in both Canada and the U.S. about the nature of their graduate TA training programs. Having been given the full responsibility for graduate teacher training this year, I have worked to restructure our departmental program, introducing a one-day orientation prior to the start of quarter to supplement the graduate seminar that TAs will take during their first quarter of teaching. My goal is to reinforce the departmental roles and responsibilities of TAs \*before the start of the academic year\*, while introducing concrete examples of effective teaching strategies and issues that impact student learning, and by providing tips for your first day of teaching, interacting with students, and giving and receiving feedback. I hope that this new format will counteract some of the apathy and lack of professionalism we encounter in our grad students ... time will tell. Meanwhile, I'm working to finish a survey on teaching that will be circulated to all grad students in the next month.

Next on the 'to-do' list is to set the project for the non-majors undergraduate chemistry class I'll be teaching this Fall (ie. a week away!). I've been mulling this over for months, but haven't settled on the topic or format. Again, this is a course I'm trying to revamp and since it will only be the second time I'll teach it, I'm still trying to understand the student's abilities, interests and goals. Last year, I had teams of more than 400 students (from freshman to senior level) plan and present in discussion sections a visual illustration of a chemical concept. It was an ambitious project and I can't decide whether to repeat it again this year; the 'hands on' element is certainly beneficial for the students, but the time it takes from the discussion periods may not be. My colleagues who teach this course (or the other two in the series) tend to follow the standard class format and assessments of homework and exams. I want to continue to foster student interactions and engagement with chemistry in everyday life; for many, this will be the only science course they will take at the university level. I need to collect data to show if any changes I make have a positive impact on students' attitudes or learning. What to do???

And then there is the freshman seminar on undergraduate research that I am developing. I have all but one seminar organized, and have only to find an industry contact for a field trip and to complete the document on research opportunities that I've started. I am hoping to make these resources available to the entire department, and to find a way to open the class enrollment to all chem/biochem majors.

Friday's meeting of the Diversity and Outreach council will allow me to highlight some of these issues, and to discuss some of the other K-12, u-grad, grad, and faculty-level initiatives that we need to embrace.

Uid 21

Working from home today, because fall quarter has not started yet.

7:00 started reading e-mail

Spent about 45 minutes responding to one message from a

colleague (a postdoc in another lab) asking about the progress of work I

spent all day yesterday doing for her (assembling a tricky

region of a genome in a bacterium from 454 data)

8:00 pinged staff by e-mail to find out if auditorium reservations for December

workshop had been made yet (requested 12 days ago).

8-9:30 continued working on difficult assembly of the genome.

9:30-9:45 took a break to wash some dishes and make tea.

9:45-11:10 continued working on the difficult assembly.

Managed to get a single contig for the region, but it is not

stable on remapping. This may be as good as I can do without

more data, though.

11:10-11:20 read e-mail, got confirmation of room reservations,

arranged for keys for visiting grad student.

11:20-11:40 reported on work on the difficult assembly by e-mail,

and suggested choosing a new primer for PCR confirmation.

11:40-12:20 showered, got dressed, put laundry in dryer, ate

lunch, emptied compost bucket

12:20-13:45 created image, web page, and www.pingg.com invitation for December conference

Sent out invitation to mailing lists.

13:45-14:10 washed dishes,

discussed son's volunteer project updating school web site

14:10-14:35 caught up on e-mail, fixed some problems on conference

announcement website, accepted a LinkedIn connection

invitation from a grad student, responded to a poll of

the department about whether we should invite/accept a

new adjunct (unpaid) faculty member who is

collaborating with some of the faculty in the department.

14:35-15:10 while waiting for software updates to download and be

installed, folded towels, washed dishes, and read some

New York Times articles (mainly from yesterday's

Science Times section)

15:10-15:25 read AP-bio teachers e-mail messages for the day.

15:25-17:50 further attempts to fix the assembly of the

problematic repeat region, which is still about 1k

bases too short.

17:50-17:55 read email

17:55-18:35 read science fiction and nap

18:35-18:25 eat dinner and read (yesterday's) NY Times

18:25-20:50 read blogs

Uid 22

06:00 Breakfast. Check emails and slowly realizes that I've got an external course for a company to prepare, a paper to review, a lot of assignments to check as well a paper to write. Sigh.

06:45 Starts the day by answering emails from my sofa about the external course.

07:35 The kids off to school, car to work - tired. That 523 km drive yesterday wasn't that fun, although I managed to listen to some audiobooks.

08:22 Figuring out what to do first, checking the news, starting to work on the external course, answering emails, trying to help new students that are lost and can't find the person they are looking for.

12:10 Lunch in front of the computer. Continue working on the course

15:00 Severe concentration problems, I better do something else.

15:45 Started to review paper

16:18 Time to walk downtown and take the bus home.

18:00 Making dinner

19:30 Back to reviewing article, I don't like it - I think that there are huge holes in the methodology.

20:35 Submitted my review. Suggested a rejection. Now I should start planning for the martial arts class tomorrow - I also need to write a "lecture plan" for the class this autumn.

20:45 Too tired, I need some sleep.

Uid 23

Awake at 4am worrying about the tsunami that is the new academic year that is going to hit us in 2 weeks, coming with our office moves, joining a new department and a new School (my 3rd in 10 years SIGH!), plus 3 new young teaching-only colleagues all from other countries and systems to mentor and induct.... Anyway, couldn't get back to sleep so got up and did 2 hours work on my research project on academic writing on our MA.

Then in to the Uni to give a one-hour 'lecture' on the English education system for the pre-sessional English language programme. Good group, with interested students from Japan, China, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan. Asked me how unis are funded and why the higher fees for them.

From that to an emergency UCU Union meeting to discuss the proposed redundancies in 3 departments. Upsetting, as it is clearly being mis-handled by the University, and the Union is taking the Uni to an industrial relations tribunal. We voted to ballot members on industrial action, which I'd hate to happen - as I can see how it would be spun in the press (ivory-towers academics refusing to accept reality), but what can we do if the Uni refuses to discuss things properly? Why do senior management treat staff with so little respect?

Then saw a prospective MA by Distance Study student, who called in out of the blue to find out about our programme. Looks promising, and will apply,I think. Works in Sicily.

Snatched a meeting with our academic writing tutor who is helping me to produce online writing support for our BA students (uni-funded project).

Large numbers of boxes have been delivered to our offices for us to start putting our things into, for next week's move to smaller premises. Discussions with two colleages about what to do with old runs of journal the library no longer holds, are not on-line, but won't fit in the reduced office space we are being given. Hate to throw them out as they are only copies on campus - golden oldies...

No reply from our new Head of Dept or the removal people re how I'm going to pack/unpack with the beginnings of RSI in my wrist and arm (diagnosed last Thursday) - is this what happens when you merge with a much bigger Department? You don't get replies to things that before would have been dealt with as a matter of urgency?

Dealing with Extenuating Circumstances forms for MA students requesting dissertation deadline extensions and a BA student wishing to transfer to part-time (in my role as Senior Tutor - which I think I no longer hold as of 1 August in our new Department, but no one has told me to stop doing this.)

Reading and commenting online on the final draft of my delightful Omani student's PhD thesis conclusion. Have to get my feedback to her asap as she wants to submit at the end of the month. She'll then ring me to go over it - 9 hours on the phone so far this summer - glad she's paying the phone bill!

Uid 24

Wednesday, September 15, 2010 --- A day in the life of a CS faculty

(Sigh. I had typed it all here, but when I clicked "update survey" something went wrong, and I lost it all. I'll need to re-write tomorrow. I will write it in a separate file and upload next time. Here is the re-constructed entry:)

Wednesday, September 15, 2010 --- A day in the life of a CS faculty

I woke up this morning, feeling a little better than the past few

days. It is only the third week of the semester but I am already

getting over my first cold. I slept a little later than usual,

getting up just before 7:00 so I could say bye to my older daughter

before she got on the schoolbus.

After dropping off my younger daughter at school at 8:25, I head in to

campus, find parking, and drop my lunch box off in the office before

heading off to my 9:00 AM CS1 class; my morning section has about 120

students. Today we introduced variables, and discussed the need for

type information in a variable declaration. Overall the class was

fairly interactive - I did get some good questions. I also got a

frustrating question at the end: do you post your lecture slides

on-line? We're in the third week of classes, the students have the

URL to the course website, I've shown the class where on the

website the lecture slides are, and I've answered this question

several times already. Sigh.

After class (9:50) I headed back to my office - a swift walk of about 6 or 7

minutes. I have a meeting with some of my teaching assistants at

10:00. I meet with two of my graduate teaching assistants first, and

we make sure they can be present to help administer next weeks' exam

in CS1, and also arrange a time for us all to grade the exam. After

that I meet with one of my "old timer" undergraduate teaching

assistants (UTAs), who is helping train the graduate TAs with writing unit

tests and grading student submissions with Web-CAT. We have a

discussion about what to do with Web-CAT once it is back up and

running - is has been out of commission for a little while after an

upgrade gone bad (we think).

We also discussed the UTA appointment paperwork with our department's

financial officer.

At 11:00 I should have held office hours as usual (my office hours are

11:00-11:50 Monday through Friday) but I had cancelled office hours

today to be prepared to cover class for a colleague who was attending

his son's wedding in California, in case he returned late and couldn't

make it to class. It turns out he did make it, and I used this "found"

time to catch up on e-mail.

At noon, when I typically eat lunch, I prepped more test cases for the

live coding example we are working on in my 1:00 CS2 class, while

eating a quick lunch. At 12:45 I headed off to class; this semester

both of my CS1 classes and my CS2 class are in the same building, so I

will get a little over 30 minutes of walking "for free" MWF this

semester :-)

At 1:00 I did my CS2 class. Today the class very interactive. We are

developing an implementation of a Bag ADT in a test-driven way. CS2

is usually taken in the spring, so the fall CS2 class is relatively

small (50 students), and they typically have a more diverse CS1

background than the spring group. This said, I was very impressed

today with how engaged the students were; they had some very good

questions both during class, and also after class (about team term

project).

Once back in my office at 2:00 I post lecture slides from CS2 to the

course website. I also took tiem to review my slides from the morning

CS1 in preparation for the afternoon CS1.

3:00 This section of CS1 has about 115 students. We covered the same

material as in the morning section. I did have to temporarily

confiscate three cell phones (two from one student) - these students

were texting during lecture, and clearly distracting other students.

After class a student asked where the course website was. Sigh.

Again.

At 4:00 I was able to follow-up on some CSTA chapter issues that came

up at our meeting, which was held last night.

At 5:00 I had a meeting software project meeting, for an ongoing

project that currently has three active undergraduates involved. The

students had not been able to get work done during the week, so we did

an interactive code exploration to focus their attention on what to

look at this coming week.

At 6:10 I left to meet with wife at our daughter's high school for its

open house. We got to experience her schoolday in compressed format.

By 9:00 we are back home - and I get to re-heat dinner, and eat while

writing these notes!

By 11:30 I head off to bed.

Uid 25

15th September 2010.

9am On paper at least it looks as if it will be a fairly typical day. Two diary clashes! A departmental meeting,arranged a fortnight ago, kicking off at lunchtime and a separate workshop on collaborative research which I am anxious not to miss. The workshop was organised first and takes priority. Irritated that departmental meetings are called at short notice;further irritated that they can be terribly scattergun. As a team we all have plenty to do (final prep for next week's Welcome Week) and really dislike pointless meetings generally.

2.30 pm Made the right choice there! The research workshop was really useful in terms of subject matter and the plea from several in the group that there should be a standing forum (social/academic) where we could regularly met and give and receive peer feedback underlined how much this has not been happenning here,outside individual departments. Also a stimulating discussion about importance areas for collaborative work:trust,openness, intellectual inquiry, which are terms less used in the quest for targets, benchmarks and accountability. Two conversations about possible co-operatives ventures which may(or may not) bear fruit. Downside: late delivery of coffee and awful, scanty sandwich lunch.....

Uid 26

Today I arrived on campus at 8 am (actually 8:05) for my 8 am class due to traffic woes. I went immediately to the office to drop off my personal belongings and pick up the graded papers to be returned and markers for the white board. I then headed off to my Introduction to Programming Class (taught in C#, with a games flavor).

Class begins with the "puzzle of the day" which are either logic puzzles or a review question from the previous lecture. I started this technique this semester to encourage "prompt" attendance at 8 am at to get the brains started. While they are working on the puzzles I handed out graded papers (previous puzzles of the day and homework 1). I then reminded them of the class calendar...homework 2 and assignment 2 were posted. Homework 2 is on arithmetic operators, assignment 2 is small code manipulation to teach operators, assignment, and sequential control flow. I then lectured for 45 minutes on data types, variables, and constants. Oh, and of the 37 students registered for class, approximately 25 attended. We're calling it "Halo fever" as the latest release of the Halo game came out on Tuesday.

At the conclusion of class I returned to my office and answered various emails until 10 am when I had an appointment with a perspective student to discuss possible majors. Student is from a technical college and wants to pursue a software engineering or gaming degree. Nevermind that the IT degree is the fastest way out, this guy wants to go for 3.5 more years and success is doubtful at best. How do you explain to a student that you don't think what they want to do is feasible and will land them in so much student loan debt that it isn't worth it?

At the completion of that meeting, two more students stopped in during office hours. One for a change of major form to CS, one for a change of major form from CS. Other major in both cases was IT. Student who wants to leave CS is because of math...they don't want to take Calc II and another higher level math. The one transferring to CS is because he wants to purse AI and possibly masters and figures that CS is more appropriate than IT.

Then it was time for lunch. Ate lunch in the office catching up on reading. After lunch I was responsible for updating the assessment page for the department. We held our assessment retreat last Friday which I organized and today was spent updating course descriptions, pre-reqs, and documenting the course outcomes measured in each class. This involves coordinating outcomes among 4 programs: CS, IT, SWE, and Computer Game Design & Development. Lots of tedious double checking among multiple checklists.

Another round of answering emails concerning grant submissions due on Friday, course scheduling for next semester, and student questions concerning the capstone class (other class I'm teaching this semester). Left work at 4:45. Logged back into email at 9 pm to answer more emails and write my survey. Logging off at 10:45.

Uid 28

My day had a false start at 3am – term hasn’t started yet and I’m already waking up in the night, worrying about how I‘m going to cope. Luckily, I managed to fall asleep again and the next time I wake it is to a clear blue sky. There was a definite autumnal nip in the air on my cycle to work and I made a mental note to look out a warmer coat and check my bike lights in readiness for the dark nights ahead.

The first meeting of the day was called to discuss the new academic regulations resulting from ending the modular schemes. In the past, everything has been tightly and centrally controlled. Suddenly, this control has all been removed and although there are some general regulations, many of the decisions are now devolved to departments, or is that to the faculty – no-one knows. It isn’t clear how we should replace the old structure yet and we are still working out which processes are covered by new regulations and which are open to departmental / faculty control. The meeting also introduced a new addition to our Student Records system to manage tracking the submission of assignments. This auditing is something recommended by HEFCE, so seen as a priority. However, the system has not yet been implemented and previous experience at using hastily adopted systems means that users will probably waste a lot of time for little gain.

This meeting lasted nearly three hours, so I was ready for lunch and a drink. I managed to answer a few emails and phone calls while eating sandwiches at my desk. In the light of the information from the last meeting, I prepared for the next meeting to review the module guides and assessments for the coming semester. This was attended by course leaders and (briefly) the head of department. As with the previous meeting, there was a problem with the room booking and we had to move to another room before getting down to concentrated work, checking that module guides and assessments were clear, appropriate and contained all the required information. This was punctuated by discussion of implications of the morning’s meeting and the coming year’s balance of duties which have not yet been received by many of the lecturers a week before the start of term; those that had received them were worried that they were well over the maximum allocation of hours.

Back to the office to prepare for next week’s induction activity and discuss personal tutoring with a new member of staff. Then on to more admin to do with MSc students at various stages of their course. Many of them are overseas students with visa problems.

I still hadn’t managed to complete all the tasks I wanted to do but by 6.30pm I was ready for home. We have a glut of fruit and vegetables from our garden. I’ve already made as much chutney and jam as we can eat and give away in a year, so after dinner, I tried out our new steamer/ juicer with half a bag of the windfall apples. This is steaming away producing a lovely sweet, pink juice and apple aroma while I am writing this and watching the TV.

Uid 30

Based on a week-old memory:

September 15, 2010

6:30 in Seymour, WI: rise, shower and dress, check and answer e-mail, breakfast

7:45 leave for hour-long commute to Ripon College

8:50 arrive at office; check and answer e-mail; review material for 10:10 class

10:10 Artificial Intelligence class: lecture

11:00 student missed appointment; used time to prep for Friday AI class

noon lunch at commons with colleagues from English, Biology, Psychology, and Religion

1:05 CS 2 lecture; helped students with programming problems

1:50 in office, prep for Intro to Programming class

2:30 Intro to Programming lecture for 45 minutes; allowed in-class work time for the other 25 minutes

3:45 back in office; prep for CS 2 and Intro Friday classes

4:15 packed bag with Intro labs, CS 2 labs to grade on Thursday at home; AI materials so can write quiz for Friday on Thursday at home

4:30 left for hour-long commute home

5:30 home! dinner, recreational reading, and the 2-hour finale of America’s Got Talent!

10:00 bedtime

Uid 31

6:15 a.m. Wake up just before alarm.

Groom, dress, eat breakfast while reading newspaper.

7:15 a.m. Grab lunch box and book bag; 5-minute walk from home to office.

Stop to check mail (Sept. CACM arrived), chat with

administrative assistant.

7:30 a.m. Start writing this.

Review notes I prepared last night for today's

Operating Systems class on synchronization patterns.

Take a quick peek at email:

file away students' homework and some spam;

glance over SIGCSE-members discussion of ethics.

7:45 a.m. Visit restroom, down long corridor.

7:50 a.m. Gather belongings from office to teach OS class at 8:00.

8:55 a.m. Return from class; gather thoughts and check syllabus for

upcoming topics.

9:00 a.m. Prepare for 10 a.m. intro class: Documentation, and a

discussion of the format for the take-home exam

that goes out today.

9:15 a.m. Check email; discovered that colleague has finished

revising exam; post to course web site.

9:30 a.m. Reply to note from colleague who wants to observe 8 a.m.

class; note from student who is ill.

9:35 a.m. Review calendar for next few weeks, call doctor for appt

about hay fever that has been plaguing me since

classes started three weeks ago.

Get voicemail from dad.

9:50 a.m. Walk across hall to teach intro class.

10:50 a.m. End class; walk back to my office with an entourage of

students who have quick questions or want to meet

with me later.

11:00 a.m. Office hours. Meet with a first-year student who is feeling

she is missing important ideas and getting stuck,

but wants to major in the subject. Work through a

homework problem with her and talk about strategies

for solving problems. Discuss her goals, the major,

and the challenges of double-majoring.

11:50 a.m. Done talking with student. Deep breath. Write this and

then relax for a few minutes; chat with colleagues

passing by my office.

noon Take lunch to meeting of Science Teaching and Learning

Group, where we are discussing "the first exam."

1:05 p.m. Return to office after a fascinating and useful

discussion. Drop into inbox the handout from my colleague

in cognitive psychology about how students learn more from

testing than from studying.

Check email.

1:10 p.m. Go for a walk with a student I know who wans to tell me

about his environmental student initiative drive.

1:50 p.m. Appointment with doctor. Stop by pharmacy and home

on my way back to the office.

3:05 p.m. Revel in luxury of not having classes to teach on Thursday

morning. Take shoes off. Read email and contemplate

getting a flu shot this year. Check Facebook and

college's homegrown social network site for updates.

3:25 p.m. Back to email. Reply to colleague about quiz for Friday

and reading group student about meeting tomorrow. Ignore

summer research student's reply to an email I sent two

weeks ago. Draft quiz.

3:40 p.m. Meet with colleague and student. Student is finding

colleague's class too easy; I give him an assignment to

see if he should take my OS class instead.

3:55 p.m. Argue with colleague about quiz via email. Look for

different problems we've used in the past.

4:15 p.m. Where did the afternoon go? I'm tired and I haven't

even started grading like I wanted to.

Meet with intro student who was not able to come to my

office hours earlier.

4:45 p.m. Write new quiz problem. Send to colleague.

5:15 p.m. Leave for home, without having started grading the last

OS assignment like I meant to.

Get home, start tidying up for event I am hosting for

a group of first-year students tomorrow evening. No

help since hubby is away on a business trip.`

5:45 p.m. Unwind by cooking dinner, eating, reading local newspaper.

7:15 p.m. Continue tidying, vacuum, rearrange living room furniture.

7:45 p.m. Short break to work on this, read online comics and blogs.

7:50 p.m. Finish vacuuming and tidying.

Lay out clothes for tomorrow.

8:10 p.m. Review slides for a departmental seminar I am giving

tomorrow afternoon to see how much work I have left to

do. Do some tweaking and write some notes.

8:55 p.m. Finish up some things in the kitchen. Eat ice cream.

Watch TV shows on laptop. Have a small drink.

9:30 p.m. Take laptop upstairs to watch TV in bed.

9:55 p.m. Lights out.

Uid 32

Wednesdays are busy days this semester. The days starts out at 4:30AM, when I get up and go exercise. That usually takes two hours or so, but starting the day with that sort of a boost is the only way to get thru the rest of it.

After the normal "at home" stuff (eating, finding all the materials needed for the day, reading the newspapers, and so on), it's time to head for the office. From 9:00AM until 9:45AM, I respond to emails. Today, these were requests for updates to the department web site (my responsibility) and several discussions on curriculum changes and program review for the following academic year. At 9:45, I head off to class.

This class is one I am taking. I need to learn something having nothing to do with what I teach simply to clear my head. Otherwise, work becomes far too all-consuming. At noon, I head to lunch.

At lunch, I meet up with a fellow faculty member where we discuss curriculum changes. It seems to never end.

It's now 1:30PM. I spend 1 hour preparing for the course that I must teach at 4:00pm. This involves reading the material, doing some additional research online to find more material, and writing up an outline of information (and the order) to present.

At 3:00, I grade student work until 3:45. I only get thru one of the five sections (4 classes) that I have this term. The rest will have to wait.

At 4:00PM, I teach my class. The first 30 minutes, I talk about the material prepped earlier. The remaining hour and a half (we went over by 30 minutes. The students don't seem to mind), the students present their lab assignments to the class. Lively discussion ensues after each one. I really hope that there is learning occuring here - it certainly seems like there must be as the conversations are mostly on point.

It's now 6pm. I head back to my office and grade student work until 8pm. 3 of the remaining 4 sections are now complete.

At 8:00pm, I head home. I grab some supper and read the mail that arrived. I pointedly do not turn on my computer, but rather watch mindless tv and read news magazines. At 10pm, I can no longer stay awake enough to read and go to bed. The alarm goes off early tomorrow.

Uid 33

15th September 2010

Pretty tired this am, worrying about the meeting with the dean all night. He has just taken away the PG Common Room, giving it to another department? For CPD work apparently? Not good news the week before we were going to use it in.

Today spent the first couple of hours dealing with email, whilst having breakfast, first meeting in the University was 11am (still vacation after all), so I cycled in. Email from the librarian identifying that we can cut some journals to help relief the Faculty library deficit, but we have to do it before Friday. Oh good. Nice sunny day, plenty of cycles, about 20% of the vehicles here are cycles, even out of term time. Student was waiting outside my room as I wheeled my bike in. We talked about his project report as I folded the bike up. He should have handed it in 12 days ago, but he has decided to wait until the final day that he can hand in and get a late penalty of a cap to 40%. Actually he is a repeating student, so I'm worried that he won't actually have that window for late handing. Problem is that he just won't get on with his work. I looked at his literature review. Its still only two pages, he is so confident that after three months he can just finish his work in two days, and yet he just won't get on with it. He knows if he fails this time he probably won't get a second chance. I like him, he is a nice chap, I can just cross my fingers that he'll do what is needed and we can get him through. Took about an hour.

Read a stupid email from the office. They have decided that students must tell us their second semester options at the beginning of October. Students arrive are immediately asked to decide what they want to do in S2. Did I think it was a good idea? I replied that no I did not think it was a good idea. Another email from a colleague, looks like 7 students on a DL MSc that isn't running next year are coming to induction? Maybe not, I just looked in the wrong column on the spreadsheet that I was sent. Its got 13 columns with headings that are (at best) cryptic. Chatted to a colleague on the phone about 'admin tails wagging dogs' and the like. She was charmingly cynical about it all and equally exhausted. Actually felt better after I talked to her. So much of the 'support' part of the university seems to have no idea that students are not just an irrelevant annoyance…

Off to see the Dean, put my jacket on so hopefully not as messy as usual. I have not met him before, actually he is very smooth and charming, I actually felt quite humbled (pygmy beside a giant) with the effortless way he handled what could have been quite an awkward interview. Was able to find out quite a lot about why he'd made the decision, by reading between the lines. We also talked about the library deficit, again he has got a pretty good grasp of that. Went away with no real solution, but at least feeling I had a better grasp of why he had done what he had. Probably don't have to worry about it until Easter anyway, which is good news.

Reported back to my post graduate course team colleague. Yes, I confirmed to her I'd used all the obvious arguments, and no they had had no impact. We discovered another timetabling problem emerging from the timetabler the dreaded subject line 'clash in work sessions'. We could not understand this. We solved all that months ago. Maybe we didn't tell the timetabler, oh well, easy solution. Tell her.

Got given several redundant bits of kit for students to pull apart. My room is becoming a scrap yard. ...and I like it that way. Later in my room thought about what the Dean said and realised that actually we could run some commercial courses and earn money quite easily too, with the lab next to the PG common room. Actually a pretty flexible config as both rooms are outside central timetabling, so we can use them flexibly and efficiently. (Would not wish to imply that the University's central timetabling is not flexible and efficient of course). Hmmm, several of my colleagues are quite keen on getting back into commercial short courses, so we'll have a chat with the marketing. A plan at last after a rather stressful day, and maybe we can bring in some money to buy some more equipment for the teaching lab. My boss sent me an email, she wants to see me urgently, probably to find out what the Dean said. Remembered to phone the guy I'm working with tomorrow, on interviews for the educational developer. Eventually left its already nearly 7pm. Back home and I'm doing this blessed diary. A coursework assessment to moderate this evening. I better read through the job description again ready for the 8.30 start tomorrow. Good thing it was a quiet day today, and at least I did help one student (I hope!). I also hope my next '15th' will be a bit more student/teaching centred! This has been a day when the seemly endless tasks involved in getting everything set up, and keeping control of the resources needed to teach have predominated. 10pm, now where is that coursework that needs moderating?

Uid 34

15-9-2010

00:00-00:30 Misc e-mails, especially to research students

07:50-08:20 e-mails to Canadian co-authors of a paper about follow-up

08:53-09:00 Computing Service - staffing issues

09:00-09:53 e-Learning team discussing 2010-11 and future use of EVS

09:53-10:07 Arranging next year's tutors for my big course

10:07-10:37 Misc. admin & fetching the morning coffee (had to try twice:queues)

10:37-11:07 Formatting poster with Canadian co-authors

11:07-11:22 Planning research trip to Birmingham

11:22-11:30 Bibliography (for my father's book)

11:30-11:37 Details for a Visiting Fellow needed by admin.

11:37-13:07 Preparing for research student A's visit (admin., reading draft)

13:07-14:15 Chair campus meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous

(pick up printed poster on way back)

14:15-16:07 Research student A visits

16:07-16:45 Coffee (+sandwich) with Research student B

16:45-17:53 Programme administrator, then data entry for 2009/10 resits

(detour to witness the University Seal being applied)

17:53-18:00 E-mail exchange with Research student B

18:00-18:45 Computing Reviews

21:45-22:07 E-mail and chasing up contacts

23:37-23:45 Requesting referee's reports for a conference

23:45-23:53 Moodle work following 09:00

23:53-00:00 e-mail with Research student A following 14:15

Uid 35

8:00 met my Finite Math class, went over homework problems due today, went over solving word problems involving the math they had just learned.

9:00 Took care of plumbing business, talked to coordinator for student disability services about a problem student and promised to send her an email documenting the distracting behaviors of the problem student, prepared for the next two days of finite math, prepared the next assignment for the computer simulation class

10:10 met the second section of the Finite Math class, same as 8:00 class.

11:00 Met with student from simulation class who had problems with the assignment due today. Took a call from someone I may be riding with this evening to a church-related meeting. Worked on filling out this survey. Ate my banana for lunch.

12:00 Played racquetball

2:00 Met my simulation class. Continued work on the emergency room example, including how to handle interpolation with a table lookup for the mean time between arrivals. Assigned the Car and Goat problem to be done by Monday.

3:00 met with my research group working on AIs for their Circle the Cat project.

4:00 Took care of plates for my new car at the license bureau. Started arranging for repairing my relatively new lawnmower.

5:00 left for church-related meeting and dinner.

8:45 Gave testimony at Honor Council trial for student I accused of violating the Honor Code last semester.

9:30 Continued working at home in preparation for people coming this weekend for my son's wedding.

Uid 38

This is the first week of the new session, a bit earlier than usual as senior management have decided to change from a session based on semesters to one based on trimesters. It is not clear yet what the third trimester will be used for... One result of this change is that there is no time for student induction/freshers week, so it's straight into classes and plenty of confused students. Oh, and apparently nobody told continuing students to come back a week earlier than normal. Meanwhile, management have strived to ensure that the IT systems and support are organised early to deal with the change - oh, wait a minute, they haven't! Many students still don't have access to Blackboard, software for computer labs which was requested by academic staff months ago is still being installed for labs which have already started, and so on. So, a large part of my day has been spent planning how to make resources available online for students with no Blackboard access, and putting extra work into creating versions of code for lab exercises which will work with old software, when I had already created the code for new versions. This is not exactly productive work!. I didn't have any teaching today, but I have a lecture at 9am Thursday. Apart from that, I met with two final year students who are interested in my honours project topics, with another one contacting me by email, so it looks like I may have some keen students to supervise this year. I'm programme leader for and teaching on a new part-time PG course, which runs in the evenings and started last night, and there have been a number of admin issues to deal with following on from the first night. I've also been having a first look at my SIGCSE reviewing assignments. I've got three papers, all of which at first glance seem quite interesting, but I'll need to spend time over the next week to read them properly and do the reviews.

Uid 41

Arrived at work bright and early, emptied pigeon-hole and unpacked climbing ropes that arrived yesterday. Chatted for a while with PhD student about formal verification of device drivers and abstraction. Updated internal Wiki-page for open-day organization (only a few weeks away now). Mailed out to staff and postgrads about open-day demonstrations. Talked with colleague about room usage for the open-day and furniture logistics. Tidied up BMC membership stuffs for the coming year. Sent out some more open-day emails and requests for demonstrations, got a few replies and updated Wiki pages. Put in some expenses claims before they get too old. Sorted out some more things for open-day. Popped into town to visit Nationwide and hand in a form (sorting out WoTUG treasury stuffs), will wait to hear back on that. Made a start on sorting out the FIRST LEGO League challenge booklet for this year's Kent and Medway regional finals; launch event next Wednesday. Read up about dismantling and altering LEGO 9v train bogies. Did a reference for a recently finished MSc student. Prepared paperwork for a PhD panel meeting, then had the panel meeting for an hour or so. Filled in some more PhD student related paperwork and returned forms to administration. Popped back home then headed off to teach WingTsun Kung-Fu classes for most of the evening. Back home, some food and started packing for holiday tomorrow.

Uid 45

My college is in Dickinson, a small town in North Dakota. We also teach some classes at a college in Bismarck, 100 miles away. Most of the time, it is via interactive video network, but sometimes we must drive to Bismarck. Today was one of my days. Rise at 6 am, leave the house at 7:15, drive 100 miles, then deliver a lecture. The video network did not let me see my Dickinson students because of some technical difficulty, but otherwise it went well. Then, drive back 100 miles, grab some lunch, teach a class here, then grade papers much of the afternoon. Also, I created and posted flyers about the computer club meeting this Friday, and signed a form for a student.

On one of the papers I was grading, a student wrote "POOP" by one of the answers. I wonder why? It is a math course, and the answer was the unremarkable 1/49.

I found out yesterday that a faculty member where I used to work suddenly fell over dead. We never know what day will be our last, do we?

Uid 46

1. Jogged 3 miles before going to work

2. led 1-hour strategic meeting to discuss postgraduate taught issues; attempting to transform PGT provision in the department in line with university goals

3. attended presentation by candidate for 3-year independent fellow post

4. interviewed candidate for said post

5. spent 3 hours preparing for EPSRC project meeting on the 16th and 17th

6. started preparing slides for fall semester course

7. numerous interruptions (email, telephone, knock on door) to address head of department issues

7. had my hair cut (finally, was looking pretty shaggy)

Uid 47

6:00 - 7:00 Insert that Good Morning song from Singing in the Rain here. I used to wake up to that playing on the kitchen radio when I was very young (once I became a 4th grader I was coming in from the barn at about the time it came on).

This is a quiet time around the house, letting me get a shower in peace, until I trip over my son, another early riser, as I walk into my bedroom afterwards.

In the shower you get to think about the day ahead. Things get a bit intimidating from 12:30 to 19:30. I have to remember to grab something to eat before class at 12:30 and during office hours at 16:00.

7:30 A good start, dishes are now washed and there are no lunches to pack today. My son is practicing piano, my daughter just rolled out of bed, their mother is finishing her shower and the dog is getting his breakfast. While working on the dishes I found myself thinking about the now-common statement that most learning occurs outside of the classroom. Someone said that yesterday and from nowhere I emphatically disagreed. I pointed out our low-level math course and said they mostly learn by making mistakes in front of me, that's why I have them work problems during class. They \*practice\* when they leave, but most of them will not learn. In our upper-level classes the expectation is perhaps different.

I'm thinking about all that because the department chairs get to meet with the president today and he's a big learn-out-of-the-classroom and community-engagement guy, to the point that we're not sure how the students will have time to actually study.

8:25 Kids are now dropped off at school and I'm in my office. Should not have discussed the learn-outside-the-classroom thoughts with my wife.

9:52 Relatively typical Wednesday morning so far. I started by looking at two department laptops that were brought in needing repair so I could take them over to our service people before the warranties were off. One turns out to be working, good news, the other I let charge a bit before taking it over. Graded five more papers while that was happening -- interrupted by a faculty member talking about a talk on student centered learning earlier this week (the same talk that prompted my discussion with the faculty member yesterday and led to my doubts on how much learning the early students do outside of class). This faculty member, let's call him Ron, was concerned that all of these hands-on activities in class leave him little time to cover content. I asked what the point of the content is if they aren't really learning it anyway. He seems a bit stressed by the workload of prepping his courses this semester. It's a new prep and he's amazed by how many in-class activities and examples are used to teach statistics.

After discussing those topics, Ron slid into his real reason for dropping by, the hope we'll hire this year. Since we failed in our search last year and it seemed like part of the problem was that the department wasn't really agreeing on what it wanted, I had hoped to do our self-study this year (which we must do) as a way to determine which mathematical areas we need to concentrate on. We know it needs to be applied, but the sub area is not as clear as it could be. I decided to let him make his pitch to hire this year to the department at our next meeting. I hope we decide not to do it, but we'll see.

Then I took the broken laptop over to the service guys, which led to a discussion of some other computer issues in the department and I wound up bringing back an external drive and an LCD monitor. Fun for everyone.

10:28 Finished grading! Rushed a quick prep of data structures (fortunately I've taught it a million times). Ready for my 10:30 meeting with time to check the online comics first.

11:30 The 10:30 student showed up at 11:20. Fortunately the 11:30 student is also running late. The extra time was used to edit a calculator cheat sheet for my math students and write half of their quiz.

The student at 11:20 is trying to figure out if computer science is a good major for her. She wants to go into Corporate Law but doesn't want to be a pre-law student. So we talked about our program and also other options in the university that are good for people with math and science skills. We'll follow-up when we schedule her for spring.

Also in this hour, had a discussion about grading rubrics for math/cs papers. Sent a link to one I use for Programming Languages to my colleague and also handed her Walvoord's book on creating rubrics.

11:45 11:30 student rescheduled to Friday. Maybe enough time before class to finish writing that quizâ€¦

14:45 Finished teaching back to back classes. First was data structures which is frustrating because software issues obstruct actual learning. Seems like we should be beyond that by nowâ€¦ Second class was the lower level math course. Around 30 students and though the course is considered the most difficult of our non-major courses to teach, I am thoroughly enjoying myself. There's a lot of energy in the room and students throw out questions and ideas without hesitation making it easy to discuss the material. Now off to a meeting with the Presidentâ€¦

20:30 This is a long day. The president's idea of a meeting appears to be him talking and the rest of us listening. I left early but still 15 minutes late for office hours. On the way to my office I ran into an alum who was looking for me. She filled the remainder of my office hour time (plus some) with tales of work. Most relevant, she realized she really can program. Despite our telling her that while she was in the program she never really believed it. But here she is a year later and despite not being a student who demonstrated really strong programming skills, she sits before me saying, "I love programming" and providing indications that her employers are very very happy with her, not just for those skills but the communication skills she also brings to the table. (There really is a reason we make them give all those presentations in our classesâ€¦)

My time with her ended with the phone call at 17:30 indicating it was time to run out and get my son to our sport karate class. Whoops, never ate. Plenty of sweat later, we arrived home at 20:00, ate a quick supper and now I'm ready to start prepping for tomorrow -- after I take out the garbage.

23:25 Answered student emails and started prepping my Thursday morning class. Prep is incomplete but I'm falling asleep while working at this point. (The course I'm prepping is a new elective I'm building as we go so 75 minutes of class time takes quite a bit of behind-the-scenes work.)

Uid 49

Sept 15 2010 -- Classes have not yet started.

I spent the day developing and preparing for a new course I am offering in fall. It's a very highly visible pilot and is being run with a very large number students (yes, belying the term pilot). VERY large for us is 600-800. The largest class usually taught at our university is 250.

I began the day by continuing to set up my new laptop. I've been working with an old spare for 4 weeks waiting for one to get warrantied, and when that was dragging on, deciding to order a new one. Out IT help installed the very basics, but most was left up to me. There's a good way to blow 2+ hours.

Spent about 1 hour triaging email. Recently switched to gmail's priority mailbox and it does seem to help a bit -- but I get 200+ mails a day so there's only so much it can do. A largish number ARE priority. Note: Inbox contains 49,000+ emails, 15,000+ are unread.

The rest of the day was spent not SO much developing materials for the course as managing issues with the course. I have some external help developing labs. I had to provide feedback. It was OK, but I spent 30 minutes making changes and then reporting back.

I also had to manage the fact that I was expecting 750 students to enroll, but only 550 have. I needed to coordinate communication between the people advising students (who claimed the course was full) and the staff in my dept (student affairs) who set up the available enrollments. Yes, there were issues on both sides. To "make up for this" I will be spending 4+ hours on friday at orientation events, demoing and trying to recruit 150 more students to the class.

For 30 miniutes, I had my picture taken by our communications professionals, since I know I will be asked to provide pics for various things in conjunction with this class. Had to change into my "emergency professor" shirt. As in computing, we don't often dress as others expect professors to look like.

A multitude of other "mundane" tasks regarding logistics for the course occurred: setting up a purchase order so the university can collect teh 35,000 USD that is helping to pay for development of the class, adding tutors, putting class resources (schedule, etc) on moodle, arranging for a company to sponsor TShirts for the tutors (including designing my own tshirt on zazzle and walking the company person through the ordering process on the phone for 30 min).

Where was the "development" during the day. There was some, but a lot got pushed off. I did develop (from 4:30-6am) the tutor training that will be specific to this course. well, I started. I got the first assignment up.

I worked on the pre-survey for the course, which is important to consider what I really want to assess (using survyemonkey). Here I at least got to have some brainstorming emails with a colleague visiting for sabbatical. That was actually very nice -- what are we really looking for to change in students attitudes -- about the topic and about learning in general? That was less than 20 minutes though. 2 hours of "development" I had planned (I plan my day each morning on google calendar so I know what to do next (while I can still think), and then as things run long, I choose to move certain "appointments" to the next day) got pushed to tomorrow. Important stuff too like, finish labs 1 and 2!

I did meet with a new PhD student working for me for just one year for 1.5 hours. That was quite rewarding. I am concerned about working well with him, as I had a student last year who didn't get on so well. Everyone says it was him, and they are right. But I could have been more proactive in handling it. Really, he was my first grad student to manage on my own. I then spent 30 nice minutes doing a lit review for a question that the student brought up. Actually it was useful for both him and my colleague visiting on sabbatical.

Now, it's 5:30 pm, I started working at 4:30am (which is a BIT unusual, but the term is approaching) and I need to decide if I will finish any more of my tasks remaining (at least 60 min). While my husband serves as an unpaid assistant and returns materials to the electronics store that I bought for the course but won't use. And today is the last day to return them.

But I did plan dinner!

Uid 50

We're in our third week and things are starting to settle in to a routine to some extent, though I'm still scrambling to get my courses under control. Today I'm working on a couple of teaching-related items:

- I'm revising my notes for tomorrow's classes (networks and computer organization)

- I'm desperately rewriting some sample networking code to go over in class. I've used Beej's guide (http://beej.us/guide/bgnet/output/html/multipage/index.html) in the past to supplement the textbook when it comes to sockets programming, but Beej changed all of his examples to take advantage of IPv6 networking routines. I discovered this while in front of the class and giving them a tour of Beej's guide during the last lecture! My examples (and notes) will need to be almost completely rewritten because the technology changed.

- I'm refreshing my memory about stack conventions on the MIPS architecture, since we've started covering that material. Where does the stack pointer get saved with respect to the $s registers? Does the order of the $s registers in the frame matter? (It must, so how are they to be ordered?)

- I'm hoping to get some grading done for the networks class.

- I need to process submissions from the computer organization class. There was a due date last night, and I need to see who submitted and whether they followed the submission conventions this time or not. I also need to get the assignments to my grader and put together some notes on how to grade them. I've never used a grader for this course before, and we're still figuring out our work flow. So far, he hasn't really saved me any time, but I'm optimistic...

- You've asked about teaching-related activities, but my primary task today is to finish up a letter on a colleague who's up for tenure. Back to it!

Uid 52

I was working at home today. I get to work at home one day a week most of the time. During really busy periods this sometimes doesn’t happen, but most of the time I get my day at home. I always like my working at home day, for a number of reasons: I can dress slightly less formally; I don’t waste commuting time in the day; I get more undisturbed work done; I can fit in doing the odd washing load when I make a cup of coffee after a couple of hours work and also: the days at home are supposed to be research focused days so I can get the time to progress with my writing, research and funding bids.

Today was wild and windy when I got up, so it was nice not to have to battle in against the weather to work. I was at my desk in the spare room (with a lovely view of the garden and a grand vista of sky) by 7am. I like to work an early day where possible as every hour in the morning is worth double of those in the afternoon for me. It is my last day before I have a week of leave and therefore I have worked through a range of writing tasks but also I have had to deal with urgent emails that could not wait until I get back from holiday.

I started work on trying to think which journal to resubmit an article to. This is a co-authored article that has just been rejected by one journal. We have done some re-writing, but before we do much else, we think we will resubmit it to another journal – this time the British Educational Research Journal, so I did a lot of searching on Web of Science journal citations for impact factors and a lot of searching of journal websites early on this morning to try to double check that it is BERJ we want to submit to. I then emailed my co-writer at another institution and suggested our plan for the way forward. She emailed me later and we agreed to proceed with BERJ. I then spent 90 minutes reformatting the paper (mainly referencing) so it is ready to submit. I am waiting for a response from my co-author before I do the final upload of the article. I may end up doing this during my leave or it will now have to wait until next week when I am back at work.

I then dealt with an urgent request from a member of staff who recently completed our PGCert in Academic Practice who has recently moved to Rio de Janiero for a letter confirming her completion of the course so that she can have funding released for PhD study in Brazil. This involved a few emails backwards and forwards between some of my colleagues as well as with the member of staff.

I then downloaded some Camtasia software onto my computer as I only have a limited number of days to download it after we have purchased this. I am going to use it to record some lectures for use on our new distance learning PG Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education which will start in January 2011.

The next main piece of work I have spent several hours working on today is starting to write up the results of an MEd in Academic Practice I completed last year. I have written some papers related to this work, but haven’t got around to writing up the main results. Pressure of REF and my desire to go for promotion early next year mean I really want to get on with writing this up. I have a structure and I have written an outline for what I want to include in each section. I am pretty clear what I want the main purpose/message of the paper to be. I made good progress with having done some good writing for the abstract, intro and background literature, and some rough starts to the methodology and discussion. So I will need to revisit this on my next working at home day (although I have a couple of other writing deadlines that might need to take some of my next working at home day too).

Another piece of work I progressed today is an educational research survey I am undertaking with colleagues from two other institutions. I sent a message to a jiscmail email list to remind people to complete the survey by the end of September. We have 78 responses to the survey so far, but it would be great to get 100. I will just have to see what kind of response we get. I must remind my line manager to send it on to some of her more senior colleagues. I also spent some time sending a message to my collaborators to try to organise a day to get together to focus on analysing the data we have and creating a plan of action from here with the project.

I have dealt with some quick queries relating to: a forthcoming seminar related to learning and teaching projects funded by the University; a member of staff asking if he attends an HEA event whether it will count towards his PGCert in Academic Practice (it will); clarification of when annual monitoring reports are due (October); a graduate teaching assistant wanting details of a GTA accredited course we run; and information about me borrowing the work vehicle to be able to pick up some US visitors from the airport and drop them at their hotel next month when they come to give a seminar.

Finally I spent some time scheduling some dates in the diary for marking. I know when the deadlines are for assessed work on most of the taught courses I contribute to or co-ordinate so I am trying to be organised by scheduling some marking time in my diary now before the diary gets even busier than it already is!

I usually work a long working at home day as it is so productive, but because I am on holiday tomorrow and because I am heading out tonight, I am going to finish soon (about 3.45pm). I must remember to put my out of office message on soon, with going away next week. I’m going to do one or two more diary scheduling tasks and submit this diary and then call it a day.

Uid 53

I'm on sabbatical, so my stories may not be quite like the standard teaching diaries, but the sabbatical topic is education research.

Working day started at 8.30am with a conversation with Viv (pseudonym). Having got in quite a lot earlier than me, she had received an e-mail from a guy at an agency from whom she'd opened negotiations on the possibility of our jointly getting funding to extend my stay / research programme here. She eagerly told me that she'd been waiting until I came in before opening it. I'm writing about this because I related completely to the almost-superstition with which she was approaching the email opening - like receiving exam results in the post. Open... silence... "hmmmph", "almost never fund special projects" - so that was it, not funded. But Viv is very pro-active - within a few minutes the disappointment had partially dissipated and she was already looking at the next possibilities for funding.

I'm tracking a major course that Viv is preparing to teach both in Fall and Winter term. She is trying out so many new things at once (just like me) that I have rather lost track of exactly what she is aiming to achieve with them all. Why is she trying them? What is her research objective, if any? She had sent me some questions to include in a pre-survey the day before, and I had ground to a halt on reviewing them because the context of the pre-survey, in terms of the research questions/framework, was not clear. So we arranged a time later in the day to talk about this.

Back to my own office. Some emails from back home concerning an innovative student induction programme which I was heavily involved in running last academic year, and this year I'm watching from afar. Mixed reports. The person who ran it (front of house, taking my position from last year) is quite gloomy - and wonders whether the (perceived) reduction in student enthusiasm is due to something in the recipe, or is it due to his front-of-house performance compared to mine. Hey-ho - educational evaluation is so challenging - and it can be so easy to take it personally. My colleague is externally bullet-proof, but in his mail, I definitely read strands of his having taken a personal hit from the responses. Of course, we have proper student evaluations from all students this time, but from only a few last year. So many false ways in which our fragile egos can get hit.

If it really hasn't gone that well, I'll be disappointed too - because I did think this was a bit of an education/induction breakthrough as a design.

I'm running a project back home about university-level writing skills. We're into our second round of annual funding (the initial one-year project got extended), and a final report on the first year is required. So read the draft and Skyped the author for a chat about it. Exciting in that the report opened up for me some new avenues for a possible third year of funding. The project so far has principally been about adjusting to university level writing - or more particularly, university level writing as required by different disciplinary areas - and how this is different in each. But the next phase, if funded, would be about the next transition - from university-level writing out to whatever working context the student meets. This is something I don't think many academics think about. First, they forget that every discipline has a different style and then they forget that their style, once mastered by their students, may not suit the student well in their on-going careers. Another example of academics only being interested in creating graduates "like us".

While reading the beginning of a paper on measuring metacognitive skills, some grit got disturbed. Yes, grit. Viv and I are using that term right now in the context of learning experiences that upset a student's understanding in some way - show up a hole in understanding, open up a new avenue - that sort of thing. The grit in our understanding needs to be worked out. So the paper got me thinking more deeply about what we were doing. The paper's context was stated as understanding more about what students were doing in complex assessments - which required meta-cognitive skills such as planning, problem solving, awareness, choosing of appropriate cognitive strategies and so on. The grit moment was the realisation that pretty well everything we ask students to do in a programming course requires all of these - none of our assessments are what I assume this paper would call 'simple' (though it gave no examples of these).

Since we are trying to measure the effect of various interventions on metacognitive skills, this paper looked promising - but by the time I got to the end, the questions just didn't seem right :-( Back to the drawing board.

Spent 90 minutes with Viv after this going over all the aspects of the very complex learning design she has associated with this course. What she commented on, and what I know so well from personal experience, is how valuable it is to have someone else to bounce one's ideas off. Of all the stuff she's doing, she'd probably not get to about 50-70% without having someone to discuss it with, to help her see the next steps, to get moving and commit. In this case it works both ways, because the conversations are getting clear to me what I want to evaluate in this course. But the general point is: why don't more of us teach more collaboratively? Sure, it appears that it takes up time discussing what we're going to do with another - and for them, time to listen and comment. But how much improvement would we get in our thinking toward our teaching if we did more of it? Lots. I guess the benefits aren't perceived for both parties. But I'm learning a lot in more of the observer role - and I've gained huge amount when I've been in the driving seat.

This, a conversation a few weeks back with Viv, and a conversation later in the day with an Englishman working over here long-term, really underline how valuable my working relationships have been back home. I've had quite a lot of very valuable reflection time around my teaching both before and after its delivery with my colleagues. Yet I see this is very unusual. Most of academia is so individualistic, particularly here in the US apparently. To Viv, it is clearly quite an eye-opener to have someone sit down with her and discuss her learning design in detail. Essentially, my ex-pat colleague was essentially saying the same thing, only in the research context - even there, there is now such a focus on inter-campus working that nobody in his research group is ever there. While the connections are/look great, the cohesion of the local unit is breaking up. I fear for this in my home institution, where cross-cultural working is being pushed heavily, and in my own department, where a number of my favourite, and very collegiate, colleagues are at the point of retiring. With the individualism of US academia thoroughly encroaching on the UK system, how much will we lose in our learning and teaching environments?

I've always suspected that writing a diary was the reason so many successful people are successful - but it's amazing how much happened today, in what I probably would otherwise have thought of as quite a mundane day. God, reflection being useful for learning - who'd have thought it? Always wished I could get myself to do more of it too....

Uid 59

Share Project

Diary Entry 15/09/10

Got up at 05:00, browsed yesterday’s papers over breakfast, and a London Review of Books article “The Pope Wears Prada” – by Colm Toibin – not really a book review but a reflection on Catholic Ireland and where it has possibly disappeared to. Collected up handouts for today’s teaching.

06:50: At the bus stop, a notice saying all buses will be diverted from 05:00 tomorrow owing to the Pope’s visit. That will mean a half hour walk to the station tomorrow to make my 09:00 tutorial – well, it’s good to have the incentive to do what I always mean to do but seldom accomplish.

07:25 Train fuller than usual and rather noisy. Catch up with 100 emails of which 20 require actual thought or action. Email seems to take up 2 hours a day at present. Time management gurus say “Delegate tasks” – but to whom? There’s good news from a colleague in Germany about interest shown in joining the European research proposal consortium which I’m currently driving.

09:00 to 11:00 Two hour lecture slot, my first with this group of Masters’ students. Someone decided we should start teaching in mid-September this year – allegedly to meet student demand, though I doubt it. The class is certainly keen. It will be fun teaching them. They come from an amazingly wide range of backgrounds; this could be daunting for most of them, as every student is going to feel he/she is in a minority. I give them a 15 minute break in the middle (nobody can pay attention for two hours!)

11:00 dash across to next block for an Honours tutorial group. There was no need to hurry – they drift in over the next 10 minutes. Rather low-key at first, but when they get going on their group exercises they become more focused and more alert.

12:00 back where I started. I seem to have mislaid two of the Masters students, but the rest are there full of questions and suggestions. Set them a reflective writing task based on giving an account of their final honours project - if they did one. Most did, but we have an Architect and an Islamic Arts graduate, whos experiences were very different. We work out how you can reflect in a similar way on very different types of project. It’s 13:00 before I know it.

13:00 sit in on “Postgraduate Café”, an event organised by our student’s association to get postgrads more involved in university life. Unfortunately have to leave before the sandwiches are served – I have a meeting with our Research and Innovation Services about an industrial contact. Meeting cancelled, but it seems bad manners to crash back into the “Postgraduate Café” at this stage.

14:15 One of last year’s overseas Masters’ students comes to go over the main points of his dissertation. Owing to the change in teaching year, he got thrown out of the university residence one week before the due hand-in date for his dissertation: not much joined-up thinking there, for all the marketing effort put into increasing our overseas intake.

15:00 Colleague calls with concerns over a research student. I remind him we have to firm up on dates for Masters’ presentations. He promises to check his own diary against the availabilities I have sent him.

15:15 Another Masters student comes to hand in dissertation, very proud to have made the deadline.

15:50 Train: reading, writing, planning. Before I get home I receive an email from the Masters student who handed in on time – he has now discovered what he thinks is an enormous mistake in his dissertation.

Watch the news. Great merriment about Cardinal Kasper. Well, it’s true, Heathrow \*is\* a third-world airport. What’s the point of prelates if they can’t speak truth to power? – power nowadays being in the hands of the many, or their self-appointed spokespersons.

Supper. Sort out desk and bag for tomorrow’s early start. Relax in a warm bath and fall asleep nearly instantly.

Uid 60

7:30 a.m.

My day begins.

The semester commences from next Monday (20th September), but I do not start teaching till mid October. This is my time to catch up with my research and do all the administrative work I have in addition to my teaching.

10 a.m.

Meeting with a new colleague, who is due to start teaching next week. I have met him earlier, and now we discuss his syllabus, the learning outcomes and how he plans to arrange the workshops for students. R

Rest of the morning...

In between writing the paper I am working on, I answer emails from colleagues (about arrangements for the freshman orientation, how to set up online quizzes, hiring of programming tutors) and from students (questions about internships, schedules, setting up a student server).

1 pm: Time for a lunch break.

In the afternoon, I get some uninterrupted time to write.

3 pm.

Meeting with two other colleagues to discuss the possibility of a Mastersâ€™ student being hired to support the staff in using educational technologies. Blended learning is now officially recognised as the university norm. Far cry from photocopying notes and exams and lecturing for 3 hours! I feel elated at the role I have played in this transformation.

4 to 6 pm.

Address by the Vice Chancellor followed by high tea. I take time to chat with new colleagues and reconnect with those in other campuses. I leave inspired by the vision of the future and the strides that we have taken so far. I hope my enthusiasm lasts till the end of the academic year. Somehow, the second half of each year just deteriorates into chaos.

Once I start teaching, my day is likely to be a whirl of classes, grading, and preparation. It is nice to have a long summer break.

Uid 64

8.30 - 9.15 reviewed joblist and then tackled email inbox: mainly dealing with queries about curriculum development project which affects all courses.

9.15 - 9.45 telephone consultation with colleague from Law in preparation for a session she is giving on our curriculum development plans

9.45 - 11.00 - review of document produced by colleague

11:00 - 11.15 - discussion with moderator about final grade for two level 7 assignments

11:15 - 12:00 marking

12:00 - 12:30 lunch break

12:30 - 12.50 - telephone consultation about curriculum development

12:50 - 1.10 - follow up telephone conversation with queries to colleagues in quality unit about details of curriculum development plans

13.10 - 13.30 - preparation of response to query about permitted assessment lengths and contact time

13.30 - 13.45 - dealing with emails

13.45 - 14.45 - gathering together material on inclusive practice for inclusion in a curriculum guide and writing a short introduction.

14.45 - 16.45 - had to leave work to attend to a personal matter

20:00 - 20:30 - more email dealt with

20.30 - 21.00 completed work on guide introduction and sent it round to colleagues for comment.

21.00 - 22.00 produced some resources on NSS and league tables for new PGC Academic Practice participants as an extra resource in response to a discussion which took place in their induction session earlier today, added to it a scholarly article for them to read, and posted it on the VLE.

Uid 65

0930h: A late start. Arranged for additional room bookings for first year induction project activities following feedback from staff. Also booked extra PC labs for first year induction needed in response to high recruitment. Received another 8Mb PowerPoint slideshow from a colleague that pushed my inbox limit to 98% (yesterday, someone sent me a 15Mb file that pushed it to 114% and prevented me from sending any further emails until I'd got it reduced!). Requested extra email inbox space from our ICTS people - but not holding out much hope.

1045h: Finalised first year student extended induction project schedule and staffing arrangements.

1145h: As Department e-learning coordinator, spent time sorting out colleague's access problems with our VLE. Did a lot of file copying and pasting and re-set the Department template on several course areas within the VLE. At one point I was trying to field phonecalls for both me and a colleague while somebody drilled into the floor above my head - there's a general feel of pandemonium and panic setting in! Finalised staff instructions for the induction project that I don't expect many of them will actually read....

1245h: Still updating the student Unit Guide for the first year tutorials unit. Found 15 minutes for lunch at my desk. Sent some emails to help organise a leaving card / present for a colleague.

1345h: Updated tutorials programme.

1530h: Dealing with Master's induction and late admissions.

1630h: Updated induction class handouts and lecture presentations.

1715h: Resolved VLE access problem for a postdoc who is standing in for a colleague and doesn't have a VLE account.

1800h: More updating handouts and lecture notes and presentations for first year induction classes, including groupwork skills, constructing an argument, presentation ideas and strategies. Printed out some of the documentation.

1930h: Left for home.

2100h: Arrived home at 2015h, cooked and ate. Then spent an hour testing a radio aid purchased for me through Access to Work to assist in meetings and teaching.

A ten+ hour day with very little break and a generally frantic atmosphere beginning to descend upon the Department.

Uid 67

Wednesday, 15 September 2010

Today was my first day of teaching, the lecture began at 10am and I was into the office before 9am for the first time in months. As we’ve had our academic calendar re-jigged to bring the exams before Christmas, I’ve lost 2 lecture slots to class tests (all exams at level 1 have been removed). As part of this brilliant plan, induction for first-year students was cancelled and those teaching on Monday lost their first class to an ad hoc induction session. (I won’t even mention the Sept Weekend next week that loses us Friday and Monday classes or the amount of time I spent planning and delivering top secret induction sessions the week previous).

Last year I spent the first lecture providing an introduction to the module and working through an in-class exercise with the new students that included a walk into town. This time, I did the introduction lecture, had them get up to stretch, handed out the seminar exercise, then went straight into the 1st lecture of module content. It was one of those wholly exhausting classes where my blood sugar dropped almost immediately, my voice started to give out and I wanted nothing more than a nap and a cup of tea. It’s funny how no matter how much pre-lecture prep I do, I still end up standing up there thinking ‘what AM I on about?’ It’s tough when the complexities of the context of the subject – in this case, the Victorian Era and the Arts & Crafts movement – really excite me but fail to interest the students. The comparison of Karl Lagerfeld to Primark – the idea that the rich have always sought to dictate ‘good taste’ to the masses – fell on deaf ears. But, I suppose, they’ve only just left school and perhaps none of them were raised by social workers constantly discussing sociology like I did.

Finishing early, I let the students leave and proceeded to pack up my stuff. Two programmes take this module and one of them is mine – I am their programme leader. So, I had several of ‘my kids’ tentatively come up to me after class (oh how terrified I would have been to utter two words to my incredible Art History 102 teacher!) to ask for advice on laptop purchases and where to purchase a sketchbook.

I have two EU students this year – a first for this programme – and the Polish student has bravely arrived with no clue where she is or what she’s doing. She’s staying in a terrible neighbourhood that genuinely has me worried and she wanted to know what she had to do about getting herself health insurance. As a fellow foreigner, I was able to explain clearly (I hope) how to go about registering with a doctor. She, like me, was both excited and impressed by the promise of the NHS and left smiling.

I spent much of the rest of the day explaining to various admin staff that only 5 of my 15 2nd year students were registered despite all of them registering online weeks ago. This involved discussion with 3 admin staff in my school and at least 30 mins stood in student registration explaining the situation to Registry staff. The issue still wasn’t resolved and my greatest fear is that this will affect funding for my students!

Now, I worked on that side of HE for years – the non-academic side – and I think this helps me work with them respectfully and effectively, but for the first time this week I thought. ‘You know what?! I’m not here to do admin! I have classes to teach!’ As I tried to sit down to brush up on my design history for the 10th time, another email pops up with an asinine question about which students haven’t been registered? What module code should’ve been changed? Who has and hasn’t been attached to Blackboard? Ridiculous! Of course, all this is meant to be ‘automated’!

The highlight of the day was a visit from two 2nd year students who are involved in a student-mentoring programme with the 1st years. They are leading weekly sessions with the first years and are very excited about it. They’d led their first session and couldn’t wait to tell me how it went. They even offered to come help me take the students on a museum trip next week (I keep forgetting that I really shouldn’t be going off campus with 40, 18 year-olds by myself!). Having explained to them that there were actually MANY books in the compact shelving (the students are all terrified of these automated stacks), the girl left saying it was ‘like Christmas’, the promise of all these design books. The boy seemed less convinced, while I remain wholly unimpressed by the education these kids have received (they don’t know how to use a library – none of them) – and a little bit saddened by it.

Uid 68

I was on annual leave on this day so didn't actually do any academic work.

Uid 69

Diary

15th September 2010

This morning I was on local radio, I’m on every month, they give me ~ three name/course/uni plugs in the hour. I get a lot of feedback from BBC which says people listen to this and I am a popular contributor.

Not overly academic unless there is a new article I have had published. I always inform our central marketing machine but they think my area (fashion) is fluffy so they never pick up. Yet this is a multi million pound global industry. I talked about meeting HRH (Prince of Wales) last week as he was publicising his ‘start’ initiative and some design colleagues put some sustainable fashion projects on the catwalk, I was invited to the dinner as I facilitated this in my role as departmental rep for PR/Awards/Competitions etc, and I had done some outreach/community work with girls who may be considered disadvantaged.

It was a wonderful evening. I was very honoured to be invited and I was on the table next to him.

Then I went into work to meet with a previous post grad who wanted to pick my brains regarding the CV we had worked on. I give long term ‘after sales’ service to past students too!

I went to the placement office to say that I had the wrong details as they had not responded to my e-mails…

I had no time to check my e-mails.

Then it was a ‘meet the new dean’ session.

It was about ‘let’s get it right’, etc. How many times have I heard this before? However, she seems really nice, aware of the fact we have little influence on things that are centralised, she is approachable and indeed e-mailed me, almost immediately, the results of the last national student survey as I made a comment that they are not widely distributed. The text comments make very damning reading about members of staff who can easily be identified by student comments.

The timetabling, library and catering facilities are also criticised.

Students have to work (well a majority) and the timetabling is abysmal for organising their jobs around.

There was an informal ad hoc meeting in the corridor afterwards with various people, as is often the way. My HOD has promised to get us together and discuss some issues raised.

But both my HOD and the Dean are ‘acting’ at present.

Then another meeting with a member of staff who wanted to show us what she considered the way forward with organising group work. Mmmm. ..MBA twaddle on group dynamics.

There is no easy way forward.

We have been forced to do group work as a major component of assessment due to high numbers. I have c.280 students in each of my final year modules which account for 40 credits. I choose to do one individual assignment, one piece of group work and one exam, which of course makes large demands on my time.

I used to team teach/mark with a great colleague but she has gone to Man Uni, to raise her research profile. I have no-one in place at present to share the load. Although I have been promised a replacement for over a year, one associate came last year, was brilliant, but did not get a full time job, she was snapped up by London Met to develop and deliver the exact same programme.

I came home a bit fed up to be honest, opened up the e-mails I had neglected all day. This was an extra two hours.

Dealt with them.

Forwarded two CVs to my mate at Ralph Lauren.

On facebook some ex students were giving me the low down on Topshop in Tokyo (appalling) and the true story about Kate Moss’ split with Topshop. Responded with my thoughts.

Commented on a CV from a guy who has been away from us for three years and is not selling himself as well as he could for a new role.

An ex student who has been working in an estate agents asked me if I thought it was a good idea to leave and go and do some unpaid work in fashion. Hard call.

Could not see where the new staff fit into things, when I have no-one to share, to learn from me and hopefully take over in the future.

I am not sure what sort of diary you want, am sure you will let me know? Thanks.

Uid 70

On this particular wednesday I had quite a nice day. I spent the monring with our learning development associates who are all working 0.2fte per week for one year in schools on learning and teaching developments and the new learning development projects holders who have just started their projects. Again the learning development projects are for one year and look at area of learning and teaching enhancement. The morning was spent sharing the projects and identifying links between these and across schools. We also discussed how we would like to meet and keep in touch.

In the afternoon I met with staff around our MA programme and where we were in terms of getting ready for the new academic year. It was nice to see everyone keen. The associate programme director and I then met to discuss the results for the next assessment board which was also nice in terms of seeing all who have completed with good results.

Lastly I then met one of the module leders whose module starts in october to go over what is still needed.

This was a good day in terms of it being about development and support and not lots of administration

Uid 71

in at 9am. trying to finish a journal article I have been working on all summer. this is my 1st submission to a proper peer reviewed journal and it is a high ranking one. the article has been submitted twice already and major changes have been made but it is still not up to scratch. it is taking me much longer than expected. I had hoped to finish today by lunchtime but no luck. still much more work to do...

free lunch at a conference. the usual rubbish sandwiches but appreciated as i worked until the last possible minute. The conference is based at the uni and is really well funded. it is attended by activists and academics from all over. An inspiring afternoon - this is the exception rather than the rule.

Uid 72

9:30-10:30 going through emails and short documents at home

10:30-11:00 travelling to the University

11:30-14:00 attended workshop on research collaboration, including a working lunch where we had a discussion in small groups

14:00-15:30 had three half-hour meetings with research students. Caught up with emails in odd moments. At one point an MSc student who has been having some problems came to knock on my door so I had a brief 5 minute chat with her to sort out her work and said that I would send her something later in the day with some ideas for how she could restructure her project.

15:30-16:00 catchup with two colleagues about progress on various tasks within the department.

16:00-17:30 working on minor tasks: writing a reference for a grant application, reading emails, checking up on the progress of a few ongoing projects.

19:00-20:00 Reviewing a grant for the Royal Society (deadline today!)

22:00-0:00 (and beyond) working on computer program for a research project.

Uid 73

Final stage student on a 2 year degree giving a demonstration this morning. I have supervised him throughout the last six months in putting together this project. I feel for the chap in that english is not his first language and during the demo his nervousness meant his english slipped. However, luckily the other marker was sympathetic to his situation and looked beyond the words being used to the content of the demo. I was concerned about the standard that the student was working to - he has struggled with being able to critique his work and logically draw threads together. I was saddened that he had not taken on board some of the things I had talked to him about during the course of putting together his report but was pleased that it was much better than he had originally done.

Rest of the morning taken up with dealing with student queries and marking the reports for students final stage projects.

Spent some time sorting out project website for collecting research data. Gets difficult to put aside time for research activity especially towards the start of the new term. Still not as much on top of the new terms teaching as I would like. Difficulty comes in that the field of computing is not static and you have to keep up to date.

Off to talk to a new cohort of trainee lecturers this afternoon to tell them in as constructive a fashion as I can given that doing the training nearly sent me to a nervous breakdown. Many of their sessions were delivered in a very condescending fashion - being told about research methods from people without PhDs or masters given that I have that was really a waste of two hours of my time - made worse by the heavy workload that I've been struggling with. This year should be much better.

Uid 75

Having spent the last two days reviewing student project reports, it was good to be able to get back to revising a research paper based on my PhD research this morning. I have now sent off the revision to my co-author in Canada. I am hoping this might be the final draft before submitting to a journal.

One of the MSc project students did interrupt for me to read the evaluation section of her report. They seem to know so little about how to evaluate their own work. It makes me wonder whether they have been given evaluation exercises to do prior to starting their project. Should an exercise in the first year workshop include evaluation of their work. I am including comparison of solutions to problems in the exercises so that is a starting point but should I push for something to be written.

When I lead the Team Java course in second term, I will need to give them some exercises in evaluation or at least reviewing evaluations written by others.

I still have a project demonstration to organise. The main problem is getting ER to agree to a time. Them seems to be a number of meetings happening this week so it is difficult to rearrange these project demonstrations for student granted extensions for welfare reasons. I have two such cases. This one, I am the primary inspector. Another lecturer has to organise the other inspection.

I managed to spend a couple of hours working on an exercise sheet for the first year software workshop. Not entirely happy with what I have produced but it is moving in the right direction and is beginning to include some of the ideas from my research.

The working day has ended with a strategy meeting. A lot of opinion but very little focus on specific outcomes. What is best for the school isn't necessarily best for me. The school has a number of research centres and possibly a teaching programme that doesn't align well. To succeed in the current environment those research centres need to be working at their best. The school then needs to work out how to support the broader teaching goals while also providing focussed teaching aligned with the research. How heavily do I get involved when I am on a fixed term contract? If I don't get involved then there is less likelihood of the contract turning into a permanent role.

At least one benefit of the strategy meeting is going out for a meal with some of the school. Another chance to mix socially rather than just work based interactions.

Uid 77

08.20: Arrived for work: I’ve sorted out my bag, taking out the things I took home last night but didn’t actually read anything! Since starting this new post last month, I have resolved to try to work at the University and not at home, redress the work life balance! It’s mostly working. I spent most of the last half of the afternoon yesterday reviewing a grant application (deadline today). I did take it home to finish it off, spell check it and then submitted it. So ahead of the deadline, just! And I didn’t spend the rest of the evening looking at papers for meetings today, that’s what I need to do now.

08.50: Sorting through email for the last 30 mins or so. Sorted out a few emails relating to admission tutor role. Determined to try to keep the in-box under control.... And agreed to a personal request to join the PBL steering group.

09.42: Sorting through ‘to do’ pile both a real pile and the virtual/email one. As usual, a diverse range of activities, reflecting the different dimensions of my job. A paper I’ve agreed to review downloaded. I’ve 7 days to do that. I’ve also completed the application for Public Health Trainer Status locally, having done this for over 10 years in my previous post. Found most of the required paperwork, written a covering letter, and, after a bit of origami to get the address showing through the window, had a successful encounter with the franking machine. Brief discussion/gossip with colleagues about the chaos surrounding the introduction of new timetabling software. And now Carol has offered to make a cup of tea!

11.20: Spent the last couple of hours looking at the papers for the curriculum development group this afternoon. My first experience of this meeting, so not sure what to expect. Looking through the paperwork it looks to be a bit like the curriculum subgroup meeting I used to chair in my previous job. I haven’t seen any terms of reference or similar but then I haven’t seen that for anything here! I really am a bit worried about how the paperwork is kept in order round here (structurally, the staff are great), and how the ship shows itself to be operating. The PVC implied as much yesterday about being clear about processes. Then fixed up to meet with admissions staff tomorrow morning: been flung in at the deep end on this one! Taking over admissions on my first day. I get the impression I am the ‘big white hope’ of the Deans to sort the selection process out. Not sure what everyone else feels or expects. I am taking my first draft of my view of things to the meeting this afternoon, but am meeting with Laura before that, so she knows in advance my thoughts, and so I can learn more about the foundation programme. Finally have spent the last 40 mins or so reading the technical report on UKCAT. So now know a bit more about it, but still not sure what it actually is measuring!

12.04: Provided feedback to BMA consultation on ‘honest brokers’. Sorted out paperwork, (downloaded paperwork for academy of medical educators meeting next week) checked email, diary etc, now waiting for my noon appointment who is late. Guess I’ll eat the banana sitting on my desk because I don’t think I will have time for lunch today.

17.00: 75 minutes meeting with a colleague working out what to do with our admission issues, followed by 2 hours of curriculum development meeting. Good attendance and some useful learning points. Also good to meet everyone. Reporting back from Away day, revised paperwork for student monitoring in PBL, timetabling issues/clashes/planning, and proposed revisions to the programme for next year flagged up. And discovered there is a curriculum map, and where it might be! Coming from a none modulised programme, and with a first hand encounter with trying to create a curriculum map for a 5 year programme, I can clearly see the advantages of a modular-based curriculum. And staff seem really focused on learning outcomes at the different levels of the programme and how they inter-relate (unlike in my previous post where they were seen as necessary but not a driving force!)

Now planning on going home (haven’t had anything to eat or drink since the noon banana); more email needing attention plus the follow up from this afternoons meeting, and the papers to file, but that can all wait until tomorrow.

Uid 78

As I start the day's work there are three main things on my mind.

During the last few weeks I've had my first real encounter with conflict in my current role. A student has made a complaint against a tutor for whom I have line management responsibility. The complaint is about his references to sex and menstruation in teaching which she finds unnecessarily frequent and extensive. The (male) tutor P has been quite unable to see the (female) student's point of view and has dismissed her as 'viscious and poisonous' and says she is out to 'assassinate his character'. I have emphasized to him that she must be allowed a point of view and asked him to consider it. He has in effect reported me to my own line manager for not supporting him. The whole episode has been unsettling and unpleasant. All the women (including my line manager) who have seen the correspondance between P and me have been appalled by P's attitude but we have to deal with him fairly; he is a good tutor in general terms. A letter was posted to him from senior management yesterday and I'm waiting to see what will happen next. I really hope this will be the end of it.

We're busy allocating students to tutors at the moment. For one course there are too many tutors and not enough students. This has been difficult. I'm annoyed by a temporary member of staff who has disregarded University procedures and tried to base decisions on his own logic. I have a tendency to bring these things home to fret over. Until the contracts are out and the students are notified I'll continue to worry over this. I don't know whether it's just me who does that!

Today is my only opportunity to work from home this week. My main task is to prepare for a meeting tomorrow where we will start in earnest to plan a new course. I'll be chairing the meeting. It's vital that we get it right.

It's now lunch time and I've had a productive morning. A first draft of the Learning Outcomes for the new module is now complete and I've had a good e-mail exchange with my deputy. He is a new member of staff. I was delighted when he was appointed because he will shake us up a bit and get us out of some of our comfortable ruts. He is questioning the title of the new module. His intellectual arguments are sound but I wonder whether he realises that students need to be offered catchy titles as incentives to sign up. I'm going to ask him to make his argument to the whole team tomorrow to see how the land lies.

I'm now closing down for the day. I have achieved a good deal but worked very intensely. When I went to eat something a little earlier my jaw was so tense that it wouldn't open! I've had an exchange with a technical support worker who though he could do something for me in about two minutes flat contends that it's not his job and that I should learn how to do it myself. Now that so much teaching is going on line there is an entire new technical language to learn. I can't see how it's efficient for me to learn how to do everything when we have specialist staff. I've emailed the Faculty expert to see what she thinks but she is on holiday. By the time she replies to me next week I will have forgotten the detail of what happened today.

All I have left to do this evening is gather up my papers for tomorrow. There's one bundle for the big planning meeting and another for a presentation I'm doing for another Department on University plagiarism procedures.

Uid 80

I had anticipated today for a week. In fact since the meeting with my new line manager had been arranged. The meeting was a briefing on whether I had a role in the new unit – and if I did then broadly what it was. I do, and broadly the same. At the beginning of August my small unit and another slightly larger one merged. There we no pedagogic or educational reasons for this but it was ‘necessary’ to save money. At a time when this university like others is required to make very significant and painful cuts, we were effectively some of the political casualties of the need to be seen to be doing something. A review panel had around three months to plan the merger after it was announced. Yet, even a month and a half afterwards, I have no idea of the structure, the personnel , the role of the objectives of the new unit. Having said that, we should find out something. Having breathed a small sigh of relief I am, like colleagues, braced for the next round of what are expected to be massive cuts. I coordinate the group of programme directors within the University and today was our first meeting of this academic year. The main item was to consider the changes to the way qualifications and modules are reviewed. I always get nervous in advance of these and for this one more than others I had more work to do in getting things ready because the merger (above) has meant the loss of the member of staff who supported me. It was a successful meeting and the members of the group continue to be enthusiastic in their involvement. I tried to get home a little early to give my wife a break from the children to do a little work herself. Our children have just started school and start on half time. So, for two months our lives have become a little harder than initially expected as we try to be fair to the children, to each other, and to our employers. I sat down to catch up on email and some other admin after the children were in bed, we had eaten and had a few minutes together.

Uid 81

last night I read the last 30 pages of the Draft position statement for Enhancement Led Institutional Review, noting the gulfs of execution and perception between what our university quality people would have us say we do, and the reality.

The depressing thing is realising that my role, as departmental quality person, is to bridge the layers of the school - via the subject groups to the individuals and find some things that are not hostages to fortune and also flag up the good stuff. It's so much effort to reach across these different groupings though - you wish they all just talked to each other.

This morning began with thinking about angles for a meeting of senior departmental colleagues today to get buy-in to this task that needs adddressing in the next couple of weeks. The next couple of hours were a blur - and so often I can't remember what it was I did. I am working on a couple of pieces that I hope will shape the UK agenda within the discipline, but I was also catching up with emails.

By 11.30 I was not really as prepared as I'd like to be for an overseas student coming for restart of their MSc project. They have visa problems and have been ill on a truip back home, but in anycase the work so far is worryingly short of the standard required, though the person is diligient and not stupid - just limited in their english ability and doesn't grasp nuance or academic writing. This ran considerably over the half hour slot scheduled, and I had three minutes to get lunch and eat it at the meeting with colleagues.

There's several of these covering different things but with the same people and a dynamic to each according to who's become chair. We meet too often and it's hard not to know what certain people will say, and hard to get a word in edgeways. But I get some backing for getting everyone to buy in a little to making a genuine response to ELIR.

A gap before the next meeting - a new start supervision for final year ug. Another one of those bubbling with ideas yet with nothing sufficient for a project, drawing too much inspiration from outside our discipline and too little to gain a pass in ours. These conversations I need to handle a bit better - they tend to run on and on and eat into the time planned to work through the pile of papers I keep carting twixt home and office.

I'm also running a dialog with an industry person - getting them to participate in a professional body event I organise each year. Think that is almost in the bag now which is great. Another professional body item popped up at 5pm - marked out some time on sat and sun to deal with it - can't really justify it in the dayjob (no workload allowance for a start) yet the institution does play up in external-facing stuff, the handful of us who do do these things, yet never go after the ones who don't. You'd think we'd all be expected to be professionals. But there are a lot who see this as just a trade and so join unions etc. But that's another issue for another day.

Uid 82

Weds 15 Sept 2010: I spent today on campus.

My task for today was to nuke all the copying and printing for teaching and learning materials for this coming term. I needed to put together a course reader for one of my modules (first year research methods) for the students, but also to print out seminar readings for myself and a sessional lecturer who is teaching for me this year. So I spent time hauling books back and forth from the library, lugging them down to the photocopier, lugging the books back to my office, lugging the copies to the admin office for printing... I really ought to release a DVD on the academic's fitness regime... This was a pretty tedious job but I think it's an important one. I should add that the only things I copied were key readings in books we simply did not have enough of in the library for the number of students on this module: I expect the students to get hold of journal articles themselves, especially as this module is about teaching them about research skills as much as it is about research methods.

I'm a stickler for students reading ahead of lectures - on the most instrumental level because I think they should be prepared for class, but also (and more importantly) because the more they read, the more their eyes are opened to the social world, to further perspectives on their experiences and those of other people. It also helps them to improve their writing skills. This time was not wasted - I see it as an investment in having 'switched on' students. I think you have to be kind to readers, to build up their confidence incrementally... there's some cracking stuff we read on this degree, but it's getting people to have a taste for it in order to make an effort to get it - and to browse for more. In a world in which Google even predicts your search terms for you, you have to encourage students to take the time to find the stuff that requires more of their attention, because the rewards are worth it. It's that getting beyond the using a few things off the internet for an essay to write a poor to mediocre piece of work to actually having read widely and thought deeply about something to write an essay that is of a good, if not excellent standard.

Making the seminar pack for myself and the other lecturer was in a similar vein. I like having a pack of reading materials for the week ahead that I can digest on the train on my commute or whenever - if I'm going to be quizzing my students on the week's reading, I need to be up on it myself. Although this is for another first year module, it is nonetheless a module that covers my main area of research, and for me, this is my means of ever-sharpening my general knowledge of my field. I make great efforts to keep skimming the periodical literature to make sure I'm giving my students the cream of what's out there. If it's good enough for an academic audience, it's good enough for my first years, and it's my job to make them more comfortable with this world of academic reading beyond what their comfort zone with A-level textbooks is.

Also today I spent some time speaking to a new PhD student on mine on the phone, discussing how his PhD would work. I suppose it is a very similar endeavour to what I do with first years - how to induct someone into academic behaviours, how to learn the codes of how we learn. None of it is intuitive, and it's about developing those deep, slow ways of thinking, about pondering all the logical outcomes.

A good portion of today also went into chatting to colleagues about various things about teaching and administration - mulling things over and working out plans. Reflection, if you like - also gossip! Not time-wasting: building and maintaining your professional social networks.

I was feeling bushed by the end of the day, and couldn't face the walk uphill to the train station so I called a taxi. The driver asked me if I'd had a long day... my reply that I'd been on the photocopier all day was probably not the dramatic response he was expecting!

Uid 83

Share Project 15th September 2010

First day back after a week’s holiday. Although I managed to not look at emails for most of the week I did ‘catch up’ on the Sunday to find that my planned meeting with my academic line manager had been changed into a discussion of personal implication following a merger with another unit in the university and that I might want to be represented by my union or accompanied by a colleague. Discussed with my wife who felt that I should ask for clarification of the substance of the meeting to see whether such representation would be required. Also contact my union and a couple of trusted academic colleagues. By the Monday I had received assurances that I was not significantly affected so was able to agree to go ahead without being accompanied.

Went to the gym before getting in to the office at just after 8a.m. Might be worth pointing out that the office is a new open plan – so everyone’s conversations and phone call are audible or semi-audible. Can’t say I particularly like it - I guess I see it as similar to a rather smart call centre.

Caught up with email – about meetings later today.

Then meeting with a colleague (one of the ones mentioned above) to discuss how we might organise a paper following research we’ve both been involved with. Agreed our approach and when we’d have things done by. Definitely one of the pluses of this job is the scope for fixing your own deadlines.

On to the meeting with my line manager. I was assured that it was ‘no change’ as far as my position was concerned.

Then went on to discuss what I’d been up to since our last meeting and share ideas and suggestion on various projects I’m working on and papers I’m trying to finish. Also people to get in touch with to take this work forward.

Cup of coffee. Printing off minutes for a meeting this afternoon and booking form for a conference in November.

Asked if I would consider doing a peer review on an article for the journal that runs from our centre –which I agreed to.

Also asked to approve minutes of a recent awards board.

Then went of to a research interest group. There were three of us present in the room and another 3 joined by phone. I was asked to take notes to act as minutes for this meeting. It finished slightly earlier than I had expected so I decided (because I had closed down my ‘work –station’ to go and work from home). Send of a book review to a journal I’m on the editorial board of. Also wrote up the notes from the afternoon meeting and saved them on a memory stick to send tomorrow.

Uid 87

Weds 15 Sept

7am wake up, feeling tired, have been suffering with a bug for the last week or so, leaving me exhausted by mid-afternoon, but I'm glad to have had a good night's sleep (8 hours). look at news etc on internet, from bed.

8am breakfast, and as the sun's shining, I go out to the garden to get some rays. A relief after yesterday's torrential downpours and wintery weather. Thinking about the day ahead with afternoon meetings, I decide to get some R&R in the sun in the morning, to leave me with enough energy for the rest of the day. Thinking about my module about to start in 2 weeks, and some of the administrative issues I need to iron out, also wondering about making some last-minute changes to the lecture programme, and whether this would be too difficult in terms of rearranging things with other people. Enjoy the feeling of calm in the garden, not rushing around for once, letting me think about the day/week/month ahead.

10am shower and get dressed, off to work, at my desk at 10.30.

11am got stuck in to email type admin.

Got a notice from a mailing list about a newspaper article that's very relevant for one of my lectures, so got the URL and added it to the module handbook for the reading list. As my topic is so current and relevant to everyday life, I like to include really up-to-the-minute references and news stories for the students, often by sending them emails with news snippets etc. I hope this helps them relate the lectures and seminars to their real lives.

Had a nice message from a researcher at another Uni who's asked me to referee their research proposal. I sent them one of my undergraduate's dissertations on this new and unresearched topic, the student was pleased not to have her project simply collect dust, and the other researchers wrote her a lovely email complimenting her on her original research and hoping to keep in touch. I love it when students do really cutting edge stuff for their projects and there are good opportunities for making links with current academic research. I'm very proud of her, and pleased to have made the connection.

Spent time on phone with colleague to discuss how to juggle lecture and seminar slots as he wants to swap weeks. Finally we came up with a plan that works for the logic and coherence of the module, and for his desire to swap a week too. Big relief and now to amend the module handbook.

12pm Amending module handbook and seminar planning sheets, asking colleagues for updated reading lists for the handbook…… adding in some more current references to websites and blogs that are really exciting examples of the course material in action.

printing out my lecture slides for first 3 weeks' lectures, to get them copied. also printing out workshop activity sheets to be handed out, and uploading all this to the blackboard VLE site.

1pm getting more materials ready for the module, collecting together pdfs of the readings for key seminars, to place on the VLE. Takes a while as I don;t have as many as I thought I had, so some time spent googling and trying to download papers, one of the online library websites doesn't seem to be working properly. Eventually I strike two readings off the list for this reason, going back to amend the handbook.

Fill in form to place a photocopy of a book chapter in the library because the library doesn't have the book. Must remember to order the book for the library and also for myself.

Pleased to have ticked off a lot of admin this morning.

2pm finalising layout of a quick quiz for a research workshop I'm running next week. Printing out lots of copies - go and look for coloured paper.the coloured paper jams the printer, so I sort that out, and print out a white copy, then use the coloured paper in the photocopier instead.

Take the lecture handouts to admin to be photocopied, and drop off the library form for the book chapter.

Annoyed with myself for not scheduling in a bit of fresh air or a walk, but have brought forward my 3.30 meeting to 2.30 (as one meeting was cancelled), so there's a chance to stretch legs and walk about there. Have my packed lunch in my office, sitting on a comfy chair, trying to eat slowly. Stare at my shelves of books. I only have 2 or 3 shelves full (about 4m long each) but it always takes me ages to find a particular book. One day I'll organise them by topic, it wont take long but its the sort of thing you need to dedicate time to, it's never urgent.

2.30pm off for my meeting with a colleague to discuss revisions to a co-written paper, and a forthcoming conference submission, and more importantly, what we did in our summer holidays, over coffee

4pm back from coffee, good discussions which covered our research group's activities and prospects, two papers we're writing together, and potential topics for submission to an upcoming conference. Action points about drafting an abstract, and contacting programme coordinator at the conference to see about organising a whole panel session for our group. Also we discussed having a team-building/conference next early summer, 2-3 days, to really bond the wider team of people working together on this subject.

I enjoy spending time talking with this colleague, as he's a senior researcher like myself, similar age, and I sometimes feel we're the parental figures of my small informal research group! I spend a lot of time encouraging and supporting and listening to the other more junior members of the team, and although they support each other, I've noticed that they don't reciprocate to me, as though they don't feel that I need encouragement and support too - I interpret this as being because they see me as more senior/experienced/confident, whatever. So I guess it's part of being in a leadership position, that people don't think the leaders require support too. So, as a result, when I do discuss work stuff with people more my own level, it's much more equal and supportive in a reciprocal way - I really need that time to feel that I'm among peers.

A bit of email coming in - the dates are fixed for a 2-day kick-off meeting for my new research project, very exciting to be getting the whole new team and 3 new recruits together, but daunting as we have to decide what we're going to be doing!

I try to only turn my email on twice a day, at about midday, and about 4pm, for about half an hour to deal with whatever's there. That way I can concentrate on a big task in the morning before getting waylaid by the instant demands of email correspondence. It doesn't always work out like that, but that's the plan. I enjoy disabling my email at the end of the day, too!

4.30pm spent some time organising the hotel bookings for the workshop next Monday, I booked 16 rooms in my name to get a cheap rate, but then it does mean a lot of gaffing getting attendees allocated to rooms, and dealing with them when their plans change. Luckily my researchers had handled most of the event organising and is a model of efficiency. Faxed the hotel with an updated list of people who will be checking in.

Emailed a student from another Uni who had sent me his MA thesis, which I'd sent him some references for, it looks really interesting and I'm looking forward to reading it. Filed it along with other pdfs of student projects that I keep to show new students as 'good examples' in related areas. It's lovely when people remember to send you their projects, most promise to but forget.

Sent the department details of my latest publication, a book chapter from a conference that took place 3 years ago. The wheels of academia run slowly, don't they? Also updated my CV and list of work outputs with the new publication details.

Ready to go home now, starting to feel foggy in the head, but much better than the last few days. Having a calmer day certainly helps. I've left things out for what I need to do first thing tomorrow morning, and have some little admin-y things lined up for the day, like updating website etc. I've also sorted out a pile of papers to read on Friday.

5pm about to upload this diary, turn off email, turn off computer, go home, probably not think about work much - I try very hard not to when I'm off duty.

Uid 88

Arrived at work at 8.15 to begin answering emails from monday and Tuesday as I'd had 2 days off. Most pressing are students wanting to appeal against fails and therefore being withdrawn for the course. Faculty managers on leave so ne advice available. Email back to student advising of the process.

Cycled to another School about 10 mins away for meeting to plan short course on supervision for locakl NHS Trust. 18 to be delivered by easter 2011 at trust venues. No idea of audinece / numbers etc or what they really want.

Back here and met with colleague top discuss timetabling and staffing issues.

Uid 90

Arrived at work for a 9ish am start at my desk. Had been mulling over during the early hours of the morning preparatory work for a talk to first year medical students on plagiarism and wanted to check up on an article on the internet which would inform my talk. got side tracked on the article until gone 10 15 !! although this is understandable as i am just about to embark on studying for a doctrate on forensic lingistics within medical eduation. I then dealt with emails for an hour until now - 11.20 when i came upon the email reminding me of this survey.

I managed to read some background articles relevant to a new lecture that I am presenting in October and made a few notes - feel a bit overwhelmed about preparing for a lecture to be given to Master post grads students but will plod on.

Spent the lunchtime with a colleague to assist her in preparing for a seminar - she has not given a seminar befor and we went through content and ways of being interactive with the students. Afternoon was taken up with the curriculum development and delivery meeting for the MB/BS,

Finished at 4.15.

left to do is to go back to my emails and deal with any quick ones otherwise the rest can wait until the morning.

Uid 91

I'm managed to call around and welcome most of my new students onto the course, with only a couple on my list left to call. I'm responsible for moderating online forums for my own group together with the main student forum for my course. I'm juggling my teaching with my full time job, so on several days of the week, I do a double shift, calling students or checking the forums during my lunch break and when I get home in the evenings. Supported distance learning has its advantages for students and tutors alike: there's flexibility, and you get to know the students well through telephone and email contact. But it can also fill all available space. No major problems on the forums. There are good participation levels and students have discussed sensitive topics with respect and sensitivity. It has been fiddly adn time consuming sorting out a few technical glitches in the forums, and computing skills are not my strong point. The computing helpdesk has been a great help. I'm already bracing myself for the first round of tutorials and essay marking.

Uid 95

The week before "Freshers' Week" or now called Induction Week". There are many issues that come thick and fast to myself as Induction Co-ordinator:

How many names on the list of 160+ students will actually arrive?

Will the weather hold good for the site visit planned for Thursday?

Will all my colleagues arrive with big smiles to greet their new tutees on Monday afternoon?

Will I remember all the information I have to pass on when we have the departmental induction next Friday?

And in the darker moments, do I really care?

Of course I do! Induction now goes on for all of the first year. "The centre" impart much advice from those who have never met new students to those of us who do this every year. How can I manage to condense all the info' so that students will understand? Decide to ditch the 30 slides on Health and Safety and leave that for another day. Every one wants their piece of the action when all the students want to understand is the timetable (= which days they can have a lie in), the work requirements (= what's the minimum I have to do to pass), and where are the nearest tolets, coffe bar, pub?

It's 10 am and we head for the "Whole School Teaching Day". Note that it is a Not the whole day, b) not attended by all teacing staff, and c) definitely not an "Away Day" - these went long ago and we are in a standard lecture room within the school. Much talk of a revised curriculum (enthusiastic new staff are keen to be radical but "old hands" know that all the HEFECE and professional constraints will win again). I don't knck their enthusuasm but really feel it's a waste of time. New lecturer extolls the importance of NSS scores and there is a debate about the "bribes" to be ofeered to get happy students to complete the survey. Even fear of the wrath of our VC appears to be a driver - what happened to students telling the truth. Some debate on the flawed statistical processed used by NSS.

Meeting finishes at lunch time with mediocre sandwiches. Back to the desk for another few hours of fielding emails and planning for induction. Can't understand why meetings have to be this week (to accommodate staff with children who are now back at school so parents free to come to work? Bitterly resent them as I only took standard holidays and could not work from home in school holidays - how times have changed).

Go home with a long "to do" list which I hope will be completed by Friday afternoon but know that, as in previous years, will work this Saturday so that for a while at least, the new students will see an efficient, cool calm and colleted tutor when they arrive.

Uid 96

15 September 2010

No timetabled teaching today makes it a slightly odd one for the second week of term. Days are often best if I’ve spent hours in front of a class. I feel I’ve earned something. If I’ve been with students and I feel they’ve learned, I can think “this is what I’m here for”.

I was somewhat anxious and guilty this morning. Some months ago, a person in a senior position decided that a student on suspended studies should be allowed to return to part-time study. I’m the student’s personal tutor, and I acted upon that. Her matriculation last week has just been noticed and I’m asked, by email from aforementioned senior person, to explain why there is a part-time student at this stage of the programme. She must be removed. A couple of emails, a conversation with my line manager, she will be removed.

She’s just picked up her learning materials for the start of term. She’s arranged childcare. She was full of enthusiasm. I said she could come back, welcomed her back, wished her a good term, signed her return to studies form. I feel like I’ve ruined her year.

Will there be a complaint? Will a finger be pointed at me? Will my emails be scrutinised and will I be hauled over the coals? Maybe.

Does this mean that any other decisions could be reversed? A programme I taught on has been closed and we teaching staff (four of us) have been redeployed. We were promised re-training and redeployment but not in writing. Could that be likewise reversed when somebody notices we’re still here? “You’re still here? Teaching WHAT now? No. Out you go.”

The last year has been an anxious one since the programme closed. I’m getting used to it, getting better at dropping anxieties in the wastepaper basket and doing something else. I reviewed some ethics applications for the committee meeting next week. I feel pleased with myself, competent, organised because I reviewed them the same day they arrived in my inbox. I like the ethics committee because it allows me to learn by example what sort of research projects are carried out in what disciplines, how they are done, what is said about them. Reviewing applications as a non-specialist isn’t difficult, it just requires attention to detail.

Hurried lunch with a colleague whom I love and who is always my comfort. We wolf lunch and laugh about current affairs in the wider world.

Full belly and inviting indigestion, I cycle 10 minutes up the road to the other campus I’m at half the time. I’m meeting the head of special needs and diversity who is helping me to plan how I will support students with special needs who might enrol on a new distance learning programme I’m developing. She’s friendly and helpful, gives me examples of problems other teams have experienced so I can avoid them, and praises me for thinking of these issues in advance and contacting her. Good meeting.

I haven’t got an office at this campus although most of my teaching is here, so I go to the library for an hour. I’m typing up a list of previous dissertations and typing a webCT announcement to the current fourth years, explaining the terms of access for reading previous years’ work. That done and emails answered, next meeting.

In the campus café I meet two women from a university-wide transferable/employability skills initiative. We’re discussing a workshop they’re going to run for my fourth year research project module called ‘Ensuring Robust Proposals’. In week 7 my students will be handing in research proposals so in week 6 the external experts will come in for an interactive session getting them to criticise their work, play devil’s advocate and consider the stakeholders and audiences for their work. I’m excited by this, and so are my two colleagues here. I love being around people who are enthusiastic about getting students to do useful things, learn deeply, challenge themselves, truly develop. There are a lot of people like that at my university. I’m often inspired by my fellow academics, by idealism about the real meaning of education, by a desire for social justice, by people who work hard for these ideals. The three of us get increasingly enthusiastic as we refine the workshop plans. I tell them who to look out for dominating the group, who has difficulty with public speaking, what the group is likely to find easy and what they’ll have difficulty with.

Mid-afternoon our meeting is finished and I’ve no others scheduled. This campus is closer to home than my office is and I’ve brought all the books I need to work at home, so home I go. At home I answer my emails again, write a ‘dummy proposal’ that my students can critique to shreds in that week 6 workshop, and dip into the webCT discussion boards for my modules. At about six thirty my partner calls and it’s time to make dinner together, that stops my work for the day.

Before I was a lecturer I never realised how long can be spent sorting out a problem with an individual student. Perhaps because when I was an undergraduate I never had any difficulties with The System. Some of our students don’t, and we hardly see them in our offices. Some students are in all the time. This morning’s part-time student is an example of an individual issue that involves many people and many emails. So many board discussions, emails, phone conversations, talking (or whispering) in offices. “Is it fair? What are the rules and regs about this now?” (the rules change, perhaps annually but I’ve only been here two years so I can’t say that for sure) “What will we tell the student, and how exactly?” “Does this set a precedent? Will we have problems with other students?” Days (or at least half days) are often spent ‘fire-fighting’ like this and lectures are prepared at home.

Uid 98

0825 Arrive, open up emails, until ...

0920 Made a tea

0930 Conversation with fellow academic/probable PhD candidate

1010 Went to see a colleague to talk over issues of delivery and assessment for a field week in Term 1. Until 1100

1110 Confirmed conversation and arrangements by email

1115 Working on PhD student interim paperwork

1300 Went downstairs to buy lunch; stayed there to eat

1325 Across campus to another building for a short course on the new version of the Intranet where students see material ... until

1505 late, to meet PhD student in cafe to discuss his current progress (following some work, leave, and need to get on with it) ... until

1530 stayed in cafe to work on another PhD's Abstract and draft work plan for a workshop and interviews ... until

1600 3 further emails (1 for an MSc's late dissertation; another towards a potential PhD) and general admin

1700 left for home, arriving 1740

2200 one last email to an MSc about a meeting and his CV

Uid 99

This wasn't a great day for me. I'm working towards a PhD, and got some feedback on a piece of work which dragged me down mentally. I find it really hard to carve out time for PhD work, so when I'm told I have to revisit something which I thought was done and dusted, it is a bit of a blow.

Work wise, I had an introductory seminar for the distance learning module that I teach. Small numbers, which is disappointing. However, a nice bunch of students, and the seminar went well. One of them said they had chosen the module on the recommendation of a friend who had done it previously, so that gave me a bit of a boost!

I then had to go straight into a meeting about staff development work that we are doing with our overseas partners. I teach overseas twice a year, and with all the new work that our School is getting in this area, it looks like I'll be doing more. It's enjoyable, but stressful too, as the work doesn't stop at home just because I'm away - I can't decide if email is a blessing or a curse! I've asked to be involved in the staff development side of our international collaborations as part of my own personal development, trying to raise my profile within the university at a more strategic level.

After that, I had a meeting with a student, looking for feedback on his Honours dissertation. He got a First for this in June, but is now progressing to Masters, so wanted more detailed feedback that he could use for his Masters work. Students like him are a joy to work with - he actively seeks out feedback, listens to it,and acts on it. Unfortunately, because I had been running around all day, I hadn't had the chance to re-read his dissertation. He was very understanding, and scheduled to come back the next day, but I was annoyed at myself for messing him around.

I normally arrive around 10am and leave after 6pm, but today I had to head home earlier, as my mother was coming round for tea. She comes round once a week, and I normally try to organise it on a day when I'm working from home, but couldn't do that this week. It just adds to my stress - I hate having a fixed finishing time. Just as I was about to go, my room-mate received some work-related news which both angered and upset her. I therefore stayed to calm her down, while at the same time getting more stressed out myself. I then raced home (I live an hour's drive away), and made it just as my husband was serving dinner.

These were the main activities that I can identify from this day, but I also had lots of little things going on. I'm a year tutor, and this is the first week of term, so lots of students are dropping in, emailing, phoning, etc.

Looking back at what I've written, it does seem like a microcosm of all the various strands of my working life. I'm sure my diary will reflect the experiences of many of my colleagues, as we try to juggle work, personal development and home life in a day that just seems too short for everything that has to be done!

Uid 101

Wed 15th Sept, (head of department)

Up at about 7 and arrived at Uni about 8:15. Spent a usual hour on routine overnight emails plus matters that had not been fully dealt with the previous day.

About 9:30 went down to enrolment to show my face. Technically I am the senior member of staff for the faculty who can be called on today to come and make final decisions. Actually the staff on hand are much more capable than me of making those decisions and I do not expect to be called.

The rest of the morning: One and a half weeks before the start of teaching on the 27th, so yet another close look at individual staff, module and course timetables. They all seem to be as complete as I can manage at this point in time.

Out of a staff of about 30 I have one out on a year's personal sabbatical, one on sick leave until at least 2011 and two about to be served with redundancy notices. These latter two cannot be taken off the timetable until they have their notices and I have to ask other staff to fill 'dead mens shoes'.

Also during the morning had a phone conversation with HR about an under performing and obstructive member of staff. The only sanction I have is a formal disciplinary procedure which I do not want to engage in at this stage. Ask the dean to see him and give him a 'put up and shut up' message!

Afternoon from 13:00 is the PG resit progression boards. Long and tedious but very necessary.

by 16:30 I am back in enrolment and not feeling at all well. I had been feeling dizzy and tired all the previous day but had stuck it out through the UG boards. Decide at 16:30 that I have had enough for today. Home by 17:30 and straight to bed, up at about 19:00 for a bite to eat and back asleep from about 20:30.

{Postscript: was ill for the rest of the week and had to take the next day off staying in bed most of the day. Having reviewed this I note that there was no real academic, pedagogic or scholarly activity!!!}

Uid 102

It is typical of my inability to handle my workload at this time of year that I had promised that I would do this on Wed and that it is already Mon and I am just catching up.

Wed began with 2 suspected plagiarism cases landing on my desk. In both cases it was agreed that the student was inexperienced and needed some strong advice on academic conduct rather than being disciplined. What can be summarised in a couple of sentences actually took the best part of a day to debate with tutors and the academic conduct officer. The process of setting up meetings with students is ongoing as, perhaps not surprisingly, they are not easy to track down or pin down to a meeting date.

I worry about how some of our students cope with the academic demands of degree level study especially where English is a second language and/or the students have limited prior study before enrolling on a foundation degree.

11 am saw the start of a staff meeting which discussed, among other things, the thorny issue of accommodation and the possible relocation of our department. We have had a complaint about wheelchair access in the current venue which presents the dual problem on resolving the issue whilst we are here even though we could move at any time. There was some discussion about finances but that is not the point. We need to be proactive not reactive. Raising the profile of our department in the public sphere was also discussed at some length.

A sandwich lunch at my desk dealing with issues related to the new intake and then onto a second meeting to discuss and evaluate procedures for logging student requests for additional support. Again the theme seems to be something about being proactive rather than reactive. Some students seem to get so much support whilst others manage much more independently and we only really hear of their needs if they hit a crisis.

The start of a new academic year and my team is responsible for something like 48 groups across 25 different courses. There is a briefing for one course on Saturday and an induction day on Sunday. At least this year my timetable flexes both ways and I will be out of the office on Thurs and Friday to compensate.

My ‘to do list’ gets longer as the day progresses. I would prioritise but everything has a short time frame. I will do some things while I am away from the office but others, like writing this, will just have to wait until next week. I am not sure how much detail is needed for this task but I am now out of time.

Uid 105

We haven't started classes yet, so, up to this point my work has been all about preparing the first 2/3 weeks of classes for the course of Introduction to Programming.

I have been discussing with my colleagues the best way to start off with this course and the general opinion so far is to start off by introducing the concepts of computer, language, algorithm and program and from that point on, we jump to teach them how to structure a solution for a problem and to produce an efficient algorithm.

The discussion has also been about the evaluation process. Should we include a final (group-based) assignment or should we only have weekly or bi-weekly individual assignments?

So basically, on this day, these were some of the aspects that were discussed via e-mail with my colleagues. In the meantime I focused on creating a script for the first exercises as these will also be used by my colleagues on their classes.

Uid 106

Yesterday's first day of teaching on clinic in London was good, quite tiring but refreshing in its own way. Refreshing because the students seem to respond to me. The admin is a little depressing - no contract, possibly no pay at the end of month 1. Induction has been poor - no locker, no swipe card, no name badge - 'just ask' if you want to know anything. The other teaching staff are helpful.

Tomorrow, for me, the new project starts at P. Although my day off today, I went in this afternoon to see how it was going.. The students arrived on Tuesday and the one's that recognised me from London trips seemed very happy with how it is going. There is a treatment planning clinic tomorrow morning, and I will be partly responsible for the first ever one! What a burden to have to bear! The other teaching staff still seem worried about how it's all going to go, but D seems happy with the years' preparations. Induction is certainly stronger for the students here, than staff in London.

Uid 108

10.13am Tuesday 14th

I'm marking MSc theses today (Tues), before the deadline, which is on Friday.

I have a paper to write on making lectures interesting for large groups. I have lots of ideas but probably not enough quantitative data, just qualitative.

I wanted to write an abstract for IEEE Educon in Jordan. It is due in tomorrow, so I might make it later today, if I don't get distracted. I need to do some more work on peer assessment and I want to test out some ideas.

I have finished my induction lectures, updated my webpages, organised two teamwork events and put all my material for assessment on the VLE since yesterday - so been pretty busy.

Anyway, the rest of this week:

I am on the recruitment team and we are meeting to plan the strategy for the year ahead this week. I am going to attend a seminar on enhancing feedback to students and I am also going to do some more work on my PhD - yup, not finished that yet - been a little busy teaching, researching, publishing and working to get that finished.

I have some paperwork to finish for the EU report on a Summer School I and my students took part in - part of the Intensive Programme.

I need to do some reading and set up some experiments. I am trialling a new assessment method this year in one of my modules.

I need to think of some projects for undergraduates to do and put them on the VLE.

I have some quizzes to write for the induction events.

I have been thinking of the value attributed to teaching and those who choose to concentrate on their teaching and pedagogic research as opposed to 'real' research (not my view but the view of some). In an educational establishment it always amazes me that excellence in teaching and pedagogic research are not seen as significant and can actually be a hinderance to career development e.g. I have been told my research does not fit the School's aim for the next REF or its future recruitment. My contract ends in Sept 2011 and my HOS is sending me job adverts now. So, I have no future here, it seems, even though I am excellent at my job and have been praised externally and internally for my innovations in teaching and learning.

I need a cup of coffee.

Wed 15 Sept 8.28am

I now have a cup of coffee. I signed up for the EQUATE course here at work yesterday - Equal Acclaim for Teaching Excellence - a course on creating the best learning opportunities for students - a teaching enrichment programme. Meeting about that on Friday.

Today is a research day - reading papers, writing papers - squeezing some time in before the new term starts.

Writing this diary is somewhat akin to the reflections I ask students to write at the end of their project.

Stream of consciousness works better though than 'all at the end'. Something else to think about for students - they keep a log book but a project diary or blog that is ongoing would be useful and something to look back on at the end. So, I might introduce that. Of course, assessing it - well, that is also something else to think about...

Ok, a-reading I must go - before the recruitment meeting.

\_\_\_

Uid 109

Well, strictly speaking it's not the 15th, but the 16th of September as it is now 01:17!

For once I can't blame workload for working so late. I have toothache!

It's a quiet time in the year for me in terms of teaching load. Neither of the modules that I tutor on start until next month. I should, however, have the list of students for one of the modules tomorrow. As I work for on a distance learning programme the year starts rather differently. Not a case of walking into a classroom/lecture hall and meeting the students for the first time - but of sending a 'welcome letter' via email.

Writing the welcome letter is quite a tricky task. Trying to include the really important information about tutorial support whilst not overwhelming the students with too much information. Also trying to sound friendly and welcoming at the same time as outlining various 'rules' about when and how I can be contacted. So today I have been reviewing the letter sent last year and seeing if it needs amending. And this speaks to a wider issue when dealing with distance learning students. Although we do provide face-to-face tutorial support, many students won't attend these tutorials so the relationship you have with them is via telephone, email or online forums. And this type of communication requires a different set of skills depending on the medium used.

I am the moderator of two online forums that can be accessed by all students on the course, not just those in my tutor group. I have been setting up so initial discussion topics this week so that there will be something for students to engage with once the module website goes 'live'. Again, a different set of skills needed here. And not just the technical stuff! It's important that the students discuss things amongst themselves rather than the forum becoming a 'Q&A' forum with students asking questions and me answering them, but it's tricky when students come there with different levels of skills and confidence.

As more institutions start to use distance learning as part of the programmes they offer, it is something that colleagues used to working in my 'traditional' universities will have to get to grips with. And even if the main part of provision is 'face-to-face' the ways in which the use of technologies are being integrated into all learning becomes a more central concern.

The focus is often on getting the technology to work 'properly' and less on how people interact with the technology and each other.

Uid 110

15 September 2010

Did some reading for an article I'm beginning to write, about 2 hours

Commuted to school, 1 hour 45 minutes

Check to make sure presentation would work on classroom computer, added a few notes to my lecture notes, 20 minutes. Had to set up the classroom as the chairs aren't fixed and were in a huge heap at the back of the classroom, 10 minutes.

Wrote up some possible questions for the first test for the class, about 15 minutes. I don't want the tests to be outrageously difficult or, for me, very hard to grade, so I'm looking at different kinds things to put on the tests

Taught class, 1.5 hours

Spoke with students about their in-class presentations after class was over, 10 minutes--the students who ask for feedback make me proud. They're the ones that tend to participate in class more and generally do better.

Taught class, 1.5 hours

Had to yell a bit at this 2nd class for not being prepared and gave a short, on-the-spot quiz, which I eventually decided I wouldn't count as a grade. It did make me decide to add a certain kind of question to the tests, based on the homework they aren't doing (listening, for a music history course).

Spoke with more students about presentations after class, 10 minutes

Commuted home, 1.5 hours

Checked and answered school-related email, 20 minutes

Decided it was dinner time, didn't do any more school-related work for the evening

Uid 111

Had a good day today, first teaching in several months. Got up at 7.30am, cup of tea, shower, let the dog out for a wee but had to get him back in because the window cleaners arrived - had to walk the dog for 15 minutes instead of letting him have time in the garden as I usually do. Caught train into work, delayed 10 minutes while waiting for a platform to be free. Bang went my plans for getting an early start to do a final run-through of my session plan.

Arrived in office at 10am, checked emails for urgent items then walked 10 minutes across town to another part of campus to get a lift to the other campus 3 miles away to deliver training to new academic staff on their PGCHE course. Todays session was on using the VLE for technology enhanced learning. Two parallel sessions had been arranged, one for beginners and one for more advanced (which I was delivering with 2 colleagues). Only 6 participants were interested in the advanced session so I swapped to the beginners to help the other 2 colleagues with their 25+ participants. The 2 hour session was well received and I enjoyed supporting the session by providing one-to-one support to those that were struggling or had questions about how they could achieve some of the more technically advanced features.

Spent half an hour discussing the sessions with my colleagues to review effectiveness and any improvements for next years delivery.

Got a lift back into city centre and dashed to train station to meet my daughter and go to card shop to pick up birthday cards for my husband as I had sort of forgotten it was today as the past few weeks have been very busy with conferences and preparation for todays session. Bought birthday cake and wine from the supermarket and ordered chinese takeaway for birthday tea (big cop-out from me as I cook really well and should have planned a nice meal or at least booked a restaurant).

Uid 113

I assume this is intended to be a free form piece of text? Unusual, and i'm not sure how well it will work as it requires us to express ourselves clearly and to have something to say

On the 15th September I had a day of meetings in london, starting at 10.30 and ending with dinner at 8pm which finished late. All the meetings were related to my role as president of an professional organisation. I left home just after 7am and caught the 7.30 train to London.

In the morning i met two colleagues RH and JT and our administrator JR. Our aim was to identify key developments in the NHS and consider the implications of these for our members and for the organisation generally. The new coalition government is largely continuing the move towards using more and more non NHS providers for services and opening up the market to private companies, social enterprise and the voluntary sector - in other words making the central NHS not responsible for emplying millions of staff and moving them into other employers. Clearly it's a huge undertaking and has the potential to go badly wrong. We anticpate that many of our members will loose their NHS jobs and many will not find adequate alternatives. This is likely to push them into independent practise and we therefore considered how our organistion might help protect and organise them in any new roles. The possibility of setting up a trading arm and operating as a social enterprise company was discussed.

We then had lunch with new Trustees followed by an induction meeting for the new Trustee/ Directors. The responsibilites and duties were outlined and the new trustees had an overview of our financial position.

At the Finance meeting later on we discussed the ironic contrast between our own healty financial position and that of the wider country. our membership has continued to increase and now sits at around 8,500 which means that our surpluses also increase and we now anticipate a turnover of £1,000,000 in 2010/2011. As a charity we must also be prudent and hold healthy reserves but the extra makes new things possible and hopefully we can put a bit extra into the research fund and also keep subscriptions at the current rate. We also discussed, or is that negotiated, an annual rise for our staff (there are 16 in our head office). Their pay is usually pegged to the local government rates; however this year local government are not going to get anything at all and given our healthy finances we felt it was reasonable to offer 2.2% (nt the 3.5% requested).

We met in the pub across the road before dinner at 8pm. As all the board members are staying overnight before our full board meeting tomorrow (16th) it was very relaxed - just as well, as it took over an hour for our starters to arrive. We finished the meal at around 11pm - some of us went on for a drink and the sensible majority went back to the hotel to prepare for our 9am start in the morning.

So in summary I spent the whole day in a series of meetings, did no research or teaching but I guess you would call the whole day professional activity.

Uid 114

Wednesday 15th September

I am apparently on leave today so shouldn’t really have any work related activity to report – however that is not the reality of my week!

I have a handover deadline for some course material on Monday so that only option is to try and complete during my weeks leave. I resent this as I’ve taken leave to try and work on the final assignment of my MSc. I’m finding it hard to manage the conflicting demands – I’m paid to write the course materials so they should take priority… but my MSc is an important investment in myself and it is getting close to make or break point, if this assignment doesn’t get written that will be 3 years work wasted. Actually not wasted as I have enjoyed and used what I have learnt along the way, but it will seam less worth while if I don’t get a piece of paper at the end!

So this is how my day panned out:

First thing I checked my e-mail, not to do anything about it as I have become more strict with myself now and only respond to e-mail during office hours, just to clear out the junk. This leaves me with 35 messages which I will need to deal with when I return next week – I expect triple that number by the time Monday come round.

Next I write out a things to do list – this is a week for me to sort things out and try to get on top of both home and work life so I feel pressured to make the most of it. It is a catch-up week so that I’ll be able to cope better when I am back at work next week.

It is maybe worth saying at this point that I’m going through a process of trying to get a better balance in my life – I have given up my teaching hours this year even though it is a part of the job I really enjoy. I’ve done this to try and reduce my workload which is ever increasing and made significantly worse by new systems which are being imposed. Frequently new rules and processes are designed by people who don’t work where the impact is felt. I spend a lot of my time devising ways to circumnavigate regulations to arrive at sensible outcomes.

I decide I can mix work and pleasure by making cheese at the same time as doing my course writing. This kind of works but takes all the pleasure out of the cheese making.

My course writing is not going well. I’m frustrated that my job forces me to do things which I am not very good at – we have an everyone must do everything approach in my institution. Why we can’t all do the things that we are good at and work as a team I will never know.

I finally become frustrated enough to decide something has to change. I call the British Dyslexia Association and book an assessment. I’ve always struggle with reading, writing and organisation but never been assessed, I’ve always muddled through. I resent having to pay £500 for the assessment but if it results in a positive diagnosis then I will finally be able to demand that I am given a reasonable amount of time to complete writing and then actually get a holiday during my leave.

With the cheese now into moulds I go out for afternoon tea to cheer myself up.

When I get back home I decide that I need to work on my MSc. I get my papers together and try to get my brain in gear for another writing task.

I’m interrupted by a phone call from a colleague. There is a problem with recruitment. My colleague is going to look into it and asks if I am around tomorrow to help sort it out. I remind her I am on leave so she agrees to call after 9!

Back on the MSc work I find I’m floundering but manage to write 500 of the 6000 words I need. This is a start but I have a deadline on 7th October so I am feeling pretty stressed about it.

Uid 115

Started day with meeting with head teacher of local upper school where I am chair of governors. Looked at breakdown of recent exam results and considered profiles of those from each of three feeder middle schools to look for patterns. Agree sixth form (particularly lower sixth) to be a priority. Signed off lots of thank you letters to those teachers who appear to have added value - good residuals with students achieving over target. Discussed plans of one of our three middle schools to become an academy and value of moving towards federation.

Back home to finish packing for trip down to Bristol, to work with dentists undertaking 30 credit unit in Dental Education. Train into London first of all, to BMA House and a London Deanery network event reporting on ongoing projects designed to foster leadership skills in junior docs - emphasis on developing leadership in the workplace, through the workplace. Gave a 15 minute presentation called 'an educational perspective' where I used Sfard's paper on metaphors for learning to illustrate two perspectives on developing leadership. Later in afternoon facilitated a workshop where two trainees presented the work they were involved in and explored challenges with audience. Good chat with Director of Professional Education at the Deanery and one of the associate deans who is completing her MA in Clinical Education with the same supervisor as I have.

Got 7.30 train to Bristol and managed to do some marking on the train - in between numerous phone calls from kids who hate it when I go away with work and were keen to fill me in on their day. Pleased to get to hotel by 10 and share a night cap with two colleagues who will be teaching with me for the next two days. Quick look over my teaching materials before bed.

Uid 116

(Times indicate when I wrote the entry. Entries discuss what I did prior to the indicated time.)

8:10 AM:

Up at 6:30, usual morning routine. Checked email for any hot issues from students overnight. Campus email service was down, so I could read what was downloaded overnight, but any processing had to be deferred. Checked Twitter for any signs of student angst with assignments.

Left home for campus around 7:30. Spent first fifteen minutes chatting with colleagues and staff, then grabbed a cup of coffee and ate breakfast at my desk while reviewing the tasks and meetings for the day. My department chair is overseas with a student group this week, so our department meeting was cancelled. I don't have classroom responsibilities on Wednesday, so I have an open schedule compared to usual. I have an 8am meeting with a colleague to draft a report on our summer activities. We were funded this past summer by a small ($10,000) grant from our home institution to develop a video series and accompanying active learning and assessment materials on C programming. We'll use the series as part of our introduction to software development class and as review materials for students entering Operating Systems or Networking later in their careers.

9:10 AM: Met with colleague. Drafted report summarizing our work. Spent a substantial portion of the hour looking for the email from the Dean's office that requested the report. (Our Dean retired and was replaced by an interim this summer, so we're unsure who requested the report. We both just noted that it was due.)

9:40 AM: Went to Dean's office to discuss report submission. Finalized report with colleague. Draft appropriate cover letter and submitted the report. Spent 20 minutes reviewing my list of tasks to be completed today. I have to complete twenty six more items today to avoid missing deadlines for classes or reviewing obligations. Although my use of time is almost completely self-directed, outside of my scheduled classroom time, the vast majority of my work is extremely deadline driven. I have to complete course preparation in advance of course meetings or the course meeting time is lost forever. I have to grade homework in a timely manner or the students' learning suffers. Despite the number of tasks on my plate for today, I need to take care of some non-deadline items related to homeownership today as well. Realistically, the pile is larger than I can get through, but I'll make a best effort and sacrifice sleep to meet expectations.

10:16 AM: Spent a half hour setting up Subversion version control repositories on a server for the teams in my programming language paradigms course. This was time critical since I didn't get confirmation of team names from the students until last night, but they need their repositories to begin working on their team milestone that is due Friday night.

10:21 AM: Shared my solution to a homework assignment with students so they can compare their answers with mine. I can share solutions immediately after the homework due date, which is more quickly than I can turn around grading. I think this helps (the most diligent) students own their own learning.

10:26 AM: Responded to an email from an ITiCSE working group leader regarding a follow-up presentation of our work at a workshop this fall.

11:37 AM: Continued working on a journal paper review. Heading to lunch with colleagues.

12:40 PM: Had lunch with colleagues from my department and two or three others. After general conversation about our soccer game from last night, talk turned to the campus upgrade to Windows 7 and the automatic network backup system that is rendering most faculty members' computers so slow as to be unusable. Talk ranged over ways to circumvent the system, the political situation within the IT department, and the IT department's apparent lack of concern for academic computing and the school's teaching mission.

12:55 PM: Spent 15 minutes processing email. Worked to reschedule one regular meeting with a student team to accommodate the schedules of another team.

1:05 PM: Dug into a couple of past articles looking for related work that should be cited by the journal article I'm reviewing.

1:50 PM: Met with my colleague on the video production work to review our task list and identify next steps. Together sent three emails requesting assistance from various staff members (institutional assessment, IT, and digital media)

2:24 PM: Completed review of journal article. Proof-read my comments and uploaded them to the journal's website.

2:35 PM: Ten minute Twitter break. Lots of activity from students but none that requires a response.

2:41 PM: Talked to colleague about scheduling a soccer game tomorrow late afternoon.

2:54 PM: Started re-reading a journal paper that I assigned to my classes so I'm prepared to lead a discussion of it tomorrow. A student working on an independent study project stopped by with a question on a paper. After that I decided another caffeine infusion was required. On the way back from that, I ran into a colleague from Electrical and Computer Engineering and ended up doing a 5 minute unpaid consulting gig on Python.

3:36 PM: Finished reading the journal article in preparation for class.

4:01 PM: Reviewed code for in-class live coding tomorrow. Decided I wasn't pleased with a portion of the OO design, so attempted to refactor the code. Discovered that two methods that I thought were the same had a subtle difference that prevented my refactoring from working. So, I reverted that refactoring and used a different one that highlighted the subtle difference and eliminated duplication of code. (I often use live coding in class to demonstrate interesting issues. I find that reviewing and improving that code before class is a good way to get in the right mindset to teach it. I don't necessarily end up using that exact code in class. Part of the point of live coding is to get student input as we go to see where we end up.)

After sorting out the coding, I reviewed my in-class quiz and slides. I use test-first teaching [ArdisDugas04a], so the quiz is critical to reifying my learning outcomes for the class session into active learning for my students. The quiz still seemed fine, but I made some tweaks to the slides to head of points of confusion that seemed likely to come up based on what I know of my students this term. I aim for fairly sparse slides, so many of my tweaks were to the notes section of the slides that I see but they don't. I post PDFs of the slides proper that students can reference and annotated, but don't share the raw Keynote files.

4:09 PM: Finished the preceding journal entry. :-) Fighting a headache, so I think I'll take a Tylenol and a walk.

4:19 PM: Walked through the downstairs hallway looking at the new art installations for this fall. There are some nice pieces and a few paintings that belong on black velvet.

4:36 PM: Made phone calls to several home repair contractors to schedule estimator visits.

@inproceedings{ArdisDugas04a,

Author = {Ardis, Mark A. and Dugas, Cheryl A.},

Booktitle = {34th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference},

Organization = {IEEE},

Title = {Test-First Teaching: Extreme Programming Meets Instructional Design in Software Engineering Courses},

Year = {2004}}

4:46 PM: Caught up on email.

5:00 PM: A student flagged me down in the departmental lab to show me his progress on an iPad app he's working on and discuss some graphic design issues and the code to implement them. I headed for home.

5:30 PM: Ran a couple of errands on the way home. Decided I wanted a decent supper after several days of eating leftovers, cereal, or take-out.

Meals have been a challenge this academic year, since my wife moved 10 hours away for the year. She's been attempting to make career change over the last three years and decided she needs to upgrade her credentials. She can't do that in our small city, so we're a two household family for the next 9-18 months. Two body problems are always challenging, but perhaps especially so for two professionals with aversions to major urban area.

6:40 PM: Made and ate dinner and stowed the leftovers. Clean up will have to wait, since I have choir practice at 7.

8:45 PM: Enjoyed most of the 1.5 hours of choir practice. Singing is a great release for a couple of reasons. I have to concentrate at it, so I don't have time to worry about work. And I'm not very good at it, so it keeps me humble and helps me remember how to empathize with my students.

9:30 PM: Cleaned up the kitchen. Quick Twitter check, then settling into my recliner with a baseball game on and a (binary?) heap of reading on my iPad.

9:50 PM: Read some tech and news blogs and RSS feeds. Need to read new blog entries from my independent study students next in preparation for meeting with them tomorrow.

10:05 PM: Finished reading my students' blog posts. They did a great job this week. I've had good success with asking independent study students to write blogs on their work. They tend to be familiar with the medium, and it hells them both find a voice and feel like they aren't just going through the motions for a grade. I'm fortunate to have a few young alumni who will occasionally read and comment on students' blog posts.

10:30 PM: Video chatted with my wife. Long distance relationships are a lot easier than they were 20 years ago, but their still not great fun.

10:55 PM: Skimmed a couple of on-line reference manuals for Objective-C that were on the syllabus for a colleague's iOS software development course. I'm sitting in on the course this term. Sitting in on colleagues' course is a fairly common practice at my institution. I enjoy it because I get to learn new subject matter, remember what it's like to struggle to keep up with the workload in a class, and observe great teachers in action. I'm blessed to work with many outstanding educators.

11:10 PM: Reviewed my task list for the day. Had to put off some household tasks to tomorrow and Friday, but it's too late to make a hardware store run or vacuum furnace filters. Conveniently, the Cubs just completed a three game sweep of the Cardinals and it's time to get ready for bed. I'll do a quick email check, then read some news and opinion pieces on my iPad before lights out.

11:50 PM: Sleep, perchance to dream.

Uid 119

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

(1) I found it easiest to do this as a time log to capture the activities of my day.

(2) I then looked it over and and reflected on it at the end of this posting.

(3) I am not concerned about anonymity. I didn't put my name in this file, but I did see what I do and where I'm located because I think that some context may be needed to evaluate what I wrote. If I should not have done this, someone should please simply tell me so and I will not do so in the future.

THE DAY'S TIME LOG

an absolutely beautiful, crisp Wednesday in New England

context: Professor of Computer Science at a state research university outside of Boston

06:15 -- up without alarm

06:45 -- snap, crackle, and pop! -- breakfast of Rice Krispies & milk with lots of raisins, a cup of tea, & the Boston Globe, saving letters to the editor re an article about UMass Amherst and "brand name" schools for my cousin, who asked me lots of questions about colleges at a family party last Sunday because his daughter will be going to college next fall

07:10 -- checking e-mail from home -- 15 new messages since I last checked at 10:30 PM last night -- including responding to a posting on the SIGCSE listserv

07:35 -- in car for 3.8 mi drive to the university

07:45 -- at the university

07:50 -- at the pool -- 1 mile swim in 35:23.42 (1750 yards), which is very good for me (I swim a mile every morning :)

09:15 -- in my office, doing final preparations for class at 10:00, including printing copies of code to be reviewed in class today

09:35 -- checking e-mail -- 7 new messages since I last checked at 07:10 this morning

10:00 to 10:50 -- teaching class -- GUI Programming, a senior-level project course with 27 students enrolled

11:20 -- back from class and talking to students and another professor -- 14 new e-mails since I checked before class, that's 36 e-mails received so far today

11:30 -- installing Dragon NaturallySpeaking version 11 (upgrade from my previous version), which went very smoothly except for the confusing messages at the end of the process about the additional iPhone apps available, which I did finally manage to install on my iPod Touch

11:55 to 12:55 -- reviewing a Declaration of Intent to Graduate (DIG) form with a student and reviewing whether he can realistically expect to graduate at the end of next semester (no, he has too many courses to finish) and then working with him to fix a CSS error in his Assignment No. 1 submission for the GUI Programming course and instructing him on other missing components required for that assignment

13:05 -- 12 more e-mail messages have come in (sigh) -- now responding to e-mails from students and colleagues on a wide variety of issues while I eat my nonfat cherry vanilla yogurt for lunch

13:20 to 13:30 -- meeting with a student who dropped in re late registrations -- today is the last day to add a course, even with special permission

13:50 -- 2 more incoming e-mail messages

14:00 to 14:20 -- discussing advising issues with another professor

14:20 -- 3 more incoming e-mail messages

14:30 to 15:40 -- meeting with graduate student re work she's doing to assist me in my role as CS Undergraduate Coordinator and her own PhD work, including discussing papers she's preparing for publication

15:40 -- 6 more incoming e-mail messages

15:45 -- running over to Dunkin Donuts to buy 3 $3 debit cards for students who posted the correct answer to a question asked in class on the class discussion forum

16:00 -- 3 more incoming e-mail messages, which makes 62 so far today (sigh)

16:05 -- reading Mark Guzdial's Computing Education Blog

16:10 to 16:45 -- dealing with a late registration for a student wanting to do an independent study with another professor (in my role as CS Undergraduate Coordinator)

16:45 -- helping another professor with university paperwork for a research grant

17:00 -- 5 more incoming e-mail messages

17:15 -- headed home from the office

17:35 -- at home, dinner and relaxing with my wife

19:40 -- at my computer at home, 9 more incoming e-mail messages, that's 76 to this point today

20:00 -- writing to Mark Guzdial at Georgia Tech and Mitch Resnick at the MIT Media Lab about sabbatical plans for the Fall 2011 semester

20:35 -- 3 more incoming e-mail messages, making 79 that I've dealt with today

20:40 -- updating iPod Touch to rev 4.1

20:50 to 22:15 -- grading GUI Programming assignments

22:15 -- backing up my system and turning in so that I'm fresh for my swim in the morning! :)

REFLECTIONS ON MY DAY

This was a pretty typical day for me. It started out well, and it ended well. The fact that the weather was so beautiful and that I swam well contributed to my good mood. Class went very well today, as it has every day so far this semester. The students are really engaged, and that makes it a pleasure to teach the class. The funny thing is that I based virtually the entire class on questions that were asked by a student in my office yesterday, and then that student didn't show up to the class! (Sigh.)

The new version of Dragon NaturallySpeaking (version 11) seems to work somewhat better than the previous version (10). This is great for me, because I use this software quite a bit. As a matter of fact, I am using it to dictate this entire section of text. It is much easier than typing, even though I am a rather swift typist. It is a real godsend for grading. I like to write a detailed grade report every student in the class when they hand in an assignment, and that obviously takes a lot of time. Being able to dictate rather than type those reports saves me considerable time. Even though the speech recognition software makes mistakes, those mistakes are less frequent than when I type things out. One also has to get used to using speech recognition software. That is, you need to know when to pause for punctuation, and you need to try to speak in phrases rather than individual words.

the truly amazing thing is that Dragon now has an app for the iPhone. I don't have an iPhone, it works perfectly well on my iPod Touch. It is really rather incredible. You plug in the microphone, talk, and your words are converted to text. Again, there are errors, but surely dictating to an iPod or iPhone is faster than typing on those little keyboards.

One thing that set and me today is that the superintendent of schools in our town resigned last night. The man just happens to live directly across the street from me. I knew that he was under a lot of stress, but I didn't think that it was quite so bad that he would resign suddenly as he did. Obviously, I was wrong.

My wife sent me an e-mail in the middle of the day telling me to look at an online article that announced his resignation. I did, and I also looked at the comments that people started to post about him. They were absolutely vile. I was amazed. I understand that people in public positions are often pilloried, but this was beyond the pale. What's more, all of the posts were anonymous. This really annoyed me, and I made a post myself about the cowardice of making public attacks while hiding behind anonymity.

I signed my post with my real name. Incredulously, someone replied to my post, accusing me of not using my real name. I couldn't believe it. My name is very unique. If you Google me, you any one of the literally thousands of pages on my site, as each has my name in it in a meta-tag named "author". My wife didn't want me to post a reply to that posting, but I couldn't resist. I didn't use any of the foul language that other people used. I simply confirmed that yes, that was my real name.

The postings about the superintendent made me think that one has to do one's work without expecting thanks. For this reason, I am very thankful to be a professor. I have worked in industry, and working in academia is very different. One has a Dept. Chair and a Dean and a Provost and a Chancellor, of course, but this is not the same as having a boss in industry. No one tells me what to do on a day-to-day basis. 90+ percent of my work is self-motivated. I like that. I feel very fortunate to be where I am.

I want to take a moment to thank Sally and the other people who started this project. It is very interesting to me. And I think that you are very clever to ask people to do this just once a month. I obviously couldn't do it every day. It's just too time-consuming. But once a month is about right. I had fun keeping track of everything I did today, and then writing these reflections. I look forward to seeing the report you write on this project at some point in the future.

Uid 120

This is my first year as a full-time lecturer. I was employed by my current university last year, but was on research leave and remained in my previous research post elsewhere. I have been coming in to my office on campus since September 1st, and because I live over an hour away I have been coming in three days a week. I hope to continue this routine when I'm teaching and to work the other days from home. It is costing a fortune to get here and my parking permit isn't even through yet.

The students have not arrived yet, though they will be here in two weeks. I feel excited but apprehensive, especially as I have spent the summer desperately trying to finish my book and have not really prepared for my courses. I am particularly worried about one of those courses, and have emailed the course leader three times since June to ask for clarification. He has ignored every email I have sent him. He has, nonetheless, sent emails to the whole faculty. Once he did this less than an hour after I had tried to contact him. This makes me slightly irritated - how does he expect me to teach his course effectively with no guidance? I do not require hand-holding, but all I have to go on is the course pack the students receive, which contains only primary reading. I have no idea what the students are supposed to get out of it, what approach to take, or even how and when they are assessed. I cannot find any other information on the university intranet. I have been burying my head in the sand about it, too, while I finish my book. I desperately need it to be sent to the publishers before the students arrive, so that I can dedicate myself entirely to teaching and to my new admin responsibilities for the first semester.

On the plus side, I finished all the footnotes and bibliography of the manuscript of my book yesterday. It is 150000 words long - much longer than I had intended - and only half of it comes directly from my D.Phil thesis. It has taken six years to complete. I could have published the thesis more or less as it was, but my experiences in my research post gave me a much more ambitious approach and I wanted to try to expand it so that it was more interdisciplinary and had more exciting things to say. I hope all that work pays off. At the moment it feels like there are holes and problems everywhere, but I suppose everybody feels like that at this stage.

Anyway, one final run through and I will put it in the post tomorrow evening. I do not know if my new university will pay the postage, but as it's going to be around 600 pages and I'm sending two copies to the States, I hope so! Tomorrow night I am meeting an old colleague to discuss a book we're editing together, and to send the proposal for it to a publisher. The next day I am meeting all my old colleagues for a board meeting of the project we worked on together, and which is still ongoing. It will be nice to see them, especially if my manuscript is in the post. I also need to follow up on a couple of links I have with them - a research lead I picked up in the early summer but need to follow up with a colleague, and my new role as a special supervisor at my previous university. I am slightly worried that this additional teaching responsibility at a different university is going to be too much, but it pays well and I have huge travel costs now.

At the end of this week I hope to have my manuscript sent, the book proposal for the edited collection sent, and all my loose admin jobs tied up. I have some inductions to attend, a review to write and another essay to get published this term, as well as another edited book in press and a new job on the board of an academic journal. I'll be editing a special issue for them and have an essay I'm holding back to use for it - I hope it makes it in time for the REF, though that looks unlikely. I also recently won a small grant to organise a conference and am involved in organising a second conference with my old colleagues. It is good to write all these things down and remind myself exactly what I need to do - but it is imperative I put all these things on the backburner for a while so that I can spend the two weeks I have until full teaching begins immersing myself in the course texts and chasing up information on how the courses are delivered. I am ten years older than the majority of the students who will be arriving here - I don't know if that's still young enough that they will see me as a soft touch. So I want to be prepared.

Uid 121

Weds 15th September 2010

Today we had an internal conference aimed at Heads, Course Leaders, Admissions teams and senior staff involved in Tutoring - which includes me! The idea is annually, to review the overall position of the University with talks provided by the VC and other Governor body representatives about our finances, student numbers, aggregated NSS results, ICT and estates management issues. These updates affect us all as a body of staff academic and administrative and help us highlight which issues are opportinities and challenges for the year ahead and beyond. The day then breaks out into 3 streams of presentation themes, generally : our VLE, Admissions policies and student experience. Each provides a narrow view on a wider picture, and lively debates are generated between audience and presenter. I am pleased to find presenters approaching me after the session, thanking me for my contributions and leading questions and go away reflecting on the delivery of my teaching and admin roles.

Social breaks/lunch also provide a welcome opportunity to catch up with Dept. colleagues and meet new colleagues from other Faculties, further widening the dicussions to how the issues affect other areas of operation. At first I had worried that a day spent at an internal conference the week before Induction might be a waste of precious planning time, I find it was acutally quite the opposite.

Uid 123

8.30 - arrive at my office. Discuss proposed workshop arrangements for an external speaker (pedagogy) email with outcomes of discussion (30 minutes)

9.00 work on new module and student module guide plus discuss with colleague my written reflection on new departmental discussions that I have sent to the Dean (at his behest!)

10.00 appointment with learning technologist to discuss online activities for new module. Taking me ages to design this new module (year long, UG compulsory) - no time allocated for this in our workload plans.

11.00 back in office responding to emails. Just moved from 'Outlook' to 'GoogleMail' and learning new processes and filing procedures - nightmare just before the start of the semester!!

12.00-1.00 Departmental meeting

1.00-1.30 - lunch with colleagues - discussing Departmental Meeting and the

uncertainties facing us in our working lives.

1.30-3.00 - Meeting with my assistant and web marketing technologist

discussing update of School learning and teaching web pages.

3.00-6.30 - Materials preparation for new module starting this semester

interspersed with discussions with colleagues on restructuring initiatives.

Uid 125

So first week back for us in health - the rest of the university start next week and annoyingly everything on the website and all registation processes don't start until next week - not all courses are the same I sometimes think the powers that be forget that!

Today I have

8am went over to RB to pick up L4 student i.d cards - this I had to arrange yesterday as it is an 'exception to university calendar' grrrr and the nice man in registry did me a huge favour ad printed them all off ready to hand out

- good job I always chat to him first thing in a morning then really!!

8.15-8.30 emails and photocopying stuff I didn't get time to do yesterday for today saw several students who were lost (didn't look at the notice boards in front of them more likely and saw my door open) I am in the unfortunate/fortunate position of having my office right outside our practical rooms which means I can keep an eye on students but I am always available - or so it feels!!

9-11. L6 induction, ALT & PDP session really good to have them back told them all the changes with the new course (we re-approved over the summer) and they go out on placement next week so we won't see them for 5 weeks. Again answered lots of questions about placements, finance - talked about what we did over the summer and encouraged them to make appointments with personal tutors this week.

11.15 quick cuppa with office mate - shut the door and had a breather - the corridor is chaos with students from nursing, physio, OT & Sw we can't hear ourselves think!!

11.30 popped into introduce L6 course reps to new first years made sure everything was ok with the new starters answered questions on finance, bursary, id cards, where the pool is and met with one student who didn't turn up on Monday (?????) and gave hime a bit of an intro to this week & the course and the attendance requirements ;-)

12.30 Uniform fittings for L4 hung around and made sure rooms were open and students knew what the were doing (room is right next to my office so just kept an ear out really)

1pm lunch - nipped down to SU shop no time to go to canteen as it is in another building across a road and it is raining :-(

1.30 Back with L6 students theya re doing moving and handling update and I went into to do CPR (resus) and infection control we have bought some 'cuddly bugs'

and we had lots of fun playing with MRSA & syphyllis - great idea from our wonderful learning officer!!

3pm emails again - lots of reminders about id cards and where students can get them from - ha ha mine already have them!!

3.15 Work on x-stream module OPP for next week uploaded lots of interesting stuff - it is a new module so having to build it from scratch but want the students to be able to access it from Monday

4pm Home

Thought for the day: more haste less speed

Uid 126

Wednesday 15th September 2010

Alarm at 5.20 and up by the time prayer for the day begins. I have a full teaching day ahead and plenty of other things to think about. At 6.30ish I am out walking the dog in the soft light of a chilly autumnal morning. These walks are important to me for thinking things through or drafting writing. Today I am thinking about the work I am doing with teachers about writing and with two young teachers who are both ex-students and who want to develop literacy in their school.

I have an hour's drive into the university and that is more good thinking time -though often sharper and less rythmic than walking the dog thinking time. I come up with some ideas that I would like to put into practice.

As I walk from the car park I meet a colleague and we find that the same student is on both our minds. We talk about the student and come up with a course of action. Other colleagues join us. One colleague had been in one of my sessions yesterday and noticed that students were in a circle rather than at tables. I am experimenting with how the room is organised during workshops and seminars. certainly the circle is generating more talk and exchange of ideas. There will be drawbacks, I want to try different permutations. A book proposal of mine has been rejected. I discuss proposals and strategies with another colleague.

I answer e-mails, grant authorised absences, arrange some photocopying. from 10 - 12 I teach drama. Students always feel nervous about this and I usually take big risks in the first session. We go slowly at first and end up outside, flying from a cliff. It often makes me smile to think that this is a university, and serious graduate students are walking through imaginary mud. A student who said he had been dreading the session comes to tell me he loved it -his participation gave me no hint that he had been afraid. I find the session exhilerating.

Lunch with colleagues. We worrit about students who we feel might struggle.

Two more teaching sessions in the afternoon. two ours each, an introduction to teaching reading. This is a massive subject and there is never enough time. I am trying to get students to take responsibilty for learning about this for themselves. the second group has a much higher than usual proportion of people who are probing and informed about the nature of language and of reading. the session is challenging and exhilerating. I will have to think about how to proceed. there are, though, students for whom this is completely uncharted territory.

Students stay behind to say variously, that experience in school had not taught them as much as the session, that some think the theory is all very well but need to see children and to ask why have said I don't especially like reading schemes.

Up to my office; more talk with colleagues reviewing the day and things that students have said. The first two weeks of term have left a trail of havoc in my room which is piled with papers and books. I leave earlier than usual by about 5.45 and pop into the supermarket to fetch dog food and something quick for tea. I listen to the radio on the way home and up till 8pm. I am addicted to the History of the World in 100 objects.

I am writing this diary now and will stop to eat soon. I want to go through the notes for my lecture tomorrow and think about an extended drama session which I will plan with a colleague tomorrow. I am bothered that I have not been reading as much as usual recently.

Uid 127

Share Project

Wednesday 15th September, 2010

It’s been a slow start to today – I’ve not been feeling very well, so I took the opportunity to have a bit of a lie in this morning, but I got the very last car parking space today, so I’m going to have to get myself back into a more normal working routine. The fact that the car park is getting full is the first sign that the academic year is starting up again in the very near future – it’s been so quiet over the last few months.

The day started as it always does, trying to reduce the email load that has accumulated overnight. I do my best to keep my inbox below 50 all the time, and it does seem to take up a substantial proportion of my time. I know colleagues complain about email communication rather than face-to-face or telephone, but I like the flexibility of being able to answer when I have space to think, rather than having to think on my feet.

Right now, I’m spending my time on two main projects – organising a full day event for Welcome Week and finishing off my PGCE. The Welcome Week event is taking a lot of organisational time, even though I’ve run it for years, because it involves getting students signed up to help, dealing with outside organisations for games and coaches, finding rooms and checking availability of spaces, writing scripts and help guides, printing endless copies of paperwork and so on. I know it’s worth doing, because the first year students always come back with wonderful feedback saying how much it helps them settle in, find new friends, and even get started on team working and confidence building, but it is a lot of work for 6 hours; probably more than I would spend on any other sort of teaching session throughout the year. Now I need to start printing off the scripts, and letting people know what role they are playing on the day (it’s a murder mystery!).

Mid-afternoon and I’ve just got back from a talk by the VC about how the University is going to handle the funding cuts over the next few years. It was a mostly upbeat talk, which was good, but the future does seem a little scary. I don’t do much research at all right now, because my teaching load is so high (around 400 hours contact time a year), and I have other commitments in relation to recruitment and programme leadership and so on, but it looks like something will have to change, because I can see that without the research angle, my future academic career is looking a little uncertain. I do really enjoy research, and I would very much like to get back into it, but I just don’t see how I can do so without completely changing my working life. I barely get an hour in a straight line for lunch most days, so I really don’t see how I can get long enough to really focus on grant applications. When my colleagues have said the same thing in the past, there’s been a response very much along the lines of ‘you need better time management’ or ‘well I can manage it, why can’t you?’ I do find this upsetting, because I really don’t believe that senior management understand what we do on a daily basis (which is, I guess, one of the reasons why you’re running this project!!). Although I know I have a lot of countable activities against my name, it’s the small things, like answering emails from tutees, or putting documents on the VLE, or sending documents to reprographics that take up all your time without realising it.

The ‘official’ working day is rapidly coming to a close, and I haven’t actually done anything today that was on my ‘to do’ list. I’ve spend a significant amount of time having impromptu meetings in the corridors with colleagues about timetabling and course handbooks, and answering unexpected emails from students about the forthcoming academic year. I’m starting to panic a bit now, because although I know I’ve got quite a few evenings free ahead of me, time is starting to run out on some of the big jobs I have to do.

I ended up putting an extra couple of hours in tonight, sending emails out and writing up some more of the murder mystery activity. I was hoping to get some PGCE related work done, but I’m going to bed a little earlier than normal, because I’m still feeling a little ill. Let’s see if I can progress the list a bit more effectively tomorrow…

Uid 128

08.00-08.40 Discussion with AK (over coffee) re clinical skills assessment (Snapshot) taking place today and one student who is raising particular concerns

08.40-08.55 - reviewing presentatation for teaching this morning

08.55-09.00 - waiting for presentation to load

09.00-10.00 - teaching students x 42 (week 1 DipHE Nursing (Graduate entry) - Introduction to Styudent Support

10.00-10.30 - wrote notes to accompany presentation to be given by colleague SF on my behalf (APPL (= Personal Tutor) Refresher Day and e-mail said presentation / notes to SF

10.30-11.05 - moderation of discussion board - year 3 sem 1 child branch students online role play stage 1.

11.05-11.35 - with distressed 3rd year student MK - doing Snapshot at 11.40. Suffers with anxiety symptoms linked to experiences in previous semester of programme and linked to this assessment

11.35-12.00 - waiting for MK to complete assessment as support for them

12.110-12.20 - student support with 4 students just completed Snapshot

12.20-13.40 - Academic Skills Centre: Day 3 - new initiative. Only 1 student attended for help with grammar/punctuation, referencing. Rest of time reading most recent edition of professional journal

13.40-13.50 - lunch

13.50-14.30 - with distressed 3rd year student BS - just sbmitted final attempt of year 2 sem 1 assignment. Worried about failing and then being discontinued from course. Other family issues also came to light.

14.30-15.00 - giving details of support services to students from this morning's session - dyslexia support and student funding contact details

15.00-15.15 - discussed content of forthcoming session for branch induction programme with AK (discussion to continue tomorrow)

15.15 -16.45 - admin = booking rooms for tutor groups; preparation for new cohort starting 20th Sept; adding online material to Blackboard

Uid 129

Wednesday 15th September.

It's difficult to write very much about this day as I was really very ill. I'm 0.5 proportional lecturer, working an hour and a half's train journey from the home my family and I have just moved to, following the location change of my husband due to the merger of the educational institution for which he works with another (larger) one. Most of the holidays, which I had hoped to use to get professionally organised, I have spent getting the family organised with various schools and out of school activities. I worked yestrerday - meetings, mostly about schemes of work - I really love this planning aspect of the job, especially when it's such a social activity. My line manager, the head of department, is a real role model for me and makes all meetings non-confrontational and supportive (though sometimes they do run over time - but I'd rather have that and friendly than the other way round). I am waiting to see whether the long commute is a tiring pain or a useful admin and work/home buffer time. When I get home (this is on the Tuesday) I am very tired and my husband's boss is staying with us as he is only staying on, under duress, until December. (He should have finished in September but the institution begged him to stay the extra time - they hadn't organised even beginning to find a replacement for him). I'm tired and I realise I have a bad cold coming on - I've just nursed my husband through the worst of it...

(ummm...so actually that's all back story and Tuesday...)

So I woke up on the Wednesday morning feeling very poorly indeed. My husband gets the children ready for school and goes to work. I am scheduled to work on Tuesdays and Thursdays this year and have good intentions about doing my own creative work on the other days of the week, but the first thing I do is turn on the computer and answer emails from work. It's ok but but I can tell that I am grumpy and not necessarily firing on all cylinders. My boss and I have had a joint paper accepted for a conference in Madrid but our Research Committee has put a freeze on all funding pending the expected "belt-tightening" government announcements which are imminent. I need to quickly do some comparative bean-counting: what would a virtual presentation cost versus one of us going, versus both of us going. I send the counted beans to all relevant parties. We will leave it to the committee to decide whether the excess cost is worth the networking opportunities.

But by the afternoon I have to admit defeat and lie down. I can't breathe and am coughing badly; and I'm aware I can't think straight. The children come home from school - what a blessing we are close enough for them to walk to and from every day - and I take my daughter to her ballet lesson but I'm aware on the way home that I shouldn't really be driving. When I get home I take to my bed, and that is the end of Wednesday for me.

Uid 131

Wednesday 15th September was unusual for me, in that I was leading a student trip to Shanghai. I had been there a week and a half, with 10 students who were undertaking a summer school course there. We were staying all together in a hall of residence.

Wednesday was a day outside the classroom. In the morning, we visited a local law firm and talked to some local lawyers. In the afternoon, we visited a local district court and had a guided tour from a judge.

In some ways, the day was one of the least productive we had had. The trips were rather superficial. However, I was, as I had been throughout the trip, pleasantly surprised by the student engagement. Far from sitting quietly when time for questions was offered, everyone engaged, asked intelligent questions and listened to the answers. Some, of course, were more "professional" than others, but all were interested and all learned a lot.

One of the things the whole summer school has impressed on me is the nature of the relationship between learning and more "vocational" activities. This school was presented to students as an opportunity to develop employability skills and they applied on that basis. There are those who think that a Russell Group law school should not think so vocationally. But it was so noticeable that the students learned, developed, were changed in themselves through this activity - probably more so than in the majority of classroom based activities. I wonder how much this had to do with the fact that the school was not assessed. They were motivated to be there, and not driven by marks, and as a result they had a genuine learning experience - and one which will also contribute to their professional development. It was such a pleasure to be part of students having that experience, and I only wish that we could take the pressure off academic study enough to enable it to be more common.

Uid 132

First meeting at 9 of the Faculty's management committee in which we talked through the problems facing the faculty. We have an extra £200k p.a. for the next four years to apply to teaching. Our VC is determined to drive down the SSR. He is the first decent VC we have had in 15 years. He has vision and determination to drive it through. He is not in thrall to his administrators and is keenly aware that the purpose of a university is to do research, from first year undergraduate through to senior faculty member. It is a relief after so many years of VCs who wanted to reorganise/build buildings/create a Med School/sail boats. Meeting finished at 10.30. Next meeting with Faculty Admissions Manager at 10.30 to talk through admissions issues. 11am meeting with colleague concerning the publication of a book in a series I have been editing. The executive editor and author have rather different views about how the text has turned out and I have to balance their competing views. Finally, at 12, I sit down to read documents submitted by an MPhil student who is applying for upgrade to PhD. Sandwich at desk, and most of the afternoon spent reading and commenting on the text. I leave the office at 3, a quick cycle home to meet my 12 year old. At 4 he goes to a party and I carry on reading the upgrade documents. At 6, I take my son to athletics and while he is doing that, I spend that time reading the upgrade documents. Home by 8.30 and wind down to bed.

Uid 133

7.15am - Started reading work-related emails. I like to address work issues early when working from home. No teaching this week but preparing for induction next week. 7.45 - Have just reviewed three dissertations and moderated a number of exam scripts and assignments for a masters pathway programme. Meeting tomorrow to discuss student progression. At the moment I am thinking about a number of new modules that I have been given due to a lecturer moving on to another University. This will take up a lot of time for the next week or so. Bit of a challenge but keps me on my toes!

9.00 Am also under pressure to get a number of journal papers submitted before teaching starts and want to get this done by the end of September. The REF seems more competitive than the RAE and my University has embarked on a strategy to improve its ranking for the REF. Am collaborating with members of my research group to develop joint ideas.

9.15 - requested details for new cohort of Masters students starting next week. Also requested name plates so that thge lecturing team know who is who from week one

9.50am - Just completed an electronic moderation form and returned it (by email) to the programme adminstrator for a programme board tomorrow

2.00pm - responded to various emails regarding induction programme next week and to queries relating to dissertation wordcount

4.30pm - working on paper - probably 3 days work left before online submission to scholarone!

Uid 134

On annual leave, and no thought whatsoever given to work! Not even to send a postcard!

Uid 138

9am: my first School of Computing Science Management Meeting, in my role as academic staff representative. This was a strategy meeting to discuss the directive from ‘the management’ that we make more money from PGT programmes. Not ‘provide more interesting or useful or relevant programmes’, but simply make more money from them. This is a good discussion for me to be part of, as having been director of PGT programmes in the school for several years, I can make a strong contribution (although it irks me that one of the well-established-end-of-career professors gets the role of ‘PGT Strategy’ when I know that my having such a role would help my career a great deal.) I feel uncomfortable that that emphasis (in the university management, not within the school) is on getting money from international students, rather than giving them a good, well-managed and well-taught qualification. Not happy with the ethics.

11.15: a meeting with two wonderfully enthusiastic lecturers in the Management department who would like to use a peer-assessment system that a colleague and I are wanting to roll out to as many departments as possible in the university this year. It has been used successfully at a NZ university for many years, but we are finding it hard to find people to use it here in the UK – here academics are more concerned about ‘whether it will fit within the regulations’, ‘whether students can be trusted’, ‘whether students will like it’, ‘will their HoD approve’, and no-one seems keen to use it for summative rather than formative assessment (despite all our research that shows a very high correlation between peer- and tutor- awarded marks). This university is so conservative – people are so scared to branch out to do something different without having higher approval. These management lecturers will hopefully give the system a good try-out here.

And inbetween: preparing lectures for start of semester, preparing materials for a meeting of all level 1 teaching staff tomorrow (in my role as head of level 1), and working out how to use an system for allocating first year students to lab sessions next week. I know someone has to do it, and it seems arrogant to say that it is beneath me, but an administrator would be able to do this lab allocation task much more effectively than I. Just like I couldn’t believe that I had to send costings for the level 1 tutors to the head of Teaching Committee: I have already sent the number of hours of lab and tutorial contact required to an administrator who will be able to work out the overall costings much more easily than I can. It’s not that I don’t like administration, but I prefer interesting administration that at least uses some of my skills – not something that I have to do because the university has starved our department of administrative staff (while, of course, increasing the amount of administration done ‘at the centre’).

Lots of common-room and corridor discussion about the drive for more PGT money, and how much PGT provision currently costs us (we make a loss on it at the moment). Lots of ideas, opinions, concerns. It strikes me how passionate the members of our department are, and how committed they are to ‘quality’.

At the end of the day: summarising the CSMC meeting for all other academic members of staff – trying to keep it light and cheerful, while representing all the information and discussion correctly. Very hard not to include my own personal opinions – and I have many!

In all, a rather bitty day; don’t feel that I have done a great deal of worth. Thank god for the two management lecturers I met today, I say – a saving grace.

Tonight I will go home and work on my Open University PGDip in Management. I am doing this in the hopes that it might help me towards a management or leadership position in the university in the long term.

Uid 139

15 Sept 2010

6.50 Sorted out whether to use train or cycle to work – I had to log in to see what trains were doing tomorrow as I’m due to be at Phonoco at 9.15. Train leaves Waterloo at 8.39, which means it’s better to go all the way by train tomorrow and not pick up stuff in the morning. So I need to take it home tonight, and hence have to go in by train today so I can carry it.

Caught 7.38 train in which isn’t so crowded. Read bits of an article from research journal on Canadian wartime transport on the train…

After getting into work sorted out emails – an outstanding course application was sorted, message to get info to new final year students sent out and brief feedback given on a proposal for attendance monitoring.

Then started to finalise my marks for yesterday’s Technical Conference presentations and invent a marking system for them by updating last year’s one.

9.00 Interrupted by brief discussions on the attendance monitoring proposal and by needing to sort out documents to take to Phonoco tomorrow. They don’t appear to be where they should be. Went to Faculty office to look in the unit box. They aren’t there either. So they may be on Stella’s laptop, which means he’ll have to send them direct to Roger at Phonoco tomorrow morning. But I do have the models to take.

9.15 Detour to post room. Bumped into the Faculty manager and asked about being able to pay people for one-off talks to students. This shouldn’t be a problem, but we’ll need to have a specific discussion on it and work out exactly what we need to have in terms of requests and contracts.

Letter from re-enrolment office about my PhD registration which means the fee waiver form and the re-enrolment form have been separated. The research office told me yesterday I’d done the wrong waiver form and they’ll post the right one on. It’ll get sorted after it arrives.

9.30 Discussion over tea room about writing crossword puzzles, general knowledge quizzes and retention of trivial data. Printed out a copy of an Oily Rag crossword for Anna.

9.55 Need to get over to Technopark for Appeals meeting…

10.00 Appeals meeting representing the Faculty

12.55 End of appeals meeting.

Bumped into a friend from church on the way back to the office: he’s in a management team looking after the boilers – jokingly he suggested we could design new boilers for him…

12.58 Back in the office and finish putting in marks received for Technical Conference unit. Some marks missing from one member of staff will need chasing up…

13.05 Lunch – or maybe not as I have to get all the records printed off for the Student Retention board meeting taking place at 1.30. Stuff printed out and sort-of read. Lunch not really finished. Shouldn’t have only a half hour gap between meetings…

13.30 Student retention board meeting…

14.15 Meeting shorter than normal. Useful info provided and virtually no extra work to be done.

14.20 Lunch can be finished…

14.30 Interrupted by someone who’s transferring course from Architecture to Product Design and no-one’s done the paperwork. Take him round people who all say he should be doing the transfer differently. Eventually send him to Finance with what I think is the right form and ask him to come back if it doesn’t work.

15.15 Back in the office.

15.20 He’s back. Finance office is shut until 27th. Walk him over to find someone else who can help. Not feeling very successful with this one.

15.45 Back in the office. Cuppa time.

16.00 MSc Student arrives for a booked tutorial.

16.20 Sorting out emails. Timing for next week’s induction programme: allocation of marks for Technical Conference unit: information on the enrolling student.

16.45 MSc student returns hoping the virus has been removed from his memory stick. It hasn’t been. Tutorial continues to 17.15.

17.15 Sorting out further Technical Conference marks as an email has some more in it.

17.30 Home!

18.30 Get home and remember that I need to email Phonoco and Stella about last year’s joint project.

18.45 That’s about it for work today…

Uid 141

7:15 Got up and got on with getting myself and my daughter out of the house

8:30 Left for daughter's school. In the car this morning as daughter was going on a trip so needed car seat.

8:55 Back at home. Chat with the missus.

9:05 Off to work on my bike.

9:20-9:30 Getting into work, chatting to colleagues to start the day.

9:30-9:40 Waiting for computer to boot up so read a draft MSc thesis that I am part way through.

9:40 - 10:30 email. First quarter of hour was just trashing stuff but then got into two more important ones. One to a research colleague in a different uni and one to a potential PhD student.

10:30-10:45 Short break. Played a game online!

10:45-11:30 Worked on preparing a practical for the coming term. It's a brand new module so working from scratch.

11:30 Went to see people to sort out admin around a PhD student I have starting this October. Saw two admin people who look after these things.

12:05-12:30 Went back to working on the practical.

12:30 Went over to other campus for lunch.

12:40-1:15 Ate lunch and continued with draft MSc thesis

1:15 Went to library to return a book then on to next meeting

1:30-1:55 Met with a PhD student to discuss a report she's resubmitted and which is now fine but I still have some comments on.

1:55 - 2:05 Met another PhD student, not mine but I have worked with her, who I know and just chatted about things.

2:15 Back in the office sorting out student related problems on the email and in person with colleagues.

2:30-2:45 Bit of a break but still fiddling with email.

2:45-4:15 Worked on the practical again. Finished it and started another.

4:15-4:30 Cycled home.

4:30 - 5:00 Back to daughters school to collect car seat!

5:00 - 5:20 Bit of telly with daughter.

5:20 - 6:15 We all went out to walk the dog.

6:15- 8:00 Daughter's bed time routine

8:00-9:20 My own supper with the missus and then we watched some telly.

9:20-10:30 Back catching up with work emails. Fiddly ones or less important ones. Sitting chatting to the missus as I do so who is also watching telly at the same time.

10:30 Started heading for bed.

Uid 146

As I was at a conference in Nottingham yesterday on 'Student Writing in Transition' I came to work today knowing I would have lots of emails to deal with - I did!

Two other members of the team I work with were due back this week (they work 6 hours a week each term time only) and are moving into my office. I share this office ( in the library) with an IT Learning Resources technician and the desk my colleagues will be using is also used by by other members of the IT Learning Resources team when they come down from our other campus. The desk is also used by a member of Computer Services Training and today that person is in as well. Truly a 'hot' desk!

We have a PC and a space outside the office where we see students, but this PC is currently being reimaged and is not available at the moment. It looks as if I shall have to let my colleague use my PC until he finishes today at 1pm. He will need to check e mails etc and get up to speed with changes over the summer.

Having completed a handover/update (we have a new line manager this year and a new Student Information System which we will use for student enquiries, appointments and actions taken so quite a lot to hand over) my colleague does not need to use my computer and has decided to change one of his working days to avoid clashing on Wednesdays with our Computer Services training person.

I've been to the post room to see if the student leaflets we use in our induction talks are there as only half of the order has arrived. I've booked a student appointment for next week, given a library colleague a small laminated poster to add to the Library Welcome board. I've updated the staff information page on our VLE and need to update our noticeboard (in another building)when I find the key! I've also put in an help desk request to our IT section to map some drives on two of our PCs. All of our PCs have been reimaged over the summer and some of the drives are missing.

I spent some time on the phone discussing with my counterpoint at our other campus what we need to discuss at our meeting with our new boss tomorrow. I then explored some of the links and resources I picked up at the conference yesterday - I want to include some of them in our VLE. This brought my day to an end at 5.30pm.

Uid 148

Wednesday 15th September, 2010

Interesting that this day should be quite an unusual one, to start the ball rolling.

I’m an ‘academic related’ member of staff and currently work part-time due to my carer commitments. It’s also worth mentioning that I divide my time between London and the county town where my University is based, and the word ‘home’ can relate to either place. In theory, I was off work this week, taking time out to counterbalance an intensive three days over a long weekend recently (of which more anon). In practice, Wednesday turned into a working day, though quite a relaxed one.

8.55am

I have only recently discovered the real effectiveness of telephone conference calls – very useful when working with a planning group scattered across the UK. If anyone’s interested, we’re using the BTMeetMe service though I haven’t yet explored all its possibilities. I was definitely in ‘time off’ mode and chaired the latest conference call from home. By 8.55am I was sitting down ready to work with coffee and notebook to hand, still in my dressing-gown, with the sun shining in through the trees. This meeting involved two other colleagues: Anna ringing in from Devon, and Benedicta from Scotland. We needed to de-brief about the three days referred to above.

I’m a National Teaching Fellow, and the three days were in many ways the culmination of my (individual strand) project. We had two guest lecturers – a guest speaker from the United States to lead a one-day workshop (with 74 participants booked), and Benedicta teaching for the subsequent two days, with 22 people who attended the workshop and stayed on for an intensive weekend of facilitator training in specific techniques relating to meditation, reflection, learning… many possibilities and the group was extremely diverse. I initiated and led this project and hosted it at my University – and lived on campus for the three days, along with Anna and Benedicta. I also teach in this field, but for this three days my role was that of host, facilitator, trouble-shooter and gopher. This was the first time that this kind of facilitator training has taken place in the UK. In the telephone conference, we were reflecting on all aspects of both events – the content, the feedback, our own experiences and what might be learnt for next time. I will be reporting back to the full planning group, but this particular meeting was an opportunity for reflection amongst the three of us who had been on campus for the full three days to support and to participate in the events. On a personal level, it was also an opportunity to reflect on my own role in the future – partly based on my own observations of the process of teaching over the three days. I’m interested in the possibility of being accepted as a potential teacher for the preliminary workshops which form a pre-requisite for the facilitator training. I hope that we may eventually create a panel of people who can be drawn on for this very specialist, and fascinating, work – but that’s in the longer term. This is not simply a matter of offering – there’s only one person in the UK currently leading these events and she has been trained by our colleagues in the USA. We are at the very early stages of developing this line of work.

More about the telephone conference - I love talking with these colleagues –deeply thoughtful and highly experienced people who have been hugely encouraging, and are also prepared to look at difficult issues and help find ways forward. From a teaching perspective, timing of events during the workshop could have been better planned but apart from this, there was a very high level of satisfaction recorded by participants, in relation to both workshop and the facilitator training. Other difficulties lay with the practicalities of accommodation and catering – there were some problems here, and I’ll need to take some aspects of this forward with the relevant departments on campus. We talked about the very high response rate for the evaluation forms – about 90%. I will probably not carry out a full-scale detailed analysis of the evaluation forms, but will be homing in on highlights and lowlights. Easy to dwell on what went wrong… but people were clearly very happy indeed in most cases, and some found the teaching inspirational. We have known since June that we would plan another workshop and facilitator training weekend, as our own two events were fully booked over a month in advance. (Of those booked, we had 100% attendance for the weekend, and 96% for the workshop – great!) It was good to spend a bit of time on plans for next time – I will be on the planning group, but the venue will be in a different region, to widen the scope for people in different parts of the UK to participate.

11.30am

I’m based in a University service that focuses on educational, curriculum and learning development. I had been dithering about whether or not to go to a full Unit team meeting the same day, at lunchtime. We have these about once a term and it’s a good opportunity to catch up with people and get a sense of what the different teams within our Unit are up to, as well as the wider priorities for the term or year ahead. I was under no commitment to go in to the office at all, but after the successful telephone conference I felt buoyed up and decided it would be enjoyable – so (threw some clothes on! and) headed up to campus. Nearly everyone was there. It was interesting to hear the team managers talking about achievements last term and in some cases, last academic year. And sobering to have an update on cuts and stringency measures.

One of these colleagues is managing a team that I used to lead – in student learning support. I set this service up as a pilot project in the early 1990s, and handed over to my successor in early 2007 – I still find it quite moving to hear about new developments and achievements. Amongst other things, I was delighted to hear that at last – after several attempts across the years - a maths support service has been established and is really taking off, in addition to the existing maths and statistics project support which serves a rather different audience.

This survey has asked us to reflect on how we feel about the work, the day, our teaching and other experiences – it’s going to be interesting to see what other people prioritise in this regard. For me, in the context of a staff meeting, I find it especially rewarding to hear about people’s personal and professional development – ways in which people are being recognised for their achievements, or moving towards a real fulfilment of potential. This was certainly the case this Wednesday. This is no doubt a particularly strong interest because of my guidance background – but it feels important to mention here, as this passion for education and learning as a means to explore and fulfil human potential is one of the driving forces in my life and work, and has certainly sustained me in my career within HE.

On a lighter note, I’ve been part of the Unit’s ‘Green Impact’ team (a project taking place across a number of universities in the UK). We found ourselves to be a competitive bunch, keen to get the boxes ticked (lots of online documentation to complete) and do whatever we could to maximise our scores – all with a serious purpose, but this was again a team that was fun to work with as we had volunteered from across the different teams in the Unit and enjoyed playing with ideas. We announced this Wednesday that we had secured the silver award for our Unit and were amongst four teams being considered for gold. Watch this space! This project has been especially interesting as it has been university-wide and has involved new collaborations – Estates, Hospitality, Schools – with a real sense of increased openness to change and to different possibilities. I hope – and think – that it has given an increased sense of ownership and it has felt very cheering, somehow, to be involved.

2.30pm

Next stop was a brief discussion with a colleague about a possible career move. That was the end of the day’s work for me. Next stop was the Red Cross shop – with a car-load of stuff we had cleared out from home – and the local farmers’ market, so I was returning with supper and good local plums and apples. Then home to London for a quiet evening with my partner. Unusually, today was a completely computer-free day and I’m glad of the time away from emails and other distractions. (Consequently I didn’t get to record this survey entry on Wednesday, but am writing this over the weekend).

Uid 149

Today has been a busy day, and there is more to do before I collapse into bed.

I was up early in the hope of making some headway on a book on which I’m currently working concerned with individualism and the notion of personal responsibility in social policy discourse. There have been some exciting developments in this field since the election of the new government, and it appears that the process of ‘responsibilization’, as we social scientists rather inelegantly call it, is proceeding apace, with the new administration busily issuing policy documents to the effect that people will have to take responsibility for themselves. I suppose they will, as the state divests itself of its erstwhile responsibilities for health and welfare. Interesting times. Could be a timely book if I can get it finished this autumn! It’s a big if, as you will see below . . .

This morning I have attended induction events for Masters degree students starting this autumn on a variety of courses. Advanced professional practice for nurses, Health Studies, MRes programmes. They’re all timetables at the same time and I have to pop into each of them and introduce myself, so there’s a lot of diving in and out of classrooms. They seem like a nice bunch Lots of people smiled at my jokes and it looked like they’ll be fun to teach. We have nurses, social workers, NHS managers, teachers and occupational therapists as well as people who work for HIV/AIDS charities and people who work with battered women. So there is a god deal of opportunity for me to learn about life out in practice, because as my undergraduate students tell me, I need to get out more.

We have an undergraduate exam board tomorrow (16th of September). This is what used to be called the resit board, but now as a significant proportion of our students need to retrieve modules over the summer and several have applied for deferrals, there are quite a number to consider. Fortunately the marking and moderation is done, and there’s just time to glance over the comments from the external examiner. Phew – no disagreements with my marking, thank goodness. The path towards completion of our assessment duties is punctuated however by an email from a colleague concerned with a student who has failed a number of assessments but could possibly get a non-honours degree if she does the coursework for my final year undergraduate module. The deadlines are all long gone, so I’m doubtful whether the university will allow us to do this. But it could count as a ‘reasonable adjustment’ in respect of the student’s disabilities. More discussions will no doubt follow tomorrow . . .

I have a new module to teach, concerned with research in health care, to be delivered to the Master’s students this autumn term. There’s a lot of new reading to do and materials to collate. I spent several hours this afternoon collecting some papers from online databases and making some orders to Amazon. Fortunately, several of the books I need are available secondhand, so there is little more to pay than the postage. Like many of those working in the education sector, I’m subsidising my work with my wages. I also received emails within an hour or two to the effect that the books have been posted, so I’ll be able to get busy with some more preparation soon.

Life is complicated this afternoon by the arrival of some good news. Some colleagues and I applied for a small grant several weeks ago to enable us to study infection control in the ambulance service. After my spell with Amazon, Science Direct and Swetswise (online databases of articles) I checked my work email to spot (among the myriad others) a message from a colleague who applied for the same call to say that he hadn’t got anything and asking whether I had. Further down the inbox, sure enough I discovered a message for the funders. I read despondently through the first couple of paragraphs about the large number of applications they’d received and the high quality of the submissions – it read like a rejection letter. Further down, a paragraph began ‘I am pleased to tell you . . .’ so we’ve got some money after all. No conditions or outstanding queries either so they’re not just using this initial good news as an opportunity to negotiate us downwards. I wrote a consolatory email to my colleague (‘As Winston Churchill used to say, KBO [keep buggering on] I’m sure you’ll hit paydirt sooner or later’ but I realise this sounds rather patronising as he is my superior). I wonder if this will sour the relationship between us. I rush off a message to my co investigators on the newly-funded project requesting an urgent meeting to discuss our plan of action. I hope they respond soon. This is considerably more scary than getting a rejection letter. We’ll actually have to do the project now.

This evening I have answered emails from PhD students and some collaborators at Bangor University. One PhD student needs her conference poster presentation looked at, and she’s written to me twice in the last 24 hours so I do hers first and make some suggestions – put some actual data in, because everybody loves data, rather than the somewhat general paraphrases it presently includes. Another couple have sent me forms to look at after they’ve filled them in. I seem to be the university’s expert on filling forms in. It often doesn’t really matter what you say, provided the box is full. These are for a process called ‘annual review’ where students have to make some report on their progress. A fourth postgraduate has sent me some written work to read through before I meet her on Friday. Her thesis is about midwives and she’s intending to submit shortly after Christmas so it’s starting to look rather pleasing. Naturally, in this REF inflected era, I have an eye towards outputs, environment and impact, so I’m thinking about how her several thematic chapters might turn into standalone articles in their own right. And whether we stand a chance with ‘Social Science and Medicine’.

I’m conscious of the leaden pall of work yet undone. I had hoped to begin refereeing a couple of papers this evening – I seem to get a lot of requests to do this sort of thing, even from journals which steadfastly refuse to print anything I send them. But it’s all part of the academic community I suppose, and I try to make useful suggestions to strengthen them. Doesn’t look like I’ll get a chance this evening, so that looks like another little job for the weekend. Under cover of anonymity, referees often permit themselves the licence to be aggressive (or they do where my work is concerned, at any rate), but I try and referee positively and write about things to do to strengthen the paper rather than delight in telling the authors it’s an abject failure. It’s 10.25 and I have another couple of hours work ahead of me on the PhD students’ stuff before I creep into bed beside my slumbering partner.

Uid 151

My day begins as any other working day with an hours drive from my home city to my place of work. This allows me time to prepare my thoughts ready for the day ahead. I work across two programmes in the Univeristy one being a taught undergraduate programme - a foundation degree, the other a post graduate professional status for early years professionals. The latter programme I work as programme leader and yesterday evening was the welcome brief to all candidates, local authority reps, and setting managers who support the candidates in practice. At the end of the event I had to interview two prespective candidates and finished my work in the University at 9pm. Today I began by reflecting, planning and actioning work generated by the evenings event.

My senior administrator and myself began the day with a debrief of the evenings events and work that had been generated by the event. We have a new member of staff who has joined the team so time is taken supporting them in developing knowledge and understanding of the programme.

Feedback and action plans based on the previous evenings interviews need typing up and that alongside meetings takes me through to lunch.

A working lunch is eaten whilst discussing the research tutor groups that need establishing and protocols discussed. This falls into the remit of my other role that of lecturer on the foundation degree. As someone relatively new to the world of academia and someone still establishing practice I welcome the expertise of a colleague who has delivered this module on previous occassions.

Septembers are notoriously manic times and this is never more so this year. We have new students new staff and trying to meet the needs of all is a challenge all be it an exciting one.

I leave my normal work setting to head out to a collaborative site where a group of outreach students are going to be starting their first module this year. They were January start students and have completed one semester of level 4 modules. I will be teaching equality and diversity once they have undertaken a short induction return to study. These students will be my personal tutor group and although they are not based in my normal place of work are based within my home city. I studied as a distance student and know the advantages and disadvantages of studying in this way. My job is to be the link to main site and studies dealing with issues that arise from not being on site and working full time.

The session consists of revisiting referencing and for myself taking some time out of the normal teachng routine to get to know the students.

The latter part of my session is introducing the module and clarifying assessment and learning outcome requirements. The students left far more content than when i had first arrived but i realised to prepare them for study and the year ahead had taken me almost the full sessoin of 3 hours.

My drive home allowed me to reflect on my day organise my thoughts and plan what I needed to do to address the issues that had arisen from my evening session.

Clearly some changes needed to be made to some aspects of work already planned which in effect has created more work for me and taken me over the accepted working schedule. I am happy for this to happen as the students would have found it difficult to study if the changes had not taken place.

September always seems to be over loaded with admin type tasks that take time and stop you from doing the scholarly activity I always wish I had time for. I know this is the last Wednesday of this academic year like this as next week will be my enrolment and introduction to study on the PGPLT programme allowing me to develop my teaching practices and I am hoping will allow me to review and develop current modules that I teach and modules for which I am module leader. I arrive back home at 9pm to greet my 4 children who have come to know that Septembers mean late sessions and lots of organisation.

I am excited for the teaching that will begin in earnest next week and look forward to meeting old and new students to share their learning journey.

Uid 152

6.30-8am Getting me & my children ready for work / childminder.

8-9am Drop off children and travel to work

9-10am Check emails & respond

10-11am Final check over my assignment for a Masters level research skills module I have been completing over the summer

11-11.30am Coffee with colleagues

12-1pm Print, collate & hand in assignment

1-1.30pm Lunch

1.30-4.30pm Very frustrating afternoon. I was planning to organise all of my teaching materials for a module which starts 27/9/10 for our new 1st years. However, lots of problems with the new VLE (Blackboard) accepting Wimba Create packages. Spent all afternoon faffing about with it, and only managed to get 1 successfully uploaded. Aghhh!

4.30pm Final check of emails

4.45-5.30pm Leave work, drive home, pick up children on way

5.30-6pm Playtime with children

6-7pm Children's bath & bed time routine

7-8pm Supper

8-10pm Quick bit of work on laptop, then Grand Designs on C4

Uid 153

Reflections on time management

An unusual location, but today’s teaching and learning activity is part of my normal academic work. As supervisor to 4 part-time PhD students (and Director of Studies to 3 of them) face-to-face meetings happen about once a month with at least one of the students. The unusual location, however, is Alexandria, Egypt. This is because one of these students is the Manager of e-Learning at Alexandria University’s Faculty of Medicine. He is what is known as a Split PhD, studying part-time in his own country with annual visits to the UK university. Split PhD students can also request visits from their supervisor, so here I am on the sunny Mediterranean coast of Egypt. Complaining? No… Bragging? Just a little!

This student is in the final stages of data analysis, so each section he writes now is one step closer to the completion of his thesis. He has been on this journey for a number of years, so his final submission date is only a matter of months away. And this brings me to my first reflection on teaching and learning: the balance of full-time work and part-time study is difficult at the best of times. For Split PhD students – studying over a period of years – this becomes crucial, especially in the last year of the programme. So a part, perhaps the biggest part, of my role here is to meet his colleagues, his Dean, his wife, and remind them that now it is important to scale down their demands on him and allow him some thinking and writing time.

I meet his Dean, a charming man, in his office overlooking Alexandria’s ancient eastern harbour. The building was once the British Consulate and still retains many of the original features, including parquet floors and splendid chandeliers. The Dean obviously appreciates my student’s work in the development of e-learning in the Faculty and comments that they are now a centre of excellence in Africa. I remind him that my student’s PhD will secure this position not only in Egypt and the UK, but also by dissemination throughout the world, so it is important that he has time to complete. I know that he is hoping to get leave of absence (preferably paid) for a few months, to finish his thesis in the UK. I plan to continue my own ‘charm offensive’ at a social event requested by the Dean.

PhD students (based on my personal experience) believe that collecting and analysing the data will be the difficult part of their programme. They don’t realise that crafting the thesis, presenting the evidence, discussing the focus and originality of the work, drawing clear, logical and appropriate conclusions is really the hard part. But this is where they achieve the greatest learning and move from apprenticeship to mastery.

Which brings me to another PhD candidate and another of today’s activities: this visit allows me to meet one of my students who completed and had a viva last year. He is now in the final stages of major modifications. He has sent chapters to his examiners and needs my encouragement to push himself just that little bit further. In our meeting this afternoon we discuss the difference between generalisation and extrapolation, and how to integrate the stages of his research programme into a coherent story of Egypt’s development of e-Government services.

The reason he is doing major modifications, not minor, is another reflection on teaching and learning. His intention is to develop his career in academia – his college ( a private degree-awarding institution in Egypt), who would like to have well-qualified staff, are sponsoring his programme. However, their funding ends after 4 years (yes, this is a part-time doctoral programme) and they rarely give him give him sufficient time to pursue his studies. In order to finish within 4 years, he took 6 months unpaid leave to complete his write-up in the UK. He felt that the writing business was taking too long, rushed through the concluding chapters and submitted what was still a draft. Although his examiners agreed that he had done enough interesting and original work to be worthy of a doctorate, he had not written a strong enough argument to support his conclusions. Hence, major modifications and a year to complete them. Under pressure from his employers he did not build thinking time into the writing, re-drafting and revising process, and finally he skimped on the polishing that brings a good PhD thesis to the attention of a wider audience.

It seems short-sighted to me that an organisation would pay for an employee to study, to enhance both his/her own career and the standing of the organisation, but not to make provision of study leave and other measures for the student to do the necessary thinking as part of the writing process.

I also encounter this with MSc students, especially in the dissertation phase, and I see the symptoms in undergraduate students. Those who write their assignment the day before it is due are invariably disappointed with the result. No matter how many days or weeks are given as preparation time, many students find time management difficult to cope with. (But they are not the only ones!)

The lesson I would like to draw from this is that those students who develop thinking, drafting and writing skills – and time management as part of the process – are those who can think quicker and evaluate situations better as they progress in both education and life.

Uid 154

My plan for today was to start reading a PhD thesis I’m examining in a couple of weeks time. I was working at home so I went straight to my study at 6.30, in my dressing gown, and logged on. It wasn’t bad at all – only 14 emails since 9 last evening. So what were the issues today?

1. REF – back in July the Faculty that my School belongs to decided that they wanted to see where we all were with regard to what our submittable profile currently looks like. As School REF co-ordinator organising reading and rating of the work of around 25 colleagues on academic contracts fell to me. The 6 members of the REF management group subsequently all got a bundle of ‘summer reading’ – though I’ve been told never to call it that again because it got in the way of one person’s enjoyment of their usual summer reading pile of (their words) ‘trashy, chill out novels’. We did our best to read 4 pieces from each person but that wasn’t always possible because they haven’t all got that many. Anyhow – today was the day when the profile had to be submitted and there were some last minute tweaks arising as a result of us seeing whether we could better some of the 2s that had been awarded by reading additional things. We finally submitted the finished piece at 1 – after it had gone back and forth throughout the morning between me, the secretary concerned and the HOD. I sent out a ‘thank you! We made it!’ to all involved.

2. I direct and teach a professional doctorate in an overseas location. Our students are brilliant and standards are truly as high as they are on our home based programme (I can say this with confidence having directed the home course for 6 years). A new cohort of 34 students based in 2 territories started in July, It’s the policy of our School to see and comment on a full first draft of all assignments and today was the deadline for submitting one of these – in this case it was a short 3,000 worder. I am the reader of all of these as I am first marker of all final (6,000 word) pieces. A few had been submitted early but the bulk started coming in. A couple were there when I switched on but they arrived in a steady stream throughout the day – some I dealt with more or less immediately and others will get done before the end of the week. As always there were those which made my heart sing and others which had quite a different effect. And then there was one where a suddenly rather different sentence had me straight to google – and yes, those weren’t her words. As this was a draft I simply and unequivocally told her what would happen if her final submission contained similar unattributed borrowings – and I reminded her we used Turnitin.

3. I got an email telling me that a student whose doctorate I’d agreed to externally examine was about to submit. Organising the viva wasn’t going to be easy because it was an internal candidate which necessitated co-ordinating 3 examiners – together with the student, a chair and the supervisor. To complicate matters further, the supervisor is to be the external for one of my students whose viva is likely to be at a similar time with equally difficult co-ordination problems. I decided to copy the internal examiner for my student in (because at my institution internals have responsibility for organising vivas) so that we could, potentially box and cox arrangements for both vivas at the same time. Complicated is an inadequate word! Throughout the day emails from the 9 bodies involved were flying around – without resolution as yet.

4. As supervisor of yet another student I had to complete an ‘appointment of examiners’ form. I thought I had all the details then I realised I’d not got the proposed external’s date of birth. He, I knew, was currently overseas – but I managed to get hold of a secretary at his institution who was able to help.

5. The secretary for my professional doctoral course rang at around 10 with 2 serious problems. In putting together materials for the forthcoming exam board she had realised that some marks were missing – they hadn’t been recorded and we worked out that this could be traced back to the consequences of a reallocation of responsibilities within the admin staff (due to staffing cuts) which means that course secretaries aren’t responsible for recording marks on their own courses any more. I had had some suspicions that things weren’t working as they should and the secretary confirmed the problem was there and, more worryingly, that it’s more widespread than I’d thought. Luckily I was able to find all the missing marks. The other problem concerned difficulties with the new online registration system. Some of ‘my’ overseas students still weren’t able to register because the central staff had put in incorrect birthdates which messed things up when the student then inputted their details – this, she thought – was due to the department concerned having employed a lot of temps over the summer. Students who aren’t properly registered can’t use the library – and given these people had paid their fees in July and it was now September they were, understandably, getting fed up. Their fed-upness was exacerbated by being told by central staff that if they popped in they could get it sorted. Not easy when you’re 3,000 miles away.

6. A notable email during the day was from an overseas student who was having difficulties finding fees because in the last 6 months he had had to pay for medical treatment for his mother and mother in law and then for the funerals when both died. The finance department agreed to a plan to help him out.

7. I received a paper to read by a guy I’d agreed to meet on Thursday. This bloke is the doctoral student of a mate of mine at a university in New Zealand. The student was visiting England to see family and present at a conference and I’d said I’d see him because there are overlaps in our work with regard to issues around doing sensitive research and the operation of ethics review boards.

At 11.30 I opened the thesis and read the prologue. Oh dear. English wasn’t the student’s first language and it showed. I started to read the thesis and did so until 2, eating a bowl of porridge at my desk on the way, by when I’d got through 2 chapters. I didn’t think they were bad really – the English turned out to be like the curate’s egg. Then I had a shower, got dressed and went to see my elderly mum who has Altzheimers and who lives in a care home 15 minutes away. I spent 45 minutes with her and then came back and discovered more drafts had come in, together with more viva organising emails. There were also emails about a couple of presentations I’m doing later in the year – times and dates and accommodation details – and one from a student asking for study school dates in 2011.

I decided to work on more drafts until my retired husband called me for supper at 7.30. Having eaten it was back to work until 9 when I decided I’d call it a day and went to play with my cat, Neville, and read a novel before bed.

Uid 155

It is now 5 days before enrolment starts, and so the madness is beginning to build up again!

Got into work for 7.30 to check post, emails etc - was out of the office all day yesterday on a training session, so feel the need to 'catch up'.

Between 9am and 10am I had a tutorial with a PGT student. They have had a difficult 12 months personally, so as well as providing academic support I have to provide moral support to, to ensure that they feel confident enough to do academic work. I then from 10.30-11.30 had a meeting about a Health and Safety audit, checking proceedures are in places. I then should have gone to a training session, but it seems to have been cancelled. I used this magic spare time to catch up with a colleague.

Working lunch when I had a 'hand over' meeting with another colleague: I was Programme leader for a Postgrad programme, but I now have a larger admin/management role so have had to give this up. The new PL looked slightly fearful of how much work the role demands!

Then a Management group meeting from 3pm-6pm, when responsibilities across the management team for the subject area were handed out. This was more stressful that it should have been, but am pleased with my lot. Came back to a very messy desk, so stayed until 6.45 before heading home. Should have gone out this evening, but too much to do: thankfully I have a supportive partner, who is also in education. I so feel for those people who have family who don't understand that this is a 'total' job. Spent the evening checking emails and updating my diary. I am writing this at 9pm, and by the time I have finished the tasks for the evening I will have done a 10 hour day. And teaching hasn't even begun ...

Uid 156

On Wednesday 15th September I attended the UK Centre for Bioscience Representatives meeting. This was a very useful event, as we got to share and discuss new teaching methods and technolgies for bioscience teaching.

As the event was in Cardiff I then spent the next six hours travelling back to Norwich on the train. During this time I began to prepare a seminar for my science communication students on the framing of science issues in the media. I was also organising a large family open day of the school, so I had quite a few e-mail queries to sort out. Managed to get home early evening and then stopped work for the day!

Uid 157

A reasonable amount of today was spent dealing with queries relating to the Open Day on Saturday (the biology department is have a family fun open day for all ages with demonstrations, hands-on activities and laboratory tours which I have helped to arrange). I am also starting the day off with a public lecture titled "Biology Fights Back" so I spent a little time going through the lecture.

UG teaching starts again in just under two weeks time, so there were several e-mails to deal with regarding various teaching matters (organisation of modules, room bookings, dates of lectures etc). At lunch time there was a School Meeting where a lot of teaching matters were highlighted or discussed. I also spent a little time updating lectures and ensuring the pages on our Virtual Learning Environment that I am responsible for are accurate and up to date. These tasks are long and ongoing throughout the year!

In the afternoon I represented my department at a preliminary meeting to explore whether the University should put in a farily big research bid to a funding body in January.

I was also asked for advice from a post-doc who has an interview coming up.

Uid 158

First things first â€“ deal with emails that have arrived since I last was at my desk. Normally such emails are information from distribution lists and suppliers that are rather quick to deal with. Today, however, there is one involving degree regulations that will take more thought and effort.

After ploughing through some of the University regulations I note that it is time for coffee. Nobody else in the coffee room so, rather than sit on my own, I return to my desk.

Several emails later I have organised another couple of lecturers to take part in a module I am teaching and realise that I have to book IT suites for two of the sessions. (Another email required.)

Expected a phone call from a local organisation but instead have one from France (advice required about a former postdoctoral supervisor) and a colleague with whom I am organising a competition for schoolchildren (discussion about preparation for one of the tasks).

Advised a student who has just succeeded in reassessment so will be able to return after intercalation.

Called to the Admissions office for a consultation about numbers, on the way bumped into a new colleague and had a quick chat about what he could put in his lectures which follow on from mine in the module. Admissions office â€“ dealt with figures, discussed managing numbers, discussed an enquiry from an applicant.

After a quick lunch dashed off a couple of emails before returning home to pick up the car and equipment to give a lecture to the local U3A in the city centre.

Not worth returning to office after the lecture so continued with data analysis at home until mid-evening. (Didnâ€™t look at any emails either.)

Uid 159

Today the Faculty Executive Group (FEG) will decide whether to increase our admissions offer from AAB to AAA. This is to enable the admissions team to better manage the process as we had nearly 5000 applications for 267 places this year. 291 have met our offer, so we may be fined for overshooting; also we seem to have had a significant increase in overseas applications. Economics has been particularly popular which means I will have 120 personal tutees this year.

Emails continue to arrive from last year’s first year students – mainly concerning elective choices; although the Undergraduate Office will deal with these they tend to get in touch as I was their personal tutor last year.I feel that the University system for choosing electives is not as user-friendly as it could be and our software does not alert students when they sign up for electives prohibited by their compulsory modules. In the Business School all students take one of two core economics modules (depending on their programme of study) but a number had chosen the other core as an elective, not reading the module catalogue which states that they cannot combine the two. Also one call from a student who failed a compulsory module resit asking for advice – they will become an external student and will have to resit next June for the third and final time.

Today we start a 3-day workshop (Maths) for students who have entered under our Access Scheme where they are only required to have a grade C in GCSE maths (normally we ask for an A). As maths tends to be the module students find most difficult we are concerned that they will struggle to keep up. As part of my discussion with the Professor who will head the division (from January) we might consider introducing mi-terms in our ‘longer’ (i.e. 20-credits over 2 semesters) modules or setting January exams for the first half of each module. This could work quite well as the Maths and Stats module is split equally so that students study Maths in the first semester and Stats in the second. Similarly the core Economics module is split equally Micro and Macro. Having analysed some of the (multiple choice) answer sheets from June I noticed that students scored significantly higher on the Macro section e.g. one student who asked for a re-mark scored 8/25 on the micro and 22/25 on the macro section. Micro is taught first and tends to be theoretical and cover material no longer taught at A level.

Continued working on the first assignment – induction week next week and we set a summative assignment in that week so we can assess their academic research and writing skills. As we are the only school to do this some students felt that we work Business School students harder than elsewhere in the University!

Received the Dean’s prize list today – happy to see that 4 of my students have won an award (from only 10 given out). Also 2 of my students from last year have come in this week to help prepare induction materials. We have some great students in Economics!

Uid 160

Not the typical academic day, but it is September, which is conference time. I attended the PSA Teaching and Learning Group's Third Annual Conference and gave a paper about lessons learned from a project I've been involved in. As always I was quite nervous about giving the presentation, but it seemed to go well and we had a really lively debate about the panel with the audience. One of the best things about this conference is the inspirational dialogue that you can have with colleagues and students about what's going on within classrooms across the UK.

Uid 161

I have changed jobs and will now do very little teaching so I am no longer a typical academic even though I remain on the academic payscale.

Kevin

Uid 161

I have changed jobs and will now do very little teaching so I am no longer a typical academic even though I remain on the academic payscale.

Kevin

Uid 167

weds 15th September

This day I was on leave and on holiday in Hungary with my boyfriend, who is also an academic.

However because there was some fairly urgent work that needed some attention and action before I returned, I had taken my laptop with me. At around 10am in the hotel room I spent 45 minutes reading emails from colleagues in Lancaster and in the US with whome I am collaborating in orgainising a conference session for a large conference next year, and then briefly editing a draft document, and emailing them back.

After that I did no more 'work' as such but during the afternon we had a conversation of about 20 mins about supervising PhD students.

Also, during the course of the day's exploration I took some photographs specifically because I thought they might be useful in teaching - examples of urban design and of a new sports centre with a green roof, for my second year environmental management course.

Uid 168

15th September 2010

So, an initial entry for the “sharing” project. Before diving into the details of my mid-September day I think it’s worth outlining the reasons why I’m excited about the opportunity to be involved. Firstly, this current project reminded me of the Victoria Wood drama “Housewife, 49” based on the war-time Mass Observation diaries of Nella Last. We are hearing a lot at the moment about “the student experience” and a number of exciting projects are underway to capture the realities of being a student at the start of the 21st century. I am attracted by the potential richness of diarising “the academic experience” in a warts-n-all manner.

Secondly, this work stands in stark contrast to the TRAC scheme which I have become increasingly convinced is not fit for purpose. As I believe the present project will bring into sharp relief, there is no such thing as a “typical” day for a university academic. Even the most trivial examination would show that term-time weeks and vacation weeks will have a very different pattern – close scrutiny will reveal the varying seasons even within the term. In consequence, recording the numbers of hours spent on this or that activity in any one week of the year cannot legitimately be extrapolated to reflect the working life of any individual. I know the dates monitored are randomised to try and take this into account and perhaps if everyone was recording their experiences in exactly the same way then this may counteract the problem. However, and this is my other concern about TRAC, scepticism about the scheme leaves many academics unwilling to enter fully into the process and thus they approximate their hours without calculating or, worse, fabricate them to fit with the expectation. Where is the merit in that? TRAC generates numbers but they are bogus, the scheme seems to me the case par excellence for demonstrating the value of qualitative data over quantitative.

Enough, I shall step down from my soapbox and describe my September 15th 2010. The schedule for the day was dominated by the fact that I am flying on the 16th to a former communist state in Eastern Europe to run a workshop on some of the teaching interventions I have developed over the past few years. The material is relatively familiar as I have run variations of the session previously both within the UK and once (last year) in another European country. Nevertheless, the day began with last minute tweaks to the slides, printing a copy for myself and sending one to the webmaster for the organisation that has invited me; participants will get some of the material as a handout in advance but access to all of the slides, including ‘the answers’, will be offered once the event is over.

Next up, I spent four hours with the University’s video editing expert try to hone interview footage that will be a major plank of a film we are producing as a resource for teaching about a controversial aspect of my discipline. The video production has been a tortuous process and though it still excites me I wonder whether we would have started the process nearly two years ago if we had known the problems we have faced. A colleague and I received a small grant to produce the video but the planning, shooting and especially the editing are all much more involved than I had previously appreciated. I’m confident the end product will be useful, but it is unlikely to pay back the blood, sweat and tears we’ve poured into it.

As if by way of illustration, I hadn’t anticipated that we’d spend quite so long today on the editing. At present we are working on a section describing a significant experiment. We have some excellent interview clips but the definitive narrative that will drive the section is proving elusive. It seems likely that some good footage will end up omitted because the interviewees have not made their points as succinctly as we need. I also have constant battles with the video editor (we’ll call him Tom) about whether or not we can afford to keep some of the material in the final film. I’m keen that the story is told as accurately and as fully as we can, but he very helpfully challenges me that we need to hold the audience’s attention. This process gives me real insight into the compromises that need to be made in the production of television programmes. I have huge respect for Tom and know that we’ll probably end up going with some of his more brutal cuts but for the meantime I argue for keeping the footage in.

At 2:30 pm I finally call time on editing for the day; I have a number of other tasks that need attention before I head off on my big trip. We haven’t stopped for lunch (which I’d normally take shortly after midday) and I’m starving. I know that by this time the choice at the University canteen will be unappealing so I nip to a local Subway.

During the afternoon I draft out references for two former students who are applying to do Medicine as a postgraduate. Neither, as it happens, was a personal tutee of mine but they have asked independently for me to help them out and it seemed churlish to decline. When I am reasonably satisfied that I’ve done the students justice without committing perjury I e-mail each of them a copy. This is not just a courtesy to them; it is one of the idiosyncrasies of individual applications to postgraduate medicine that we need to supply an electronic copy of the reference to the student – if they are going to quibble about any of the contents I’d rather know sooner rather than later.

A quick call to my mobile phone company to confirm that my phone will be active in the country where I am heading, and to ascertain the rates I will be charged to talk to the family during the week I am away, takes longer than I had anticipated and I miss the first train that I might have caught. I use the additional time to send an e-mail to people who will help on a stall that we’ll run at the International Student Welcome Fayre towards the end of the month.

Although the train I ultimately catch leaves after five, I am pleasantly surprised to find that it is not heavingly busy; I get a seat with a table, crack out my laptop and do some work on a book chapter I am co-authoring (due for submission at the end of the month). This process initially goes well; I do tend to find time on trains to be very productive. After an hour or so, however, my creative energies have been sapped and I shift into neutral.

I have bought a ticket to the airport station. As we pass through the local station where I know I ultimately need to end up for my overnight accommodation I reflect on the fact that I ought to have conducted more careful research into this aspect of the journey. This thought grows during the 10 mins onto my original destination, 15 mins waiting at that station for a train in a different direction for 8 mins, followed by a further 15 minute wait for a third train and an additional 8 minutes to complete the triangle back to the station I passed through the best part of an our earlier. By this time it is dark and I’m hungry so I am delighted when a call to the manager of the accommodation results in her assistant coming to collect me.

The B&B itself is functional (aside from the en suite loo which seems not to be in operation). I always knew this was not going to be luxury lodgings; it seemed silly to fork out a large amount when I am in reality only going to be here for half of a normal night and the fact that they throw in a free transfer to the airport at nonsense-o’clock in the morning was one of the attractions. I had hoped, however, for a flushable toilet.

I pop out to the local take-away emporium. It has an Indian sounding name but appears to cover all genre of quick meals. Perhaps swayed by the name, I plump for a curry. During the wait I flick through a copy of the Daily Express but am distracted by the sounds of a man with a heavy cough who, it would seem, is in very close proximity to my dinner and is, I assume, in charge of its preparation.

When it is ready, I stroll back to the accommodation. The food will not win any awards but, for the second time today, is eaten much later than would be my norm and is therefore gratefully received. After tidying up the dining area, I retreat to my room where I learn that Arsenal have butchered their European opponents 6-0 and Gareth Southgate is explaining away the fact he had described the sacrificed team as “quite useful” in the build-up to the match.

I switch off the light – with the high degree of ambient noise and the knowledge that the alarm is set for 4 O’clock I am not anticipating quality rest but will be grateful for a couple of hours asleep as the following day will involve significant travel.

Uid 170

On Wednesday 15th September at Manchester Metropolitan University we began to dismantle the excellent, widely praised English degree which we have together shaped, developed, honed, critiqued and delivered for many years. We are implementing management imposed cuts. The cuts have been presented in the guise of an opportunity for radical but creative solutions. What they actually do is to force us to dismantle the degree, limiting the expectation on our students so that for example they only read ten books per course. We are only to advertise ten books per course in case the students notice the poverty of provision in the library. We are required to design a new degree which permanently keeps largely working class students forever in a lower level of education achievement... And along the way, the process smashes up those systems and conventions of academic change which have allowed us to pursue and enjoy quality - so that the connection between the needs of the subject and the needs of the community of scholars and learners of the subject no longer shape the design and practical delivery of the courses. We are handing over control to a centralised management team, because if we don't they can't implement this level of cuts. It's clever and actually has some justification... But it doesn't cover up what's happening. Our respect for each other and the quality of our commitment meant that we responded by trying to work more closely together - a collective response to the external danger. But it was too rosy, too cosily self-congratulatory when what we're facing is the sort of social change imposed by Thatcher in the miners' strike. It might be even more long lasting and disastrous, because these educational changes are going to embed social and educational divisions back into the Higher Educational system, rationing resources so that by the time young people get to A level it is definitely too late to hope to get the sort of education that will equip them to lead, to change, to deepen our shared understanding of the world. I am going to be going into lectures and seminars and workshops that are organised in a way that demonstrates every day to our students that they are worth less attention than we believe they should have. My colleagues and I become Mrs Bumble in Oliver Twist, doling out the carefully accounted bowls of thin soup. It's intolerable...

Uid 171

I awoke today with a terrific headache--a combination of working on the laptop (reading, editing, commenting upon) a co-author's chapter in a book manuscript that's due to the publisher next month) till past 3am and ending up sleeping with my daughter in her toddler's bed from about 4:00 to 8:30. So, I took a couple of Syndol (my drug of choice) and slept another hour while my husband got daughter dressed, breakfasted, etc.

My 2-year-old daughter comes with me to work, as we have a fantastic creche/nursery here. I spent a lot of my 'spare' time last year working on the campaign to save it in the face of higher education cuts. The big compromise solution has been that a private company is taking it over. At any rate, I settled her in there around 11.30, then came to my office where I'm desperately trying to get myself to the fabled 'Inbox Zero' status that I'd like to have by the start of term. I get 50-70 new messages per day, many of them because I am the head of my unit. Most are easy to get through, but there will be some sitting in my inbox as a virtual to-do list...right now there are 14 stubborn items. My goal is to end the day with fewer, rather than adding to it more.

Some major themes in the email today have been making sure that returning students are on the right courses for the new term (dealing with oversubscribed courses and special requests), hiring a new associate tutor and preparing to hire another half-time temporary staff member. Our programme is consistently oversubscribed, but the powers that be have slashed our staff numbers in half. The job market is so nasty, however, that we're able to hire very qualified PhDs for jobs that were originally intended for graduate students. And then a lot of on-line time was spent on booking travel and accommodation for a conference in Finland next month. I don't get any relief from teaching in order to do my 'head of unit' duties--instead they give me a little research budget, about 1/4 of which will go toward this trip to a conference at which I am not presenting, but one of my doctoral students is.

At 1.30 I had a meeting w/ a colleague to agree a mark for an MA dissertation. Unfortunately, the dissertation has to be referred to a misconduct panel. This is the third MA student I've had this year whose work was more others' than their own, and the second from Iran. The misconduct panel will have no choice but to fail the dissertation, and then the student will not be allowed the degree. I don't know what to do to prevent this in future--the students on our course are taught about plagiarism and avoiding it in at least three forums (pre-sessional academic English courses, general MA induction, and our own research methods course), I repeatedly asked this student for drafts of her work and received none. And then I get this to read. It's hard to know how much is the student's own state of denial about what they've done in their dissertation and how much is just not understanding the academic research culture, the notion of intellectual property and the notion of master's-level achievement. What a waste for everyone concerned. The paperwork for a misconduct case is an absolute nightmare as well...one probably does more research finding the student's sources than the student had to do to complete the paper!

In order to get myself away from the internet and other distractions, I had lunch at the Med School tea bar, where I'm unlikely to know anyone, and I started reading a book that's a sort of history of my field, for which I was asked to write a review for a journal. The review is due in two weeks--I'd better get reading. Happily, it's really well done so far. I'm thinking that it should be the first thing that I give to new doctoral students.

Back to the office, the misconduct paperwork and more emails. One of the changes with the new creche set-up is that I am no longer forced to take my daughter for lunch (the creche closed between 1 and 2 until recently). I'm trying to ease my daughter into lunchtimes at the creche before the term starts--so today I'd promised that I'd come a bit earlier to collect her and would take her to the playground near the student family housing. So, at about 4.45 I go to the creche, where I find that she's been a bit fragile all day. She's had a cold, and I can feel myself getting it. 45 minutes of swinging and sliding, then we're off to the station to get home.

After some nice family time, husband goes to put the girl to bed at about 8.30. I spent the next couple of hours doing a bit of tidying, but mostly catching up on Twitter. I am of two minds whether to treat my tweeting and blogging as part of my work. In all honesty, I do consider it to be part of my professional life--my blog is about linguistics and my tweets are too...it's a way of bringing the public into my work and the joys of language. And I think it's a good thing for my uni too--I have 1100 Twitter followers and close to 600 blog hits per day...I'm pretty good advertisement for our department and programmes! But 'officially' it's not work...though it involves research, it won't count in the REF, so I have to call it a hobby.

It's past 11 now, and I'm going to start reading a draft of the first two chapters of a doctoral student's thesis. We meet on Friday, but I know I won't have much time for reading tomorrow. My head/neck are killing me...I'll take more Syndol and hope that I can keep the work going till 1.30 or 2...but in all honesty, I can't remember the last time I went to bed before 2...

Hmm...we're people who like to reflect and write...you're going to get a lot of very long entries, I'll bet!

Uid 172

A meeting at the start of the day. Not really in my remit as I'm a lecturer in education. The meeting was between the new 'coordinator of staff development', one of the academic leaders (of a group of programmes), an HR administrator and myslef. The Academic Leader had called it because she was concerned about some members of her team and their capacity to teach (or at least to teaching in a way that did not turn off the learners). I attended the meeting as I have a background in academic staff development and like to take every opportunity to reinforce the notion that this institution needs to appoint some academic staff developers. Meeting lasted just over an hour and resulted in the staff who were of concern being offered the chance to attend the PGCE HE programme (that I am Prog Leader for). We also discussed one off workshops (not a fan) for 'managing students'.

Directly after, met up with Post Compulsory Teacher Training colleagues for coffee and lengthy discussion about the new academic year and how we would timetable classes / writing schemes of work / booking an enrolment time / and all the other stuff that goes on at the start of the academic year.

Back from that to deal with emails: An individual wanting specifications from the PGCE HE programme from five years ago, one from HR giving me the list of new academic staff in the last year (so that I can do all the administrative work of inviting them to attend the PGCE HE ....

Two hour lunchtime meeting outlining the new Prof Doctorate to people who had expressed an interest. I didn't have to do anything, just attend and chip in the odd thing as the named Education person (responsible for the EdD strand of the Prof Dr).

Then whole afternoon in a classroom (2-6pm) waiting for any students to show who were prospective candidates for next years PCET PGCE. Dealt with three in the whole afternoon! (Did some marking in the lulls). The afternoon was a whole institution open day so also had a chance to chat with other education staff in the same room, between their prospective students - they were rather busier.

Uid 173

7.30am-11.30am: Working from home on presentation material for teaching next term

11.30-12.30pm: Travelling from home to campus for team meeting

12.30-2.15pm: Team Meeting

2.15pm-4pm: Informal and impromptu meeting with two colleagues to discuss a student issue and to plan joint teaching sessions next term.

4pm-5pm: Travelling home

6pm-6.45pm: Checking and respoding to e-mail

Uid 179

Today was meant to be a day-at-home research day except that checking my email late last night there was a message from a colleague to say that he'd dropped two very late MBA student research proposals in my pigeon-hole for marking and they needed to be done by this Thursday for the exam board on Friday.

Anyway, I rearranged my day, dealt with emails from four or five other dissertation students and took the train up to London to Inner City University where I work part-time. Spent a good couple of hours reviewing and marking the two proposals (one quite good; the other will need a lot of joint effort between the student and their supervisor to bring it into focus) and left them with the course administrator. In between, I also wandered over to HR to hand in a signed contract for extra hours last year, then had a look at the big Freshers' Fayre marquee they've put up in the car park to welcome new undergraduates during enrollment and orientation next week. It was rather good: there were a couple of giant yenga towers, some exercise machines from the gym, a fairground Test Your Strength thing, a couple of big screens and, of course, a coffee area. This is the first year we've done this: I thought it was a really good idea.

Took the 7.15 train back and got home about quarter to nine.

Had dinner, took the younger boy to the bath and then read him three chapters of Robopop, about a Dad who designs a football-playing robot to stand in for him while he's away giving a paper at an academic conference in California ... sad really. And now it's 12 midnight, pumpkin hour.

Uid 180

First real day back in terms of the life of the department - two meetings to kick the term off, policy committee at 9.30 and School Board at 11. Which means it is the first day when I have to get kids out of the house early to make the drive into work and get here on time so as not to appear unprofessional. At the back of my head is also my Mum who is being treated for advanced cancer of the mouth - hard to focus on much else to be honest.

At midnight last night, trying to put together some material for a module reading list/lecture outline, I also discovered that the website I've spent the last 3 years creating as part of an AHRC funded project seemed to have stopped working in that the link between the queries and the results seems to be broken - so the lovely lots of infomation that should come back when you click for more details has been replaced by a blank page. As the IT colleague who helped build the site has been made redundant this has thrown me into a panic - all the concerns I had when this reshuffle was announced seem to be coming to pass.

In terms of time commitments, meetings run from 9.30 to 10.35 and 11 to 12.15. Around them, time to catch up with colleagues who have been away for the summer and also to finish off module guides for the stuff I am doing this semester (I was on leave last semester, am teaching this, and then going on leave again in the Spring). This takes a lot of time - I lead a big team-taught 2nd year module which introduces students to critical frameworks for analysing live performance, and following a well-received major revision last year, there is still tweaking to do to this year's guide, making sure I've incorporated the various external speakers/practitioners we have lined up this year and updating the reading lists.

At 1.15 we have a farewell lunch for two colleagues who retired at the end of August, although both will be back in various guises, teaching part time and doing research.

The day seems to fly by - some of it occupied trying to search out a solution to the website problem - and soon I'm leaving at 5.45 to collect children from a friend who has looked after them every Wednesday since they began school 7 years ago - without whom the academic Wednesday would be much more stressful.

Once kids are in bed I carry on with some of the module stuff, emailing colleagues to check that what I have them down for is indeed what they committed to and that the guide makes sense.

Uid 182

I arrived in my office approx 8.20am and immediately started my usual routine of turning on my computer while going through my paper list of tasks for the day. I always try to answer/address as many emails as possible from my inbox before 9am. My email correspondence/new tasks throughout today mostly consisted of my finalising an author interview with a publicist for the children's literature mazagine I edit, arranging consultation times with various Erasmus students taking my courses, arranging the time & venue of the next committee meeting of a society I'm the secretary for, finalising a book list with a colleague for a new course we're developing, confirming a series of research skills sessions I coordinate within my college and moderating the first week of a student discussion board for an undergraduate class.

I was away at a conference since last Thursday so I stopped to say hi and briefly catch up with all the staff I saw while walking down corridors etc.

I had four lectures which went pretty well (3 consecutive ones this morning which was quite tiring) and 1 afternoon class. The 10 minute gaps between my lectures was filled with talking with students and my updating of student attendance lists. I took 25 minutes for lunch in the staff room.

Some admin involved writing two references for tutees applying to MA courses, organising my invoices for a recent conference expenses and writing the minutes of a committee meeting from this morning.

Re: my own research, a student didn't turn up for an appointment so I spent that 15 minutes searching online for journal articles for an upcoming conference paper.

I left work approx 7pm.

Uid 184

12:20am. It's just after midnight. I arrived home after my 6-10pm class around 10:30pm. After a light snack, I'm ready to start prepping for the coming days.

I'm going on a trip this weekend. It's just a vacation to celebrate my XXth birthday. Since I'll be gone all weekend, I need to get a bit ahead in my preparations. I'm normally a seat-of-the-pants, last-minute kind of teacher. I do my best thinking in the shower as I'm getting ready for the day. I can often be found at my computer ten minutes before class pounding out an activity or assignment for the students. They don't like that. They (the students, I mean) want to know what's coming up so they can plan their week. I don't blame them. I'd be frustrated, too. But that's the way I am and they've come to expect it.

I teach four or five classes per semester, all preps. That's the nature of where I teach. It's a community college. Everyone teaches 4-6 classes each semester. We have no TAs, no graders. Plus we supervise labs, student clubs, and honors projects. There are committee meetings to attend, tests to write and grade, homeworks to grade. It all adds up to more than forty hours a week of work.

Don't get me wrong -- I love this job. I can't imagine teaching fewer courses.

I can't resist making big changes in at least one of my classes each semester. Assignments get old, technology marches forward, and teaching styles change. This semester I made the bold move to abandon the textbook I had been using for CS1 and \*gasp\* write my own. It's infinitely cheaper for my students, although I've been devoting about 15-20 hours per week to it.

We're four weeks into the semester and I'm on chapter 7. Each chapter is 5-7 pages, so I've written about 30 pages so far. Not bad. But the students just got done reading chapter 6 and I'd like to have up through chapter 8 done by the time I leave in three days.

I don't think I've had a full night's rest since the semester started. Between prep and writing, I've been averaging about six hours of sleep each night. Go to bed around 3-4am, get up around 8 or 9am to get to my first class at 11am.

I better start writing.

12:45am. Answered an email from a student in my night class who is apparently staying up as late as I am. At least he's working on his assignment. :)

2:45am. Chapter written and posted online. Time for bed.

9:45am. Ready for work. Catching up on emails over a bowl of cereal.

10:45am. Fifteen minutes until class. Just got into my office. Need to type up a homework assignment, but my CMS (course management system) is being cranky about formatting math symbols. Still, I get about 80% done and promise my class that I'll finish formatting it this evening.

11:00am-12:30pm. Discrete structures class. Today's topics is Karnaugh maps. My classes are interactive, so I give them a problem to do and along the way we discuss how to solve them with K-maps. They learn as they go. I'm quite pleasantly surprised that the students are all doing the work, helping each other out, and asking intelligent questions. I'm doing my best to keep them awake -- some of them haven't had any sleep all week because they've been playing Halo Reach, which was released on Monday.

12:30pm. Class is over and now I'm meeting with five students who are doing honors projects. We have to turn in the paperwork by tomorrow, so after speaking to them as a group, we sit down at computers and I individually meet with each one to complete the paperwork. A couple of students have to leave for work and can't finish it today, so they'll fill out the papers online and email me the documents. The honors committee would rather that the student drops off the papers, but since one of the student won't be on campus tomorrow (she lives about 20 miles away), I'll turn it in for her.

2:30pm. Poke my head into the meeting of the robotics club, but they've gone off to Home Depot to get supplies. They'll be back later.

2:45pm. Soothed the CMS and now it's formatting the problems correctly. Still need to add some more problems, though. Decide instead to read some blogs.

3:15pm. I'm the internship coordinator for our department. It's getting to be that time when a few students approach me asking about internship opportunities. Responded to some of the emails requesting they come to my office so we can talk logistics and paperwork.

4:00pm. Still waiting for the robotics clubs students to come back. Answered more emails and worked on completing the honors project contracts.

5:00pm. The students have come back, finally. I'm kind of disappointed in the ones that went to the hardware store. Four of them left around 2:30, leaving three behind. They said they would be back no later than 4:00 and now they are an hour late. It's disappointing because this is the first real meeting of the club and the three people left behind were just sitting in the classroom patiently waiting for the others to return. I don't think they had much else to do, but if I were in that position I'd be upset that half my afternoon had been wasted.

Club president JJ is an energetic guy with a can-do attitude, but he needs to learn how to delegate and ensure that his other club members are kept in the loop. With some guidance he can probably get to that state of mind, but he currently wants to do everything himself.

5:30pm. JJ starts painting the plywood they bought from Home Depot, but again has not consulted the other club members. Some of them are just standing around, watching him work. I come outside to try to include everyone else, but JJ is feeling pressured to get enough robots ready for next Tuesday when they can do a demonstration in the cafeteria. He wants to get the platforms painted and a couple of robots assembled before 6:00pm. Other members of the club remind him that they have class at 6:00 and there's no way they can finish in time. JJ says he'll take care of everything, so that's when I step in and suggest that JJ put everything away for now and reconvene tomorrow. If it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. JJ reluctantly agrees.

6:00pm. JJ finally packs up and heads home. I return to working on the contracts.

7:00pm. I head home, finally. My girlfriend is out shopping and wants to go out to eat when she's done, probably around 8:30 or 9. My day isn't over yet. I need to write the next chapter of the book, finish the contracts, and prep homework assignments for the weekend. Probably another late night for me.

8:00pm-ish. Nodded off at my desk at home, maybe for about 5-10 minutes. That should be enough sleep to keep me going. I'll just goof off until I'm ready to get back to work.

12:30am. After dinner out, a bit of blog reading, and eBay shopping, I'm back at the computer typing up another chapter.

2:45am. Chapter done. Heading off to bed. The day is over. It starts again in six hours.

Uid 185

I woke up 6am, in a hotel. I was in the last day in a 3-day conference --all faculty and doctoral students in science teaching in Israel are invited. Students present their work and get (constructive) feedback from researchers. very exhausting because (a) not only you need to listen carefully during session and phrase your comments in a way that will help (after all we're all committed (I hope) to something bigger than our own promotion and progress, we're all committed to the field) and won't offend the student or her/his advisor(s);and during breaks students kept coming and asking questions, and of course I talked to colleagues and met those I haven't talk with for more than two years (which is a long time in a small place like Israel).

I started driving home at 1: 30 and got back home at 4am. I talked with two students over the phone while driving and at home I simply crashed on the sofa and watched TV. I took my son to Karate class, walked with my dog.

Now I am off to dinner with my family, b/c I did not see them for three days.

Uid 186

7.30 in the office. need more coffee. must remember.

G hasn't opened the email asking for their teaching this semester. Do they think I won't notice that they aren't doing any. Must ring them this morning or see them at the timetabling meeting tomorrow. I think that there are a number of staff who would prefer that they don't do anything for the students if they can avoid it. I love teaching, and getting some of the staff to do it makes me think that they don't. Not sure why they are still here.

7.45. W has come in to complain about the teaching materials that others have put together for the module she has been allocated to this year. Says they are out of date, lacking alignment, and full of typos. She isn't wrong, and has a good understanding of the educational needs of the students. But the team's interpersonal relationships are rather like the immovable object and the irresistible force.

Timetables. AAAAAGGGGHHHH! no-one likes them.

8.30 H has now come to complain about W and her complaint about the teaching materials. I've told them both to try to work together and not stress about it.

Staff objective setting. seeing 2 staff today. one hasn't had time to complete the paperwork yet. and the ones I have seen already are about things other than teaching. These are middle managers, who do still teach a lot, but it isn't what is valued by the organisation - at least not in this process.

Staff member 1 had very rosy ideas about what they were doing, and set interesting objectives. Staff member 2 didn't complete the paper work, and put the session off. I wasn't surprised. T does too much teaching, is an admissions tutor and a year manager. T loves teaching, but the only way up is to do manager things.

Exam board before lunch. Externals think our innovative web-2 teaching is good. I like it too. We use a wiki and a blog for different things. Staff have a bit of difficulty working out what we are trying to do with it (one staff member says that maybe the blog could just be a reflective essay. they are missing the web 2 stuff entirely. but I know how they would respond to a suggestion of going on an e-learning course....)

spent all afternoon in an "academic quality" meeting. 3 hours. again, didn't really talk through teaching (unless you count timetabling), and while it is all relevant to the job, it isn't teaching.

laptop in front of the tele, trying to work out timetabling for tomorrow. Partner helping but rather sick of it. If I get 50% of the uncovered teaching covered, I'll be happy. And I know who it will be who does it....

Closed the laptop at 9.30

Uid 187

6:30 AM - got up/dressed/breakfast

7:15 - left for office

7:30 - email

8:00 - CS Service Committee meeting

9:00 - Ensured CS110 lab started and GAs were present

9:15 - Met with PG to ensure my understanding of universdity course assessment requirements for CS104 and CS110

9:45 - CS110 lab - helping GAs answer questions

10:45 - Office - email (May have missed an appointment w/ a student at 10:30 - student not waiting)

11:15 - Office Hour - One-on-one with CS110 student - had problems with lab activity

12:30 PM - lunch

1:15 - email

1:45 - Alpha workshop for new faculty - subject: grading and assessment

3:30 - email

4:30 - headed home

4:45 - cleaning house

5:30 - dinner

6:00 - email and Facebook (mostly fb)

7:15 - grading

9:00 - snack break

9:30 - email

10:30 - CS104 lab activity development and testing

2:30 AM - headed to bed

Uid 189

6.00 Woke up

6.45 Left home

7.45 Arrive at work...attend to emails in office

9.00 Planning for meetings in week

10.30 Meeting with Admin re. timetables

12.30 catch up with emails in office/eat lunch at desk

1.15 Preparation for teaching

3.00 Meeting with student re. progression on course

4.00 Meeting with ITE Team re. latest developments for 10/11

5.15 Catch up with emails

6.00 Departed work

Uid 191

Just got back this morning from 3 weeks away in London where I was semi-working (ie. answering emails etc) but semi-taking some personal time with family.

Today is an Open Day.

9-9:30 - run down to payroll (different campus) to get copies of payslips for mortgage application.

9:30-10 - sit in coffee room opening post, chatting, catching up, eating breakfast

10-11 - catch up on emails (been off 1 day driving back from London and 76 emails - some personal but still .....) and review lecture slides for open day talk.

11-1 - give talk on 'why you should come to our lovely institution', talk to prospective students and parents afterwards. (grab sandwich in quiet time in middle).

1-1:30 - give talk again

1:30-2 - catch up on day's email. Mainly students asking when resit results are available.

2-3 - talking to prospective students and parents again.

3-4 - work on advising slides for first years who arrive on Sept 27th

4-5 - I am on a HERA appeal panel tomorrow as a union rep. Try and get caught up on documents so ready for that.

5 - go home. Later will have to review mortgage documents, look at emails from the institution where I am an external (am really overdue on that).

Uid 192

Slept in for 10 minutes - 'till 06:15 because I wasn't car sharing for my 1 hour commute. I had been dreaming about assessments, probably because it was our reassessment board yesterday, or perhaps because there are a couple of students that still need to be assessed, with their progression decisions being made over the next couple of weeks by Chair's Action.

Under the shower I was thinking about my 2nd year module: specifically about redesigning the 'lecture' I give on skill sets for multimedia projects. At the time I had lots of images in mind of inspirational powerpoint slides to introduce the scenario, you know the sort - the kind of ones you see on any "use of bullets in power point is BAD" slide share presentation. However, I know I won't get time to get on Flickr and find all those wonderful images with creative commons licenses… but at least the new structure of the session is a good one and should work well. Last years session lacked the focus of a scenario. I get my best ideas in the shower.

The drive to work was largely uneventful, apart from a mad speeding driver who turned out to be an elderly 'granny' rather than a young 'boy racer' as I had expected. That made me laugh out loud. Beware the stereotype!

One hour at work (09:30) and little has been achieved. I have checked our grou.ps social network as one of our incoming students on a UCPD has blogged as part of the induction activities. So I left her a comment. I have written the day's "to do" list, which probably won't get checked again - but it's out of my head now. I have caught up with my "personal learning network" on twitter and favourited a few links that I want to follow up, at some point, who knows when, or if ever. I have finished my all-important coffee.

Messed up on the time of a staff development session on Aspergers Awareness, which means I will have to leave the session early to be appraised… but it did give me time to complete my appraisal form, which technically means that the form has been sent to my appraiser before the appraisal meeting… just not much before.

Quick check of emails and twitter before the free lunch and Aspergers training. One significant point I learnt was that use of metaphors can be problematic for students with Aspergers because some cannot make the connection between the metaphor used and the concept it is illustrating. I always had the understanding that use of metaphors is good, now I have to be doubly sure of who I have in my classes. Perhaps a case of signposting these items more carefully when I mention them to students, be more explicit about the connections I am trying to make.

I was appraised. It was a strange experience and I am not sure that I ended up making all the points I wanted to make. On the other hand there wasn't any new job or role that I have to undertake suddenly sprung on me, so that was good. I also have a better idea of the Department strategy for surviving the recession. I am a bit concerned that my priorities (excellent teaching, learning and assessment experiences and developing research) are not wholly aligned to the strategy… but we can only wait to see what happens.

Since the appraisal I've had difficulty focussing. One of those times where the brain is running at double speed, which means it's very difficult to make progress on anything because you're thinking about everything. Time to return to my list.

Our students are having problems using the grou.ps social network site for our UCPD Induction, so we need to find an alternative. I have sent emails to the students to sit tight, we are working to sort a solution. but figured out a suitable alternative for one of the activities.. and it doesn't involve Blackboard (our institution's VLE).

I actually managed to tick everything off today's to do list. Do you realise how rarely that happens?

Finally left work at 6:30 pm after playing on Blackboard and Twitter while waiting for the rain & traffic to ease.

Home, dinner, watch DVD and sleep.

Uid 198

I began the day by finishing a manuscript before giving it to my boss for comments, after which it will be submitted to a journal shortly (I hope).

I started two reactions, and worked up two reactions. It seems that one of them worked well, and the other I can not tell yet - will have to do more tests tomorrow.

I wrote a draft of an orientations list for new grad students in my lab, thus fulfilling my duties as a safety officer.

Uid 200

Pretty uneventful morning leading up to leaving for work. Woke up at 7:00am. Both of my kids (3 and 10 months) are battling colds and we were concerned that the older one actually had an ear infection because he was complaining about ear pain last night. This morning, no complaints. My younger daughter slept in later than normal, which was a nice break and made getting everyone ready and out of the house easier. I ride with my husband into work because we both work nearby to each other. He is not an academic. It is a 25-mile one-way commute (about 40 minutes).

On the ride in to work, I finished cleaning up a Greenfoot scenario that I am using in class later today to illustrate how to get a random number within a specific range. I want to post it to the Greenroom so others can use it, so I wanted to fix up the comments and take out some unused variables that were left in the code. I want to learn how to get typed user input in a Greenfoot scenario, so I am going to put that in the comments when I upload to the Greenroom. I also want to know if anyone has a good way to do buttons on a sceario (easily).

When I arrived at my office (9:00) and I opened up my email. The Web-CAT server is down. We've been having problems with the grading modules and last night one of our other faculty members said that he could not access his data - this is probably related, but my students are in lab now and some may be trying to submit.

Need to upgrade my tablet to Windows 7 and it looks like I am scheduled for tomorrow, so today I need to back up all the important data from the laptop onto our servers.

Went to go look at the SPLASH website. Used to go to OOPSLA, but since the themes of the conference have moved towards parallel and concurrent programming, I was not interested in participating this year. However, there still seems to be a strong OOPSLA track and even the educator's symposium still has some things relevant to my interests (which aren't parallelism).

Email arrived at 9:25 from TA in lab about Web-CAT issue - wasn't quick enough to get word to them about the situation before students found it themselves, \*sigh\*

In process of uploading data from laptop to server for backup. This will probably take significantly longer than I would like because the wireless connection in my office is painfully slow.

In the meantime, I am going back to read more email. Finally fixed a URL another faculty told me about in an old course page that has instructions for installing the C++ plugins for eclipse. Emailed him to indicate that the instructions were from 2008, originally written by a student and probably weren't the best reference for the current way to install Eclipse. Not interested in changing it drastically at this time because I'm not teaching the course for this semester or next.

Answered another email from a student about my syllabus confirmation form. This semester, I had the students fill out a web form indicated that they had received a copy of the syllabus and read and understood the course policies. The form sends me an email with their name indicating they completed the assignment. It was due Monday. Many students did not complete it, so I have been sending out reminder emails and now every student that completes it wants confirmation that it was done because they all claim they already did it. It is possible that the emails were lost, but since I received a majority of the emails (>80%) it seems as though soem of the students simply did not do the assignment.

Email came from cousins from my husbands side about our daughter's first birthday. They live in Washington, DC and I emailed them yesterday to see if they would be available for her birthday. They might be. It would be nice to see them.

It's 9:45 and I need to get my bags packed and ready to walk to my 10:00 class. I think I need to stop the current upload to the server from my laptop - it will never survive the walk over to the classroom.

On my way to class, I ran into the other instructor that is teaching the "A" section of the course I am teaching the "B" section of (we'll call him Professor A). We are collaborating to a point on the course. We have almost diametrically opposing views on education, so we collaborate as much as possible without arguing over those things. In this way, we each can keep the integrity of our courses while still covering approximately the same material for the students. He told me how much he was enjoying Greenfoot. It is his first semester using it and I explained briefly about the problems with Web-CAT (which effects his students as well).

In class from 10:00-10:50. The class enrollment is 143. It is a course whose syllabus is similar to the new AP CS Principles course and it is full of entirely non-computing, non-engineering, non-science, and non-math majors. It fulfills the university's gen ed requirement for mathematics, so many students who are weak in mathematics take it as an alternative. In class today, I did a CSUnplugged activity for the first time - the binary number activity. We are starting a unit in this class on how the computer works and computer architecture, so what better place to start than with binary numbers.

After class was over, I ran into a former student in the hall. We talked for about 5 minutes. He is graduating at the end of this semester with degrees in electrical and computer engineering and has a job lined up. He was a good student, so I am happy to hear he is doing well. He will be working for a company that works on radar and other steath devices, some government contracts, some non-government work. He interned there over the summer and they offered him a job. He was excited about it.

Back in office and 6 emails to read, mostly about the issues with Web-CAT. One is actually from a former student who is in grad school in California and back in town visiting family. We will probably meet for dinner tonight. He worked for several years on a project with me and we became close. It will be nice to see him and find out more about how grad school is going. He finished his first year last year and will begin his second at the end of the month. He is pursuing a PhD in electrical engineering. We'll call him Mac.

Unpacked my bag from class - put completed papers on a pile for grader, but papers in bag for next class. Pulled out laptop to begin sending more information to the server for backup. While working on that, wrote up my own lecture notes for the other course I am teaching. Should take me through the end of the week in that class (today and Friday). Faculty member from the office next door stopped by. We chatted a bit. He leaves nearby me (within 2 miles) and we have kids the same age. Talked about non-work related stuff. Opened the text for the "principles" course I am teaching trying to decide which sections I am going to cover in Chapters 1 & 2. Need to prepare a lecture for Friday. Have to stop because it is 11:45 and I have my next class at 12:00, so need to pack and up and begin walking over there. Before I left,the ACM Technews came to my mailbox. Skimmed the headlines. Nothing jumped out at me, so I continued on to class, but not before the phone rang from home with an update on the kids - everyone seems okay, but the younger one has not taken her usual morning nap yet, so she's cranky.

In class from 12:00 - 12:50. It's another section of the same course I taught at 10:00. Did same activity. It is always better the second time. Really enjoyed doing the activity. Will definitely look into incorporating more stuff like that into lectures.

Walking back to office, met up with another former student who just started grad school in our department this semester. We talked about how things were going. He was telling me how it was very different transitioning from undergrad to grad than he expected. I think he will do well, he was a talented undergrad. When we arrived at my office, there was already a student waiting for my office hours. Turns out he is actually tutoring one of my students and just had some questions about the course. We talked for a while and then he asked me about learning other languages while he was an undergrad to help his resume when he got out of class.

1:25 - grabbing lunch while in office hours. At this point, there are no more students, so I can work on other things while I wait for anyone to come by. 18 emails came since I left the office. Just read an email "nudge" about this project. Futher emails about an ethics course from the SIGCSE list have come as well as messages about an internationalization issue brought up yesterday. Computers in the lab are slow - leftover problem from last week when a disk had volume of 100% full. More emails about Web-CAT. It has to go totally offline tomorrow for a re-install, which will impact my lab section in the morning. Emailed TA to warn him of this.

Finished email and ate lunch - ham sandwich and cookies. While eating I looked at Yahoo news headlines, TV show spoilers and gossip and on hulu to see if an episode of a show I watch has been uploaded yet. Then (15 minutes later) it was time to go back to figuring out what I am going to teach on Friday to my Principles class and uploading more stuff for backup. But, I was distracted by a file I had open in my task bar that was the schedule for spring classes. We need to look over it and provide comments and feedback about our schedules. I need to make sure that the lab sections for my courses are scheduled at good times and in the correct rooms. The administrative assistant in charge of creating the schedules never seems capable of actually doing this check. If I catch errors now, it will save me tremendous amounts of headaches going forward.

So, using Excel, I make charts for each of our computing labs (two of them) and indicate when the recitations are scheduled, making sure none conflict with each other and none conflict with the lecture times for the course. I have to request changes. I need to eliminate one whole section for my first course because the lecture room only holds 100 and there are seats in recitations for 125. Also, I want to change the time of the Friday recitation section. Further, I want to number them so that the first section in the week is 1 and the last is 4. For my second course, I want to move a section from Mondays to another day. The second Monday of the semester is a holiday and that throws off assignments, so if no recitations are scheduled on a Monday it makes my life easier. Just sent the email to ask for these changes. Took about 20 minutes.

Spent some time looking at a basic outline of topics for the next few weeks in my priniciples course. I am starting a unit on hardware and architecture and I sketched out what order I would like to cover things. Unpacked my bag or finished assignments from class. Need to post information on the class website about what to do if students missed the in-class activity today. Took about 5 minutes to post the information and fix all the HTML permissions.

Showed Professor A the Greenfoot scenario I am going to show my students about random numbers. He would like to show his students as well. Worked on more stuff for my Principles course.

Sometime during this block, I realized that uploading everything for backup on my laptop was mute because I didn't bring my media base with me and without it, there is no CD-ROM drive on my machine, making it impossible for the upgrade to be installed. Oh well, will have to wait for another few days.

Got ready to go to class again at 2:50.

In class from 3:00 - 3:50. This is an introductory programming course for non-majors. Today, we introduced the idea of selection and if-statements. I also started talking about randomizing behavior and showed my demo scenario. I think it helped to illustrate my point.

I walked back to my office and met up with one of my TAs for the principles course. He told me that lab sessions were going well this week and the students seemed to be completing the assignment rather quickly, but doing a fine job. Then, I ran into a colleague I work closely with on many projects and he indicated that they were definitely going to reinstall Web-CAT. I decided at that point to go talk to our IT manager and express to him that he and his staff were doing a good job and to reiterate that I am happy with the progress. It is so hard to make sure that you don't come across as cross or angry in email and just wanted to give some face time to ensure that. We got to talking about my courses and another software installation that I need done from the main computing group on campus (not internal departmental machines). We talked for almost 40 minutes about various topics related to computing.

Came back to 8 emails. Some information from our faculty about a former PhD who won an award. Some other former colleague died. Emails about the ethics and academic integrity discussion on SIGCSE. More email about our Web-CAT troubles. An email from my husband confirming that he should eat dinner without me. (He is taking courses for his MBA on Wednesday nights and sometimes we have dinner together before class.) Left office again for last meeting of the day at 4:57.

Meeting from 5:00-5:50 involves meeting with a bunch of students who are working on a project I have been supervising with another faculty member (Prof G) for a number of years (greater than three, but the actual amount escapes me. This is our weekly status update for the week. The students working on the project were not able to meet this week so there was no forward progress, but we did look into some of the code base to ensure that the students were looking in the right place this week. We are trying to change the way the project reads and writes XML. The projects saves files in XML and one of our users has asked for a change that would require us to change our XML. Mac actually stopped by the meeting and brought me crossword puzzles. When he worked on the project, he would always bring me puzzles to work on/help him finish during our weekly project meetings.

Did go out to dinner with Mac around 6:30. We spent dinner talking about grad school and how things were going with him. We also talked about our families and such. We are actually the same age (he's a year older), so we have a lot in common just because of that. We also both grew up in the same area, so we have common experiences. It was a nice evening.

Got back to campus and back to my office around 8:50. My husband was done with his class and came to my office so we could drive back home. Left the office at 8:52. Arrived home around 40 minutes later. My daughter was asleep, but not my son. We worked to get him to sleep. I cleaned up a few things and went to bed around 10:30.

Uid 204

8am-10am: Mixed tasks, mainly email. The teaching-related email includes...

a discussion on how to teach web form designers to recognise and cater for the variety of names found in real life;

contacting a student regarding his absence from a test;

discussing the next assignment with a lecturer at an overseas campus; and

discussing with colleagues an application for late admission to a coursework masters degree.

10am-3.30pm: A full-day workshop on the challenges of running multi-campus subjects/courses. This was facilitated by folk from another university as part of a national research project on that topic. My department offers many such courses across two main campuses in this country, one in another country, and several smaller campuses. I myself coordinate the offerings of three such courses, so I'm forever having to create new assignments and exams, and my 'teaching' year is the whole year except for a small break from 24 December to 4 January, as the overseas campus runs on a completely different timeline from our domestic ones. I feel I was able to contribute a lot to the discussion. The workshop was more about gathering opinions than presenting solutions to the challenges, which is a shame: it would have been good to be shown some good practices, particularly if they were adaptable to our own situation.

3.30pm-4pm: Dealing with a student misconduct case. One of my roles is to deal with all cases of student academic misconduct across the department, in a system designed to ensure uniformity of treatment.

6pm-7pm: At home now, and writing the initial letters for a new academic misconduct case that was referred to me today.

8.30pm-8.45pm: Backing up my files - an essential aspect of every day's work.

Uid 205

I am not teaching this term, but preparing for the teaching of Early Modern Literary Culture next term. As a graduate student I do not yet have onerous teaching responsibilities.

I initiated an informal discussion with the teaching assistants who worked on last year's course. I also booked attendance at an external lecture on one of the texts that features on the course.

Uid 206

We've had a 'development' event. These things are scheduled regularly through the year and are pretty much compulsory, which gives a flavour of the Dean's management style. One guy cut short a research trip to another city because of this one. The day started with some administrative updates: student numbers, financial regulations, NSS results. Later we split into departmental meetings. Most, if not all, of that was focused on students. Assessment is causing some concern: do we over-assess? (probably); what is the policy on setting re-sit work? (there had been some inconsistencies in practice this summer); can the deadline for re-sit marking be extended next year? (let’s hope so; we only get a week, and it always coincides with a conference). I then had an hour to run a session on research ethics. It was a bit of a challenge to prepare, given the range of disciplines present – groups that have very different approaches to research, and differing experience of 'research ethics'. But it seemed to go OK. I wondered where on earth I developed the confidence to stand up in front of 60-odd academics. But they’re a friendly bunch really. It often surprises me how willing academics are to go along with whatever you’ve planned. They're no different from students really.

During the afternoon we split into ‘working groups’ to discuss faculty plans. I was in the ‘research’ group. 'X' was leading the session. He’s a Professor, close to retiring, who has some kind of historic grudge against the Research Committee chair that he won’t let go. It doesn’t make for a constructive discussion, as anything that happens at Research Committee is presented to colleagues with a distinct ‘X’ twist to it, which generally seems to be intended to undermine the Research Committee chair. I’m not sure any progress was made.

The day finished with an update on the personal tutor system. A recent review had revealed a gender difference in the way staff view the personal tutor role. The males considered academic guidance to be the most important part, and the females, the pastoral aspect. I wonder whether this is really a difference in attitude, or if it could equally reflect a difference in experience. Could it be that students approach male & female personal tutors in different ways? Generally all academics here are accessible to students – they can just knock on our doors and will usually be seen immediately – so students don’t necessarily go to their personal tutor for everything. They can choose who they want to talk to.

Uid 207

22.00 End of day – will write this on my laptop now. Have never managed to maintain a daily reflective diary so signing up to this project and the expectation of a monthly day of reporting and reflection seems like a good way of both inputting to the project and giving myself some kind of feedback. 5 days before teaching term starts.

Diary – 15th September

06.00

Get up shower, breakfast at cmpt, writing e-mails to international year students who are already abroad and whose terms have started. Dealing with students who spend a year abroad means that you can start having to feedback to them as early as mid-July. Reply to e-mails from a school student who came to an open day and to school teacher who wants to bring in 24 AS level students for a workshop (one of the days suggested is in 2 weeks time and in our first week of undergraduate labs. – have to reply suggesting something later when our harassed technical staff may be doing less fire fighting in the teaching labs.)

07.45

Coffee at end of road hoping to meet retired friends with very early morning habits– end up reading the Guardian instead as they are clearly sleeping late.

08.15

Back to house and go to dentist early to avoid traffic - sketch out professional body opinion article which they have asked me to write while sitting in waiting room .– get some of it done

09.30

Into work – sit in car park making mobile call to hospital where aged parent is currently residing 250 miles away. Have been told to try and catch doctor on rounds between 9 am and 10am – the construction of the building means that my mobile doesn’t work in my office. Stressful conversation with doctor. Decide I must get down there during working hours on Friday in order to meet with consultant.

09.30-11.00

Dealing with incoming e-mails re. start of teaching next week – update my teaching timetable (again!)

Send out e-mails and get letters our re. UAS course/schools/CRB checks/paperwork

11.00

Realise I am late for a maths teaching meeting that was meant to be over coffee in the staff room - ………..

11.15-12.00

Look at reorganising the first lecture that I have to give in 8 days time. Colleague with whom I co-teach the course has some commitments abroad in the first few weeks of teaching so we have to reorganise the material a little.

12.00

Lunch with student support administrator – we go off campus and enjoy hugely talking about non-work stuff.

13.30-16.00

More teaching admin/reworking of lecture

16.00

Get coffee in staff room – realise I have not sent draft contract for future regional coordinator to our business person - remember to do that when back in office.

Ask head of department to remind all staff about induction event for first year students. Some of my colleagues claim to be too shy to attend….

16.30 – 18.00

Write 400 words for professional body opinion article. They want reflection on the start of the academic year and the expectation of first year students arriving. Make me think a little harder about the expectations on both sides.

18.00

Take advantage of late night opening of store and go and pick up new TV – my old cathode ray portable one has been delivering a purple picture for several weeks now. Am truly excited to set it up at home.

20.00

Cook supper and revise the 400 word article while watching back-log of truly mindless TV recorded on PVR, relentlessly fast forward through adverts. Write this diary before end of day.

Uid 212

Ok, so what did I do yesterday? It was the Faculty of Business and Law's Faculty Planning Day. As a Law Academic, I was expected to attend. I made it to work about 9ish, and then made my way up to the new fancy business building for 9.30pm. I then stood in a hugh queue to "register" our Dean came around and said it was an authentic experience been made to queue like students do in enrolment, I was less than impressed with that justification. I signed up to some workshops in the afternoon on how to be an effective personal tutor and how to use the student voting system (crickets) which our faculty has just invested in. I grabbed a cup of tea and some biscuits and went into the lecture theatre to hear our Dean talk to us about the National Student Survey and how we can improve, what the issues are, what are success are and then watched a presentation by our financial accountants on the predicted budgets for next year (it made depressing reaading with the predicted cut in HEFCE funding!).

Uid 213

I spent the day doing planning - we have a new group leader, so we spent some time going over the likely student numbers for semester A and the amount of teaching I'll be doing. Our workload has to increase this year before we bring in any adjunct teachers, so the quantity of class time will increase, which I don't mind, but the knock-on increased marking will be the killer. I'm not going to think about that part yet!

The afternoon I spent in a research meeting talking about grant opportunities. I have lots of ideas, but it's finding time to write the applications and then finish the projects - one of the things I should be doing now, but teaching planning and induction prep cuts into that time drastically.

After work I had drinks with a friend who finished her PhD long before me, but the friend still is doing adjunct work - a portfolio academic, they seem to be called now. They also have more publications. I feel very lucky, but also a little bit guilty. The job market seems entirely random (although we are in different disciplines, so it's not like we've ever gone up for the same jobs). What will happen to the academics who don't get jobs in this time of cuts?

Uid 214

Although an academic I also work in local government as a heritage officer - advising a local planning authority on heritage related issues as required under law. By chance, this first of the 'Share' project post coincides with a day spent at my other job away from my university.

A few things. For a start, this was a long day: i left my home at 6.30am and got home 12 hours later, only to do more emails once home - hence this posting is made at 7.30pm. It should be noted that those are about my normal working hours - so lets debunk the myth of the relaxed academic schedule for a start.

I spent pretty much the entire day - including working right through lunch with a hurried sandwich eaten at my desk - working on what are known as 'Strategic Consultations' - official replies on behalf of my local government employer to local and national consultations on planning issues that impact on the heritage of the county I work in. The first four of these consultations - a set of four documents, each of some 30 pages - came from the national executive body for heritage in England, English Heritage. These were a set of three 'thematic research agendas' and a stand-alone consultation on 'setting' (the wider physical and social 'bubble' around an historic site). In each case I read and reviewed the consultation documents before sending back a detailed reply to each. This took all morning and then some of the early afternoon. The latter half of the day was similarly spent on other consultations, this time local ones. The county I work in is 'two tier' - with a county as well as various district/borough planning authorities. I work at the county level, and was responding in the afternoon to a series of district/borough consultations on 'local development frameworks' - the legal frameworks for local government planning and development control that are under review across England at present. As in the morning, I carefully read each document before sending back a detailed reply to each.

For my last hour at work I then responded to various less urgent emails and planned my schedule for the rest of the week. Then it was off home on my daily commute - a walk, a train ride and another walk home via the supermarket. On the train home I read another work related document - an international survey of the impact of the recession on archaeology (Schlanger, N., and Aitchison, K. (eds) (2010), Archaeology and the

Global Economic Crisis. Tervuren: Culture Lab Éditions, http://ace-archaeology.eu/fichiers/25Archaeology-and-the-crisis.pdf).

Once home, I then sat down to respond to yet more emails, this time from my university. We're a few weeks away from the start of term so things are exceptionally busy with planning for that. I also have two books nearing completion, so have a lot of last-minute admin to sort with those. This 'Share' project entry should be one of the last things I do today at the end of a 14 hour working day - I need to go and cook dinner for my wife, another academic who just texted me to say she is on the way home from a long day of meetings!

Uid 217

A pretty standard day for the week before our registration week, this, I suppose, consisting of doing highly professorial things such as photocopying. This is technically the last research week of the summer, but no research can be done in a day of this kind.

The day begins, as usual, with fifty minutes' travel.

9.30-11 e-mails and coursepack preparation (by which I mean mostly standing at the photocopier, but also updating the topicsheet questions and suggested reading for a module I taught last year)

11-12.30 coursepack preparation (writing discussion topics and photocopying): same as earlier, but this time working jointly with a colleague with whom I'm co-teaching an MA methodologies module

12.30-1.15 meeting with Business Development Manager to finalise a grant application. The BDM in question is, unusually for such managers in my experience, a sharp and thoroughly engaging person with a PhD in my field and a good deal of openness to the kinds of thing an academic needs from those who advise us on grant applications: very refreshing, he is. Needless to say, my engagement in these matters, as for all of us, has changed a great deal in the last year or two with all the pressure (very intense at my institution) to bring in funding. Worse, I recently got a grant - from an overseas funding body - to the tune of £50K and was then told that I should have consulted the bureaucrats before applying for it because it was the 'wrong kind of grant', i.e. not full-economic-costing and thus did not bring, along with the money to pay for a research assistant to do the actual intellectual work, a large bucket of free money (sorry, I mean 'overhead') for the institution. So now I have to work that bit harder to get another grant of the right kind so they will stop growling at me. (Is this what I signed up for when I decided to be an academic? Er, no.)

1.15-1.55 lunch with colleague. You can tell it's not actual termtime, because there was time for lunch.

2-3.30 meeting about getting EU funding. Quite informative, though not esp uplifting, since the particular project I have in mind doesn't fit the model at all. But a useful occasion, not least because a professor in a different dept is on the funders' panel and was pleasingly frank about it all.

3.30-4 coursepack preparation: more of the same

4-5.15 supervision with panicking PhD student. She arrived to shout at me because I should have told her some critical material she has come across that she thinks means she no longer has a thesis topic, and how come I didn't know about it? So I calmed her down, told her a) that her supervisor can't be expected to have read everything about her PhD topic or it wouldn't actually be a PhD topic, and b) that the chapter in question is in fact helpful for her and not the disaster she thinks it is. She seemed less stressed when she went away, thankfully. (It turned out she had already unloaded over another of my colleagues before coming to see me, so that was two hours of academic time spent on one panic. But such is life and teaching, and she needs regular reassuring.)

5.15-5.45 discuss MA seminar enrolment and teaching load with departmental administrator: a fraught conversation involving an overload of students from other MAs in an MA module I teach mainly for the MA I convene. So, a slightly difficult discussion had to be had.

5.45-6.30 e-mails, coursepack preparation: more of the same

6.30 drink with colleague - an old friend from my school days who, unpredictably, now holds a highish managerial position at my institution. Much discussion about things like 'impact' and 'knowledge transfer', but eventually we moved off that and got onto mutual friends' love lives and other more enjoyable topics.

And, finally, fifty minutes home. ('Why', American visitors ask, 'do you live so far out of the centre?' 'Choose?', I say: 'Have you seen a) how much properties cost in this city and b) what academic salaries are like?' An endless topic....)

More next month, then. Bye.

Uid 219

It's tough today and morale is low. I had gone to bed at midnight after attending a meeting at the school where I am a Governor, editing some writing I had done, and completing my emails. I was up again at 5.30am thanks to the cries of my toddler son. By the time I had finished seeing to him (one of my three children), my head was throbbing. I tried to go back to sleep but didn't manage to, so an hour later I ran a bath and read my library book whilst wallowing a bit and conditioning my hair. (It is a perpetual battle to remain working as a female academic without ending up looking like one). One of my other children played angelically with the toddler for a bit while I found an outfit that wasn't falling apart too much (I have hardly been able to afford to buy new clothes for the last decade since I went into academe, so I have been wearing out ones I bought whilst in my previous career in the late 1990s, plus I wear my 'funeral' suit a lot. Fortunately I bought some new shoes last year and wear those for work most of the time, as my others are so worn they hurt my feet. I wear Fit Flops at home to save expense). My nanny told me the baby had missed me a lot yesterday and I had a little cry about this at various points. I wondered why I was paying £375 a week to leave my baby with another woman like this (I earn £600 a week after tax, being top of the lecturer pay scale).

Left at 7.40am. I drove the 80 minutes to work (it would be a five hour round trip by public transport). I filled up at the usual petrol station, as I do every day. Commuting costs me £25 in petrol daily since I was made redundant from my local university, plus I will have to pay 40% higher parking charges from this term, at £2.50 a day. The University told us HEFCE had insisted on this as a way of greening the campus - I remain unconvinced as see it as pure revenue raising from staff. Lately I have been having a secret capuccino and croissant on the way to work to break the monotony - fuel for the car, fuel for me at the same time. I listened to Radio 4 during the journey, although this often makes me angry as they do not report the news relating to my subject very well. I keep meaning to download more cheerful things onto my iPod to listen to in the car, but I am not sure how to do this in a way that will let me navigate it all.

I got to work and found a disabled parking space easily - this is good as often our spaces are blocked by university maintenance vehicles using it as overflow parking. The lift was broken so I had to carry all my things the long way around (it broke on Friday last week while I was waiting for it). Every step hurts as I have mobility problems and am waiting for an operation.

My email didn't work when I got in so I rebooted my PC half a dozen times and eventually got it going. However my iPhone won't sync my calendar for some reason, so that's another project - I am keeping two diaries at present which makes me nervous about errors. I had a spontaneous cup of tea with one of my favourite Associate Tutors from 10-11, where we talked about interesting educational things past and present, and then I looked at my to-do list. 11 things on there today:

1. Revise team meetings plan. A third of our course is staffed by casualised staff so there is no esprit de corps. Hence we introduced regular meetings, but we cannot afford to pay the casualised staff to attend them. A bit of a Catch-22 problem, methinks.

2. Check room suitability for teaching, A recent systems failure meant that big groups were allocated to tiny rooms in a bizarre and random fashion, so everything needs checking manually now.

3. Produce events calendar for department.

4. Chase online order for son's football boots and astro trainers, which were not delivered yesterday despite payment of supplement.

5.Confirm hospital appointment date.

6. Produce legible labels for lever arch files in office. Currently trying to make working environment more pleasat, although I am pretty lucky already as I have my own fair sized office and newish furniture.

7. Make appointments to see Pastoral Tutees (no=15). I am supposed to see them termly to hear about the trivia of their lives. I find it hard to be very interested as they seem so pampered to me, and indeed I am even less interested since one tried to attack me in my office last term (reported, but me spoken to for raising my voice in response and asking her to get out rather than her being spoken to for being aggressive). Despite this, most do seem to like me though, and find my advice helpful.

8. Advance research funding application. This is the eleventh in three years - none funded thus far. Depressing. I used to get a lot of funding. I suppose another year or two of this and I will have become a research zombie in REF terms.

9. Copy some teaching and admissions multimedia resources.

10. Delete a document in case of future FOI request.

11. Sort out Outlook issues.

The tasks are pretty straightforward in many ways, most of the job routine, clerical, dull, little scope to make decisions or direct strategy in a useful manner. We only get consulted about silly little things most of the time. I rattled through most of the list and then went to lunch at 12.30.

Lunch was actually quite nice, red pepper soup then pork in mushroom sauce (£5.65). Queue was dealt with more efficiently than usual, so I wondered if they had realised that this had started to become an issue for people. Some friendly colleagues in canteen, had a bit of a laugh and a joke. Went for coffee afterwards in student coffee bar and discussed a conference with a colleague. Then went back to office to meet with some casualised staff to find out what they are planning for this academic year on my course. All seem keen and hungry for work, and I have to keep quiet about the fact that I think they should all be given proper jobs rather than kept dangling, as being on message is part of my role.

Got home at 7.15pm and played with toddler for half an hour, husband got home at 7.45 (early for him), then we bathed baby and put him to bed. Put other children to bed. At 9pm watched the final episode of a rubbish TV drama called The Deep that we had recorded, whilst eating some microwave mussels. Went to bed 10.30pm.

Uid 221

Morning: dealing with email, preparing for this afternoon's session, preparing for next week's induction.

Transferred across to another site.

Afternoon: running a staff development session for new staff.

Having a discussion with colleagues about next week's user group meeting.

Uid 223

A fairly satisfying day, pre-teaching but got some necessary preparation out of the way.

Get to work at 9.30. Check email: an exchange about university funding for a research project on which I have been a collaborator. The Principal Investigator of the project has now left the university but is continuing the project and contact with the university; I have now agreed to take over as the PI. This is good because I had been wondering about research directions to pursue this year; now I need to get some documents about what I've got myself into :-) I also need to go and see the Head of Research about giving some research methodology workshops for faculty.

Other mail: arrangements to meet with a doctoral candidate for whom I am second supervisor; and arrangements for a course which I am covering for another university on Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers.

Now reading a BBC news story about dying languages.

About 20 emails, but they take a long time to go through because several lead to interesting sites (e.g. HE Academy research syntheses), or things I need to do while I remember.

12.00. Responded to various emails. Tomorrow the whole department is going to join a meeting on our other campus, so have been negotiating transport. Two colleagues dropped by and we talked about the summer holiday which has just ended. As I'll be off campus tomorrow and then it's the weekend (when I'm covering the extra Discourse Analysis course), I need to find and print some materials today.

Just got the final pdf of a special print issue of our online teaching and learning journal. I had originally requested 300 printed copies, but now the quote has gone down a bit so I'm going for 500, although I'm not sure who I'll send so many copies too... I got this into shape to publish online, posted on the university website.

I forgot about keeping the diary after this point. Summary:

13.00 I met the colleague who is co-teaching Discourse Analysis, and discussed the course outline and some details of the first session or two.

Then I ended up staying at the office until 7pm publishing the journal, trying to find video-conference rooms for cross-campus Doctoral Study Community meetings in the rest of the semester, and other odds and ends.

Uid 224

Today is in an unusual context for us here - our city had a huge earthquake 10 days ago, and the university was closed for cleanup and recovery until today. Consequently people need to talk a lot about what has happened to them, how their courses/deadlines will change given the interruption, and there is a lot of planning and communicating to do about changed deadlines and in fact changed courses so that we can complete in time for graduation.

7:10-7:30am Check emails

8:50-9:15 Reviewing proposed high school curriculum material for Computer Science

9:30-9:55 Transcribing one of my educational videos so that it can be have translated subtitles for other countries (I'm currently working with some people doing a Polish translation)

10:30 - 11:30 Morning tea to welcome back postgraduates after a 10 day break due to the earthquake, and discuss the changes to plans.

11:30-12:00 Making arrangements for general access to our computer labs due to closure of a lab in another building after earthquake damage.

12-12:20pm planning a Chinese version of some of our educational material with a visitor to the department from China.

2-2:15pm Finish the video transcription and upload it to YouTube, where it was automatically synched to the video without me having to give timings. Amazing! It will save hours of manual work.

3:00 to 3:30 Dealing with student cases where personal issues in their lives were having a severe impact on their study.

Between the above: spent about 2 hours writing an exam for a first-year algorithms class.

8:30pm 10 minutes posting information to my class about changed arrangements due to the earthquake

9pm 20 minutes on Skype to a colleague in Sweden talking about cool ideas for teaching algorithms (this time of day is where our time zones overlap comfortably)

9:30pm 20 minutes booking details for a conference trip

10:30pm The Chinese translation (to be recorded tomorrow) arrived in the wrong format; spent about half of the next hour getting clarification and adjusting it ready for the recording in the morning.

11:30pm I think I'm prepared enough for tomorrow... time for some sleep

Uid 226

Sept 15, 2010

Day 1 of journaling what I do as an academic. This year I am on special assignment to the National Science Foundation, a federal agency, so I am not teaching at all. [Note to researchers - you may want to expunge this identity revealing information at some point.] I put down in the profile that I am a professor at XYZ teaching institution but the fact is that I'm not there much this year. Instead I am in a different city, doing 'other duties as assigned'. However, those other duties are very much part of the academic life so I will journal faithfully.

I believe I will journal my entire day in detail since even the minutiae have meaning - we are, after all, often driven by the constraints of our personal lives.

5:15 - 6:30 AM Got up for yoga exercise and meditation

6:30 - 7:30 AM Personal hygiene, breakfast, pack lunch, go

7:30 - 8:15 AM Commute time. Read a novel on the train.

8:30 - 10:00 AM In a meeting planning a large event (1500 people) to take place in early January. My role at this time is mostly observational since I am new and this planning process is well underway. However, I volunteered to help with event evaluation and, later, analysis of the evaluation data which I find personally interesting although I feel like I am cramming in another thing for which I may have insufficient time. However, I would like to become expert at this (I should say more expert at this) and one of the people working on the project is well known as an expert in evaluation. I think I can learn something valuable from her so I am going to make time to do a good job. Of course this means that I must make feedback to her today's priority. Sigh. Also started reviewing SIGCSE papers during the meeting (multi-tasking!). We have only TWO WEEKS for SIGCSE reviews this year. What the [expletive deleted] are they thinking??????

10:00-10:45 AM Checked email and followed up on my travel authorization which is still 'Under Review'. Since I leave tomorrow this is a concern for me. Also started this journal.

10:45 - 11:40 AM Planned to attend a cultural event/lecture on Hispanic Heritage at 11:00 but, as usually happens, will do my priority work task instead of taking the interesting byway. Oh, wait, there is something more urgent. I must put together my Telework plan so I can officially work on the road or at home. Interrupted by urgent request to obtain a signature. This is the end of the fiscal year for us when all money must be spent. Spent 20 minutes or so printing out then running a piece of paper around. Back to Telework agreement. Interrupted by colleagues for chat, technical assistance and peer mentoring. Back to Telework agreement.

11:40 - 11:55 AM Checking new email and cleaning out backlog. Checking to see if anything urgently needs attention. I do this a lot. It is a way of keeping myself organized.

11:55 - 12:10 Started working on feedback on evaluation questions from meeting earlier today.

12:10 - 1:00 PM Brown bag at library about reading genre literature - strictly for fun.

1:00 - 1:05 PM - Back to checking email

1:05 - 2:00 PM Took my evaluation questions to lunch. Completed my analysis of draft of evaluation questions (on paper). Missing electronic format, however. Also read through reviews of one grant proposal.

2:00 - 2:05 PM Back to email. Then back to tracking down my travel authorization. To no avail.

2:05 - 2:35 PM Received electronic copy of evaluation questions so can provide written feedback. Interrupted for peer mentoring. Back on task documenting my feedback. Finished and sent off via email.

2:35 - 3:05 PM Trying (AGAIN) to resolve my travel authorization. Interrupted someone else for peer mentoring about travel authorization and other issues. Very helpful ideas.

3:05 - 3:15 PM Checking email

3:15 - 3:35 PM Facilitating planning for a training session for 30 new investigators. In reality I was doing gofer work for someone who was not in the office. Technically I am the lead on this project today since the real lead is out of the office. But in reality I just run errands for the lead. A bit beneath my dignity but I might as well be cheerful about it.

3:35 - 4:35 PM In a meeting to explore partnerships with the office that funds international research collaborations.

4:35 - 4:55 PM Checking email. Still working on travel authorization. Getting closer.

4:55 - 5:05 PM Break

5:05 - 5:15 PM Processing a grant proposal. This is my primary job function so it is a bit discouraging that I've eked out less than 1 hour to work on it today.

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6:00-6:15 PM Break

6:15 - 6:30 PM Spent a little more time on reviewing SIGCSE conference papers

6:30-7:15 PM Commuting home

After I got home I spent about another 20 minutes on email and about half an hour packing for travel tomorrow as well as taking some time for personal stuff.

Some parenthetical comments - I'm still in the orientation stage of the job. There are 6 of us starting at once, all getting acquainted and all trying to figure out what we are doing. Each of us works on 3 to 4 different grant programs (not all the same ones) as well as doing outreach to prospective grant applicants and responding to questions from people who have previously been awarded grants. So it is a pretty complex job. Today was a 'meeting' day. Some days are 'reflective' days when I have extended periods of time to read grant proposals and process.

It was a bit discouraging to actually track the time I spent on specific activities. No wonder it seems so hard to get things done. Next month I will probably just list activities briefly instead of giving all this detail.

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Uid 227

Today was the programme board for the resit examinations.

Yet again there was a general apathy from members of academic members of staff and we had to call a sick member of staff in to make the meeting quorate. The head of department was a way and his new scheme of 'red' events of highest performance seems to had little effect in persuading some colleuges that teaching should come first then research

Uid 229

This is an unusual day to begin these monthly diary accounts – the academic year has not yet begun, and I have been given (in theory) the opportunity to engage in some scholarly activity at home. I began promptly at 9:00 – but had to put off my planned activities to deal with a number of other pressing issues. Yesterday, I gained some details of the teaching commitments for level 3 research supervision sets (my full timetable has not yet been sent through to me, although the level 3 and MSc inductions are due to start on Monday (20 September)) – and I wanted to make sure that I entered this into my diary and onto a Gantt chart, as recently we were told that the University had “agreed” to reduce the turnaround for all summative assessments. All assignments will be returned within 2 weeks by 2012/3; but for this year, we’re expected to complete scripts within 3 weeks (level 3 and MSc assignments), or 4 weeks (levels 1 and 2).

On a related theme, I received and responded to an e-mail on my Remote Desktop Connection, inviting me to meet with the secretary of our branch of the union (UCU) to discuss my concerns that undue pressures are being placed onto academic staff, without structures in place to alleviate these; and that the focus on speed was likely to reduce the quality of feedback that could be provided for any summative work.

Other e-mails that required attention included organisation of a pre-launch meeting for a level 2 module, and concerns being raised by two of the incoming level 3 students regarding ethics issues arising from their research proposals. I also found out about the Share Project, and decided to sign up. Therefore, it was nearly 11:00 before I was able to devote my attention to the things that I had planned for today.

Following my Development & Performance Review for 2009-10, I plan to submit three articles for publication in the professional literature: an informal account and evaluation of a move to a 20-credit structure for our Professional Development Diploma course in Social/Therapeutic Horticulture (which was shortlisted for a Teaching Excellence Award last year, and which includes a completely new module on project development); an account of a pilot study into the therapeutic potential of the Nintendo Wii from an occupational therapy perspective; and a discussion of the use of the Model of Human Occupation as a tool for understanding and evaluating how students learn, as a complex adaptive system). I therefore divided the rest of the day (from 11:00 until 21:30, with a one-hour break to collect my wife from her workplace, and for lunch; and another half-hour for my evening meal) into two main parts. The first part of the day consisted of extensive searching of Google Scholar and of academic databases for articles that would be suitable for the literature reviews of all three studies; and also in comparing the international accreditation status for horticultural therapy internationally (as there is no recognised system in this regard in the UK). After 18:30, I moved across to setting up an online facility to collaborate on the Nintendo Wii data analysis with my co-researcher; and began to explore for emerging themes from our focus-group transcript.

After logging off at 21:30, I had an hour to catch up on my fluid intake (I had a kidney stone about 18 months ago, and was warned that I don’t drink enough if I’m working, as I get engrossed in what I’m doing) and watch some TV, before bed.

Uid 230

Less than three months until the contract ends. Getting lots of help putting together an interview presentation. I really want to get out of University research; I have an interview for an office job as a research manager for Arthritis Research. I would also take on industrial research/development/science, but this is all done through recruitment agencies and I haven't yet had my details forwarded for any roles I'd serisouly consider taking absolutely right now. We get the chance to do lots of training in this job, but none of it's really geared towards working in a commercial biomanufacturing department.

Work is going well, got lots of good data two weeks ago. Now desperately trying to get more done in time and also to repeat as necessary. Also getting together a practical demonstration for an open day this weekend.

Journey to work not great; codes have been changed on bike stores. Lots of aggro caused for other people, but I didn't have any problems. Probably rain later, bike rusted, me wet. Would use bus but I'm not paying £5.50 for a 4 mile journey to take 40 minutes, instead of 20 riding a bike. Car makes sense, but spaces run out now term's nearly back in. And we have a transport and travel office that's meant to make things easier for us....

Uid 231

This is the chronological tale of my day.

7.30am get out of bed and have a cup of tea - early for me, think about what to do first in terms of urgent priorities.

8-9am deal with emails from overnight - I use the morning to get rid of things that have come in overnight as well as left overs from the day before - we teach and supervise throughout the world. I recieve an average of 130 emails per day. I check emails every hour or so, most days. I also received nine phone calls throughout today from admin staff and research assistants and students. Two calls were about working with the student union to try and reform two bad faculty processes that are detrimental to students. More often than not, the students union has more power than academics.

9am - shower, dress and go into work.

930am - 10am Organising an exam for students who failed a course in their last trimester. We moved heaven and earth for these students to resit their exam in complicance with policy, so they could graduate or not in time as it would be costly to stay on in AUstralia and their parents had already booked tickets from Thailand to attend their graduation in October. Good feeling, both for the students and for beating the bureacracy!

10am-1pm Meeting with colleague to work on research paper on sessional academics and the quality of teaching and learning. This is lovely work, playing with data trying to make sense of it.

1.30-3pm Go home to work on my lecture for tomorrow, post some information to Blackboard for students and sort out groups for the first assignment - I have 110 students of 19 nationalities and in the first assignment I like them to be in homogeneous groups to speed up skills in data base searches, reading and understanding scholarly journals, annotating journal articles, linking articles and evaluating them. As it is the second week of teaching tomorrow, I want to make sure the groups are as bedded down as possible so students can start the assignment. Enjoyable but time consuming work. I am sure I overdo it.

3 -4pm admin duties as PRogram COnvenor of the MBA and MBusiness courses - checking admissions, credits and general enquiries from students and admininstrative staff. This is necessary work that directly helps students so it is important to be quick about it, but it is boring and I resent it because it is a big load for which I receive almost no recogition apart from the students and the admin staff which almost makes it worthwhile.

4- 8pm trawl data from our research on sessional academics to look for possible correlations and themes and sketch out a conference paper. Nice work.

8 -9pm work on Union issues \_ I am president of the Branch, eg. reply to Union emails and develop an agenda for the next committe meeting as well as a draft strategy for industrial action. This is necessary work and I believe in it but resent the time it takes away from my precious time for reseach.

9pm Eat some very bad food! while continuing to do emails.

9.15-9.30pm - write diary for first time, including thinking about what I did all day apart from what the diary said.

Uid 232

Principal tasks today were:

Research student supervision (2 hours)

Development of School strategic plan (1 hour)

Research proposal preparation (3 hours)

Research workshop (evening dinner)

Other time taken up by email etc.

Uid 233

After a long summer break I'm finding it hard to get going. I seem to be working very slowly.

I got to my office at 8.30am and made a very long list of things to do. Despite all good intentions I looked at email and immediately got drawn into replies and distractions. It was soon 10.30 and time for coffee with colleagues but weâ€™d forgotten that large numbers of students had started to arrive on campus and so queues in the refectory were long and slow. I enjoyed watching new students negotiating new friendships and overhearing their first impressions, fears and nervous questions about where to go next. My colleagues appeared to be in the same state of confusion as me but generally looked well and relaxed after the summer holiday.

In my diary I had four meetings arranged and two extra were created by people popping in 'just in case you were free'. Two meetings were concerned with administrative issues such as student enquiries and registration, timetables, induction for postgraduates. I met to agree with heads of department work load hours allocated for staff to undertake dissertation supervision. Why are some tutors reluctant to take on students?

There was also a personal review meeting, delayed from July. I like my reviewer and we know that some of this a paper exercise but get it done so we can tick off another university requirement. The last meeting was supervision with a student so we went through her draft literature review and agreed a timeline for future chapters.

During the day I visited the library to return a pile of books, mostly unread from the summer. Walking to that building was not straightforward because of the many diversions caused by workmen digging holes, filling in holes and laying paving or turf. Some colleagues report that they cannot work in their offices because of on-going work with heating systems, replacement windows and decorating. I always hope that this work will be done when academic staff and students are on holiday but it never is.

What else have I done? Iâ€™ve entered many more meetings in my diary, collected a set of assignments to mark and tried to find an external examiner for my course. A large proportion of my day has been spent talking to people and so tomorrow I intend to work at home, in peace and quiet with no interruptions and mark student work.

Uid 234

08:00 arrived at work;

08:00 - 09:30 Answered emails & phones cals. Predominately about the Collaborative Learning Intiative; on the one hand with another academic about the logistics of room bookings and on the other hand trying to recruit more service users & carers.

09:30-11:30 went to another building to escape the noise of building works.

Uid 235

Started the day as usual blurring the boundary between 'home' and 'work' - checking emails whilst in my nightie, and discussing university matters over breakfast with my husband who works at the same university. Some amusement about our university's appearance (or rather that of the squirming registrar) in a Guardian article about new students with no accommodation to go to.

In the morning, I did a lot of essentially clerical work - finishing off a flier for some seminars, sending mass emails about them, going over the website and identifying mistakes about them. This is because, for this particular aspect of my work, I have been assigned a secretarial assistant who is legendary for her uselessness and inability to attend to details. What's worse is that she is quite blithe about it as she doesn't see anything we do as particularly important. I have a feeling she has not mastered cut-and-paste so retypes everything with new and interesting spelling and grammar errors. It is deeply embarrassing to see some of the nonsense that she puts out in the name of the department, it makes us look like a bunch of halfwits. We are hoping that she is one of the people who has responded to the university's call for early retirements and voluntary redundancies.

Speaking of which ... I am accosted by head of department who is relieved that I have decided not to apply for this. Instead I am asking for a six-month reduction in hours to 3 days a week - which I know will be difficult because we do not actually have set hours of work, formal holiday entitlement etc. How will I know when my 3 days are up? Given that I often work at weekends and in the evenings I'm not sure how it will pan out - but I need some time to myself after a pretty horrendous year, dealing with severe depression and a resident relative with dementia. Relative is now safely in residential care and things are improving, but I'm anxious not to endanger a fairly fragile recovery with an unmanageable workload. I know it is going to be a very hard year, particularly once the scale of cuts to HE budgets emerges next month.

So - head of department OK with this proposal, not least because it will free up a chunk of salary to pay someone to take on some teaching.

Take delivery of various pieces of bumf from learned society in which I am actively involved, and consider how I am going to maintain these commitments on reduced hours (answer - will do it in my own time if necessary, as it's one of the things that keeps me sane).

Mid-morning I go to a 3-hour workshop on collaborative and interdisciplinary research, run very informally by senior academics in Anthropology and Philosophy. Interesting, but like many of these things it's run on the basis of experienced people sharing anecdotes and maxims from their own experience. There seems to be little awareness that there is research about research (so to speak) which they could make use of and that might offer a broader view. Useful to meet several people from different departments whom I hadn't met before, and identified one possible collaboration on doctoral education with a colleague in Criminology. We have no shared staff space in the university to speak of, no SCR, food outlets are all very busy and shared with thousands of undergraduates, so few opportunities to make the social contacts with colleagues in other depts from which collaborative work could emerge. This is really a very mediocre university which is far more concerned with the management of media representations of it than with the valuable stuff that goes on - or could go on - inside it. And it actually gets in the way of good work. Free lunch included - extremely stingy and poor quality. So much for being a high-living public sector fat-cat.

Return to department to catch the tail end of departmental meeting. These function largely as a forum for the HoD to cheerlead us about what wonderful stuff everyone is doing and how successful we are. NO PROBLEMS ALLOWED. Some colleagues like to grandstand in rather nauseating fashion about how their work is the only worthwhile thing being achieved by the dept (politely and implicitly of course) - the longest self-promotional spiel was apparently 23 minutes long. I'm glad I was elsewhere, but happily filch some lunch from their leftovers as I am still hungry - and of course there has been no lunchbreak.

Brief interlude in office - do some more emails including ridiculuous request from Director of HR's secretary for directions to a room on one of our campuses. Respond rather snippily with link to maps of university campuses available to all-comers on the university website. Feel, once again, that I fritter my time on idiotic tasks that could be done by an efficient secretary. Why does director of HR need directions from a senior lecturer???!!! Is this a sensible use of resources?

Team meeting follows, with our small team of 4 academics plus team administrator. Some routine stuff catching up as its the first meeting of the academic year. Some negotiation needs to happen to accommodate my reduction hours - I will have fewer tutees, but also end up offering to help out with some teaching that needs to be happen at another (affiliated) institution. Discussion about REF preparation - 3 out of 4, including me, have stories to tell about papers in press, book negotiations and research collaborations. Our sole male lecturer, who has barely been glimpsed for the last 3 months and has 'research' on his electronic diary for most of this time, reports that he has 'nothing specific' in the pipeline. What has he been doing? How can we carry a totally unproductive colleague into this brave new funding-reduced world? And indeed, why should we? I have seen this problem coming for a long time, was not happy that he passed his probation with not a single REF-able publication and only so-so teaching evaluations. But it is not our decision, we just have to live with the consequences.

Some of the meeting is devoted to sharing out personal tutee numbers and checking that all is ready for student induction next week. Plus dealing with requests for service teaching that will be difficult to fulfil - Molly, one of my (lovely) colleagues is always too ready to take things on out of a sense of obligation and ends up doing far too much. This is in contrast to the deadweight colleague mentioned above (Folly) who manages to avoid taking on any extra responsibility. Our other newly-passed probationer, Polly, is very keen and does excellent work, but happily is realising that she needs to pace herself - since passing her PhD last year she has published 2 journal articles and a book chapter, and is currently working on a book proposal - plus doing 3 times the amount of teaching that Folly takes on.

Meeting is abbreviated (for a change) because Molly is awaiting call from doctor about an X-ray. This is (perversely) a nice change, as it saves us having to revisit the same issues over and over as Folly questions decisions we made months ago after endless discussion. I'm conscious that I let this stuff get to me far too much, but it's difficult not to seethe with resentment when one has a colleague who seems to use his post largely as a way to fund pleasant and totally unproductive thinking time and networking opportunities.

Return home and spend some time working on Special Interest Group plans for another learned society. Receive an email announcing yet another deadline extension for a conference - these seem to be becoming more common as people have to make hard decisions about what conferences they can actually afford to attend. Cook a monkfish curry. End the day by watching Mad Men - a brilliant depiction of male power politics that is only-too-relevant to the contemporary UK university and specifically our own dysfunctional HEI.

Uid 237

Diary entry 1

Wednesday 15th September 2010

Context:

Today is the second day back to work after a 10 day holiday abroad. I cannot remember the last time I went so long without checking my emails or looking at a computer screen so it was very relaxing (in fact it was the holiday I should have had at the end of my PhD in February 2009!). I returned to several hundred emails in my inbox and still have 70 or so to deal with.

I have worked from home today, because as of September 1st 2010, I became a part-time rather than full-time lecturer and am only paid to be in two days a week. I was a full-time lecturer in my current institution (let's call it institution A) last academic year covering for someone's maternity leave. Had there not have been an 'economies exercise' in full swing due to the HE cuts, I may have been kept on as a full-time lecturer.

This academic year I am also teaching at another HE institution (let's call it institution B) as a sessional tutor. I had expressed an interest in teaching at institution B some time ago and by chance, someone left and some specific teaching (in my area of specialism) needed filling this forthcoming year. Teaching has not started at either institution yet for 2010/11 academic year (starts on 27th Sept.).

Content:

Last night I identified several tasks that had to be completed today (15th) before tomorrow (16th), including preparing documentation for a module meeting at 10am, reading an upgrade viva report and preparing questions for the examination at 11am, finishing an article review, and continuing with revisions on an article (something that I did not expect to finish today).

I turned my computer on at 8am and checked my emails quickly and then started working just before 9am after some breakfast. I quickly prepared the documentation for the module meeting; task one done. Then, in an attempt to put my own research before departmental work (something I have never thus far been able to achieve successfully), I started working on my article revise. I worked on this for about two hours, although I kept checking emails (to respond to colleagues and to help try and clear the backlog from being on holiday).

Checking emails regularly was not beneficial to achieving goals today. For example, I received emails which asked me to check details of module outlines (e.g. reading lists) which involved looking at documentation and reviews from last academic year; and one email asked me to write a piece for the start of term newsletter about a forthcoming event involving members of the school, which required getting in touch with other colleagues and identifying and checking suitability of images (in terms of resolution). It was past 2pm before I knew it and I had only achieved a minor task (preparing papers for a meeting tomorrow) and had not started reading the upgrade report. I then had to turn my attention from my own research to the upgrade report and abandon my own personal work for the day to ensure I did a thorough job of examining the student's work. By teatime, I still hadn't finished the upgrade report and questions, and had not finished the article review.

So there are two main points of reflection from today. Firstly, my day would have been more successful (in terms of achieving goals) if I had not been checking my emails so frequently. It is unfortunate that I am trying to catch up from being away, and it is the time of year when module leaders (myself included) are getting handbooks finalised and needing to know information about timetabling, structure and content quickly. However, checking them so regularly made me feel like I needed to respond immediately and this wasn't necessary and resulted in wasted time on the internet also.

A second related point is that I am now employed to work for institution A for two days only, which theoretically means that I should not have to respond to emails from colleagues at institution A on the days I am not working there (like some other colleagues are skilled at doing), but personally I find this hard. I am not the sort of person who can switch off and be unhelpful ('I will only respond to you on these 2 days of the week') when I know that responding to an email (which in some cases only takes a few seconds) can make my colleague's job easier, especially at this time of year.

I think I will find it hard to go from being a full-time member of staff to a part-time member of staff this academic year, for other reasons as well, such as not being able to apply for grants fully, although perhaps that's a reflection for another entry!

Uid 238

Diary of a CS Professor

September 15, 2010

Background: I teach computer science in a small liberal arts college with about 1400 students. I have

taught at the same school for the past 20 years and I taught at a different small

college for the 5 years previous to coming here. I (finally) completed a PhD in Computer Science in 2004.

I teach four courses per semester - each being a different preparation. Due to an alternating schedule of

some of the upper division courses I usually have 16 courses to teach over a 2 year span with a total of 12

unique subjects. I am the chairperson of the combined math and computer science department. I am in charge

of one part-time computer science teacher, two full-time math teachers, and three math adjuncts. I have no

secretary or student workers.

I am 55 years old, have two grown children, three grandchildren, one spouse (of 36 years), two cats and one dog.

5:30 am alarm goes off and I start my day (shower, dress, breakfast, feed cats, etc.)

7:30 - 8:00 drove to the college

8-9am Made an attempt to clean office / tables / desk.

Organized stack of papers on my desk and made my to-do list for the day.

Started to download an SDK for one of my courses.

Requested evaluation copies of textbooks via publishers' web sites

9-10am

Filled out purchase order / check request form.

Took it to division chair for a signature.

Checked with a couple of other departments looking for a phone for one of the adjunct's office.

Installed the phone - Met with data center personnel to request the phone line be set up. The adjunct's

office is in a new building and they had not turned on the service to his office yet. (He had no office phone

for the entire previous year.)

Walked to campus center to pick up a tax-exemption form to submit to Microsoft

10-11

Tried (unsuccessfully) to scan a document on new office printer.

Prepared lesson plan for my 11:00 class - an introduction to computer science with a breadth-first view of

the field. These are new lessons plans since I have not taught the course in the last 7 years.

11-12

Taught the introduction to computer science class. All 5 students showed up! The math skills / reasoning

skills of two of them are pitiful - they had no concept of what a square foot was! How did they get

into college? I am in constant fear that

the administration will decide that there are not enough majors and kill the program.

12-12:30

Ate lunch in office while reading / answering e-mail.

Noticed that the 3GB download I started at 8am said it still had 6 hours to go until finished.

12:30 - 1:00

Met with the computer center staff to discuss the miserable download speeds I was seeing (30KB/sec!)

1:00 - 2:00

Made lesson plans for my 2oclock class on Java programming. Wrote a skeleton program for the

students to complete as well as the solution.

A student stopped by to ask a question about a Java assignment, which I answered.

2:00 - 3:00

Taught the Java class to 9 wonderful students. They ask intelligent questions and are very engaged. This

group reminds me why I enjoy my job so much even with all of the other headaches.

3:00 - 3:30

Office hours are scheduled until 4:30 but I had to leave at 3:30 in order to get home, pick up spouse,

drive to a neighboring town to pick up our other vehicle (which was at the mechanic's shop) before 5:00.

5:00 - 6:00

Ate out at a restaurant, a rare treat for us.

6:00 - 7:00

Drove home. Got there in time to see the last 10 minutes of the news.

7:00 - 8:00

Fed cats, started laundry, did ironing while listening to the Dr. Oz show on the television, did a

few stretching exercises while waiting for the spin cycle to finish.

8:00 - 10:00

Tried to work on an assignment for the class on programming the iPhone which starts at 8am tomorrow, but

my brain wouldn't cooperate, so I watched television and folded the dried laundry.

10:00 - 11:15

Finally able to do some debugging on the iPhone assignment. Did I mention that this is the first time

that I taught this subject?

11:15 - 11:30 ready for bed and lights out

Uid 239

in at seven after worrying about all the loose ends still needed tying up before students return. Big issues re: organising the learning spaces properly and keeping everyone on track for what still needs to be done in terms of sorting out staff teaching timetables, alterations due to the student numbers, more space issues to contend with.

Rush to see Y about the inicident yesterday which managed to deal with without a major issue on our hands- then rush to staff conference with major changes up for discussion. Once again running to get somewhere in time- ill prepared with the paperwork, will need to attend the meeting for part of the time and a quick detour back to the office before rushing on the next thing.

Meet X at conference and worry that by missing sessions I'll be insuffuciently informed- no time to ask X or someone to report back to me.

Back in office a long list of people want to see me about : part time hours; room bookings; their timetable; teaching relief for research; student problems re not passing ; programme for induction; need to call Z again about the incident.

Talking to Z it is already 1.40- suddenly realise next meeting started at 1pm-rush off like a wild thing to arrive late-no lunch; no papers; but someone has a spare set; and there is tea and a biscuit!

Actually a good meeting-the most calm felt all day; back to office a long list of papers to sign- three more people wanting to see me. Phone A about the problem with B. Good to talk it through but do not relish the next encounter. Appointments over by 18.10- now time to catch up with emails- one hour later remember that should have phoned about the family matter and still haven't done it and too late to do it now! Need to make a list of priorities for tomorrow but running out of steam.

Uid 240

My reduced load allowed me the luxury of going to the local recreation center for a morning workout. At home, I had coffee and made a quick check of personal mail and favorite news sites as well as a scan of the local papers.

Then an hour of catching up with professional email, both from students and those that professional society work deems necessary. A final cursory read of non-personal, but professional list serv conversation before heading off to the campus.

I spent the next couple of hours grading homework, talking to students and colleagues. One student came in with several questions on the homework and to point out some of the deficiencies in the new-to-me Moodle course site.

I met with the students in my seminar class (there are only two in the class on comparative programming languages). They had jointly take notes on the reading using Powerpoint and gave a combined computer/blackboard lesson with my acting as tutor, and interrogator. They also worked some problems on the board as I watched and gave advice. The three of us settled on a plan of action for the next week and I went to my office and spent another hour and a half refining the next week’s assignments on Moodle. I also put together the materials I would need to prepare a take-home exam for them.

Back at home, I downloaded the conference papers for which I would need to write reviews as I traveled over the weekend. I went home to meet my husband for a quick dinner at church and while he was a his men’s choir practice I stopped at the office to get printouts of some papers. My last event will be to return to church for my own choir practice.

Uid 241

I remember seeing information about this survey on Mark Guzdial's blog (http://computinged.wordpress.com) and on the SIGCSE mailing list. I wish Sally good luck with this project.

Today is September 15. I have three classes to teach today. I taught this morning at 8:00 and will be teaching at 12:20 and 1:25. In the morning class, a sophomore-level algorithms class, we are learning about basic analysis of algorithms. On Monday we covered big-O, Omega, and Theta notation. Some of the students remembered those definitions this morning, which was good.

One of the students on Monday was trying to get everyone awake and excited about class. I liked that, especially because I need some caffeine to get going in the mornings myself. Today in that class, we started to determine the number of times that a basic operation is performed in an algorithm so that we can determine the order notation. I am trying to encourage them as much as possible with the mathematics. I announced that they would be having their first test on the 27th.

At 9:00, we had a disaster drill in our building. The all clear signal was announced for about 15 minutes, which was very annoying. I felt sorry for the teachers who were teaching at the time. One of the math professors decided to cancel his class. I don't blame him.

No one came to my morning office hours. That is not too surprising because nothing is due now. However, three students stopped me at the end of my 8:00-8:55 class to ask about what they had missed on Monday, and one student wanted clarification about something that we had covered today. That was encouraging.

On Monday, the network was down in our department, so I had to write code on the board in old-school fashion in the 12:20 class. Hopefully the network will cooperate with me in a few minutes, but I am bringing backup files just in case.

...

Back from classes.

The network did cooperate with me. I was able to use BlueJ in class today and the object workbench. We discussed more class examples, with instance variables, constructors, and methods, both static and non-static. This course is an OOP class in Java, and it is the third programming class that students take. Whenever possible, I point out connections with C++ from their earlier coursework. 34 out of 36 students were present.

The third class, at 1:25, is my cross-listed senior/graduate algorithms class. It normally has 15 students, but over 30 students are enrolled this semester. We are using the Kleinberg/Tardos book. However, we are currently working on techniques for solving recurrence relations. When I teach the sophomore-level class, I cover recurrence relations, but I cannot count on everyone having (or remembering) the background material. I also have to record this course using Camtasia for two online students. The computer in the classroom is a tablet computer, but the writing pen is not working properly, so I have to type, which is a little bit of a pain for dealing with exponents. Hopefully the proper driver will be installed soon so that I can use the pen again.

After class, a student wanted to ask questions about the current homework assignment. We had to go to my office because another class was beginning soon afterward, and also, I have office hours from 2:30 to 3:30 anyway.

Another student showed up for office hours from the OOP class. He had some good questions. Then another student from the senior-level class stopped with a quick question.

I took a break for a minute to check Facebook, and then started back to this survey. Anyway, I still need to finish grading a set of homeworks. Hopefully I will finish them tonight or tomorrow so that I can return them to the students on Friday afternoon.

Well, I got sidetracked for an hour by talking with a colleague. I brought my grading home, but now I am too tired to concentrate on that. Hopefully I will get done tomorrow.

Uid 242

This has been a good, but busy start to the year. Perhaps it is always a busy start, though.

Our 18-month-old son has only been ill once, and yesterday was the start of his second cold. So, all night, he would wake up with a fever and are having a hard time breathing (as one does when one has a head cold), and would start to cry. More than once I tried to console him, but he most definitely wanted his mother.

It eventually grew late enough in the morning that there was nothing to be done but to get on with the day. I had a bit of leftover ham (from a tasty dinner on the weekend), made some coffee in my to-go cup, and walked up the hill. Work is about 1 mile from home (uphill both ways -- we live across a small valley), and this morning was comfortable. Cool, but not cold.

My morning started with filing receipts and setting up warranty information on equipment recently purchased through a grant (video cameras and audio recording equipment). I sat in on a colleague's class, and ended up providing tech support -- the projector in our large lecture space has been misbehaving, so I set up a mobile projector so he could more easily run class.

My "sitting in" bears some explaining. This year, we're working on revisions to our intro course -- or, perhaps a completely new course. Our goal is to develop an intro to computing that is more appropriate to our local audience, which is largely made up of students studying biology, psychology, and literature. Our traditional "lecture-about-code-and-give-them-programming-assignments" approach is not broadly appealing, and the tools we introduce them tool do not necessarily help them in their own endeavors. So, I am sitting in on our intro this term for several reasons. One is to provide feedback to my colleague on his class at a detailed level. A second reason is to make "meta notes" about what I see taking place, and reflecting that back through our readings and conversations regarding next year... in some ways, "what do we know needs to change based on practice and research?" Third, it is to strengthen trust and build our relationship as we dive into this design process.

After sitting in on the intro, I handled some tech support issues for students, I forget what happened in the next hour (it was busy), and then had class. It is a design-centric class (titled "Human Centered Design"), and I am confident my students do not understand what it means to work hard and produce quality deliverables. So, I put them on the task of doing what they were supposed to have done, and said I'd be back in 20 minutes. We then proceeded with what we should have done at the start.

After my class, I talked with one of the students about expectations and whether or not I am communicating clearly. I suspect that I need to be clearer, and I also realized that they are not verbalizing any of their confusion. So, we'll spend some time Friday discussing our collaborative process as a full group. What kinds of communication/explanation do the students expect from me? What quality of work do I expect from them? What processes can we use as a group to get to a point where we are working as a large team to simply do excellent work in the context of helping design and test interfaces for open source projects? (I should email those questions to them now...)

From there, I went to a workshop on evaluation in the context of our freshman seminar. I am also teaching a course on basic writing and public speaking titled "Creativity and Leadership." The Freshman Seminar programme is long-running at Allegheny, and while it is enjoyable, it is also challenging, as it places me (as someone grounded in computing) in the context of introducing writing and speaking at the college level to first-year students. As it happens, they also become my advisees, and I am responsible for helping them in their scheduling and major selection process. (Talk about a complex relationship.)

After the workshop, I spent some time talking to one of the conveners (the writing coordinator for our Learning Commons here at the college) about a series of assignments I'm considering for my students, and then I took off for home. My goal is to get home early to help on the home front, and hopefully let my wife catch a bit of a nap before the afternoon is over.

The last thing I'll do here in my office today is record this diary. As it happens, I only remembered to do it because Dan Garcia advertised it on the SIGCSE mailing list. However, if I get a prompt automatically from now on (it seems like that was an option), I shouldn't have any problems doing this in the future.

Uid 243

8:00 am

dropped kids off at school

took car to repair shop

generic handling of email in morning

prepared next module for online course

analyzed and entered quiz grades into moodle cms

emailed class about reading assignment

read two articles on OOP, prepared response

taught graduate software engineering class

talked in hallway with colleague about a joint work idea

helped student with registration questions

completed a course registration form for a student

met with GTA about grading current module

walked after lunch

more generic email handling

picked up car at repair shop and kids at school

took kids to soccer practice

chatted with other parents about community issues

helped kids with homework

read a small bit for pleasure (history of inventions)

10:30 pm

Uid 244

15th of September:

8-10am Introduced a colleague from the UK in a two hour lecture and discussion on cultural awareness. Stayed to participate.

10-10:15 coffee break, chatted to a colleague about new computer systems for anonymous written exams that are to be implemented university wide.

10-11:15 Talked to some of the international MSc students about course choices. Worked on two extended abstracts for the EDUCON 2011 conference with deadline this evening.

11:15 went to lunch

12:15-13:15 prepared some details of the teaching and examination of my course in computer networking

13:15-14:30 teaching meeting to discuss arrangements of the computer networking course with the three teaching assistants in the course. These are all PhD students, and we needed to discuss the grading of the programming exercise. We have decided to interview each pair of students in order to assess if they really understand what they have done in the exercise. This takes some planning since we have 120 students in the course.

14:30-15:00 completed one EDUCON abstract and uploaded it as PDF to the conference management tool.

15:15-17:00 gave a lecture in the Computing Education Research course we offer to advanced undergraduate and MSc students on CER literature and values, and the role that research in CE plays in supporting a scholarly approach to teaching and learning practice at University.

17-20 family stuff

20-22 course admin, reading e-mail, working on a second EDUCON extended abstract. Installing some new software on the laptop.

22-22:20 completing this survey

22:20- I intend to complete the EDUCON abstract and upload it before midnight.

Uid 245

Arrived @ work @ around 8. Fiddled around with moving electronic files about to help those covering for my study leave.

9.30 went off to all day event sharing teaching good practice arising from some faculty projects. A rather typical event of this type ... Lots of powerpoints ... lots of talking ... a mixture of inspiration (engaging with community organisations) and exasperation (long self concerned presentations). Much concern about food and coffee. Post-it notes. etc etc

The door to the building worked only intermittently, sometimes jammed open, making it freezing or at other times keeping out anybody who didnt know the magic words. Im sure this could be turned into a symbol of something to do with HE.

Then had a long discussion over coffee in the student union with one of my research students about his project, that was quite inspiring. Felt the project made sense.

Then waited a long time for a bus that never came and walked home. (I suspect this is also symbolic of something... probably the state of my career).

After tea, had a bit of an argument with another research student on email and read a number of anxiety promoting emails from head of department and others. Loose ends. Started to reply to some of the emails but realised I couldnt finsih the email without doing this or that.

The weather has turned unpleasant and everyone is under the pall of the return of students. This period of anticipation (after a long summer of freedom) is more unpleasant than the reality of encountering students, usually rather pleasant and intriguing.

Uid 246

Wednesdays are my busy days. I taught a web development course (mainly reviewed for the upcoming exam), CS1 (facilitated a lab converting flow charts to C++), and graphical user interface programming (gave implementation hints on an upcoming project). I also managed to play basketball at lunch. Now I'm exhausted, but I've got some contract work to wrap-up, and in a few hours I'll be rounding up the kids and taking them to church for our mid-week get-together.

I've been somewhat concerned recently that my students might be a little intimidated by me. My wife says that I just have that way about me at times. I have a decent rapport with some of my students, but some of them are so introverted that I find it challenging to engage them outside of class. It doesn't help that I'm somewhat introverted myself.

When I was younger and single, I used to invite my students over periodically to play video games at my house. Those were always a big hit. Now that I'm married with children, I haven't opened up my home to students in years. I've decided today that I need to start inviting my students over periodically to establish a better relationship with them outside of the classroom. When students are invited into a professor's home, I think it helps them know on a deeper level that their professors really do care about them.

So today I invited three of my classes to come over on a Thurs evening for chili and to watch "Tron", one of my favorite movies that is also well-loved by many computer geeks. When I announced this opportunity to my classes, I saw quite a few faces light up. We'll see how it goes.

Oh, one of my CS1 freshmen added me as a friend on Facebook today, despite the fact that he received one of the lowest exam scores two days ago. At least he doesn't hold a grudge. :-)

Uid 248

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Uid 249

Wednesdays are my busy days this semester. It is surprising to me that until the semester starts, you don’t really know which days will be the busiest. I only have one additional independent study on Wednesdays, as compared to say Mondays or Fridays, but it seems to put me over the edge. That and perhaps the mid-week stress and strain.

I got in just before 9am, as usual, spent about 40 minutes putting the finishing touches on a homework that I would assign in my 11am Computer Organization class. I had identified most of the problems yesterday, a few more last night, and knew I could draw on a homework for the remaining few from a previous semester. Thankfully I had enough time to not only type up and print the homework, but also rough out the solution – it’s always better to assign problems that I have actually done – it helps me to know they're do-able by the students and also to clarify in the problem statement if something needs clarifying (which in this case, several problems did).

I finished that at 9:45 or so, with 15 min to spare before my Independent Study meeting. I looked up on the spreadsheet I keep what the student should be handing in, and what material we would go over today. I had just enough time to skim the material before he came. He didn’t have his work to hand in and wasn’t as prepared as I expected, so we discussed a few concepts he wanted more information about/help with, and then he left about 20 min early – so, a bonus 20 min before my next class! Except for a few minutes to update the spreadsheet for the Independent Study. Since I was already prepared for that class (including: graded homework and solution, new homework, extra reading to go with today’s topic, and PowerPoint for today’s topic, which is a topic that I didn’t cover last year), I skimmed important homework (a friend of mine had her baby!!!) and started looking at my next class, which I was not at all prepared for but that I knew would be pretty similar to last years’. I pulled up last year’s PowerPoint and also the in-class exercises sheet and started looking at it, before my Google calendar warned me it was time to go to class.

Computer Organization class was good, lots of questions and some interaction. It’s funny though how I can see the point at which most of the class just checks out. This class is 1 hour 15 min long, and at about 55 min their eyes start glazing over. Today I needed the whole 75 min, and they did perk up at the end when we started talking about the 1-bit ALU they need to design a virtual circuit for by Friday.

Class ended, then I have 75 min to my next class, Introduction to Programming. I changed up the slides and in-class exercises, remembering from last year what students found more and less difficult, adding more info here and there. Then I realized too late that I needed to assign their next homework today! Whoops. I pulled up last years’ but it needed too much work for this year – I don’t like to assign the same homework year to year so students can’t just blatantly copy (although I do some just out of my own time limits), but last year’s program for this homework, which includes Boolean conditions, Ifs and loops, was too difficult and there was a lot of confusion. So I went to class and confessed that I didn’t quite get the next homework ready for them but I would post it later today and send them an email.

After class, which went well, back to my office where I had a student waiting for me for office hours. A Computer Organization student, she told me this morning she would come to my office hours today. We have an exam next week and she had some misconceptions about different negative integer representations as well as some of the Boolean logic proofs. We had a great 1-1 session, but it lasted from 3 to 5:15pm. Then I made up and posted my Introduction to Programming homework, and sent the email, now it’s 6pm. NOW I can carefully go through my email. Flagged some things for another day, responded to some things, and left work at almost 7pm. I would have stayed later, but was so hungry I wasn’t bring productive – you may have noticed in my narrative there was no time for lunch today! Thankfully I don’t need to work tonight since I don’t have anything that HAS to be done by tomorrow morning. So I went home, ate, had a beer (which tasted oh-so-good!) spent time with family, and went to bed early – I have been very tired lately and felt like I needed the sleep – although by the time I actually got to bed it was only about 15 min earlier than usual. Oh well, will try for more sleep tomorrow, or catch up on the weekend.

Uid 250

Today was like many days in the recent past, with the notable exception of writing a diary entry. I've been meaning to chronicle this year, but none of that has happened until today.

As is my normal schedule, I visit the gym for a vigorous workout before arriving on campus.

As an Acting Chair, I've not been freed (or perhaps, I haven't freed myself) of extra (extra from the point of view of being chair) activities. There is the danger of not being chair next year. So, I acknowledge my over-committed schedule of keeping up my prior level of service and research while taking on the Chair's responsibilities.

From the moment I'm in my office it is a juggling act. I spend a few moments in my office signing forms, and catching up with the events that have occurred in my absence. Spending time at the gym keeps me off campus during the first 1 to 1.5 hours of normal business hours.

At 10:00 I intend to make my way over to the library for a meeting. I didn't actually get out the building until about 10:15, but that leaves sufficient time to get to the library and have a chat with the Engineering-Librarian.

From 10:30 until 11:15 it's a meeting with a faculty member in another degree program. I'm half of a two-person interview team performing a part of an internal program review. We ask the faculty what are the points of pride and opportunities for improvement.

The subject is relaxed and has many good and many insightful things to say. After the meeting I spent a few minutes debriefing with my interview partner. The meeting and debriefing are rewarding. This is a chance to have an impact. A chance to get to know the University community better.

A short walk through another building affords me the opportunity to grab a small pizza on the way back to my office. The pizza is 1/2 eaten by the time I am back in my office. This eating in motion is a time-utilization technique employed to make the most of every in-office minute.

I spend the next 20 minutes on the phone with an adjunct faculty discussing the spring semester teaching schedule. She wants to teach a course, but at a different day/time. This will be difficult to make happen. Any course changes for the spring should happen immediately as the students are already being advised.

I spend the next 30 to 45 minutes playing catchup with email messages and impromptu meetings with students. Several of the email messages are related to the summer teaching schedule.

Beginning about 12:00, sequestered myself to concentrate on the lecture to be delivered at 13:30. About 60 minutes of that time was focused on 38 powerpoint slides and making improvements to them.

Shortly before class, a graduate assistant, who maintains laboratory equipment dropped by to talk about a specific problem. Fifteen minutes later I'm walking with him to the copy machine to make copies of the powerpoint slides for class and finish our conversation.

I arrive in class a few minutes late. I deliver the lecture and finish exactly (by my watch) at the prescribed time. It doesn't always work out that way. I'm frequently stopping a few minutes early to avoid a deeper topic from ending prematurely, or accidentally going over time by a few minutes.

After class I spend 15 minutes in the classroom answering questions about a research paper the students are reading.

When I arrive at my office (just down the hall) a faculty member is waiting to talk to me. Though I have an appointment for a student to talk about a research project, the student is absent and the conversation with the faculty member begins.

Fifteen minutes later the faculty conversation is done and the student comes in. An hour of fruitful discussion of the research topic brings me close to the close of business.

As the secretary is leaving, another student arrives for an discussion about University, but not classroom issues. Though I have a course scheduled for that time, it is a project course and the student teams are working independently.

I spend from 16:30 until 18:00 with the student.

Back to the email inbox. I spend about an hour catching up with the dozens of email messages ... one of which prompts me to type this.

In a short while I'll probably carry my laptop home, only to carry it back to the office in the morning.

Tonight (I guess it will be at home), I should review the CVs of the applicants for a position on campus. Presentations are tomorrow.

Oh, but wait. There is at least one more email that must be sent today.

talk to you next month

Uid 251

9:35 Day started a bit rocky; alarm failed so i woke up 10 mins before physical therapy appointment. Zoomed out.

9:45-10:30, physical therapy, then back home.

11:30 - 12:45 commute to work

12:50 - 1:20 met with honors student who wants to do a project as add-on to my OO programming course. we discussed, decided on a scheduling program for debate competitions to be done as a constraint satisfaction problem.

1:20-1:40 met with lecturer in department to discuss how to use software in his lectures given application not installed in room.

1:40-1:45 Discussed schedule change with colleague for her spring course.

1:40-2:15 Ate lunch at desk while reading email.

2:15-2:45 Went over recent panel review of one of my proposals; sent reviews to a collaborator.

3:00-4:15 Met with student and 2 colleagues for demo of system that checks graduation requirements and generates approval forms so students get their degrees. Discussed what features are still needed, sent student off with tasks.

4:15 - 6:00 work on my course: update/upload syllabus and schedule, edit this week's lab exercise and homework assignment for friday distribution.

6:00 - 7:30 commute home

Uid 252

730-8. Have to get to class 1/2 hour early now to set up the technology: unlock cabinet, connect laptop to projector, turn on projector, turn on laptop, make sure wireless is working, start up the software to be used in class, etc. Luckily this is fairly routine so I can reflect on class while doing it.

8-930. Teach a section of data structures. There should be about 15 students in this class, but several prefer to attend the afternoon section, so there are 8 or 9 -- a luxury to teach such a small class. Starting Stacks today.

930-1115. Worked with two students on the program that was due yesterday evening (still acceptable with a late penalty). Amazing how much difference you can make working with people one-on-one.

1115-1220. Reminder emails and paperwork to set up lunch for our four scholarship students in computing (2 freshmen, 2 sophomores). In the end only one student shows up -- not much of a networking opportunity! Always difficult to arrange any kind of event for our students, so many of them are working full-time in addition to taking a full course load. Will try to reschedule.

1220-1250. Lunch with the one of the students who showed up.

1250-130. Reading paper and algorithms text in preparation for meeting with honors student.

130-2. Chatting with colleague.

2-320. Research meeting with honors student.

320-340. Personal (break for phone calls).

340-540. Teach second section of data structures. Again there early to set up, not so much time as this morning. For some reason, this class went slightly slower than the morning section, so they're now out of synch. Maybe because it's a larger group. Our sections are capped at 24; between the two sections, about 40 students are registered for this fall. A substantial increase over 2-3 years ago.

540-615. Chat with students and colleagues about work-related topics: a new independent study in cloud computing, a planned course in concurrency for Spring 2012, etc. Catch one of the students who missed lunch earlier and discuss re-scheduling.

615-730. Grading; email to students.

730: done for the day.

Uid 253

6:45am-7:00am Checked email before showering and getting dressed.

8:00am-9:00am Arrived at school, checked on whether the justification to hire a new faculty member that I emailed to the Provost last night at 11:00pm was received. Responded to emails.

9:00am-10:00am Completed approving transfer courses for 15 transfer students who entered this semester.

10:00am-10:30am Told colleague what I had covered in her class when I had to teach it when she was out sick.

10:30am-11:30am Department meeting. Updated colleagues on meeting with the Provost, discussed the justification to hire a new faculty member, discussed issue with proposed course schedule for Spring 2011 and came up with a change that works for everyone.

11:30am-12:30pm Lunch with colleagues from outside the department. Explained the Creative Commons license to one colleague.

12:30pm-3:00pm Open Source project class. Met with student teams individually about their groups status, gave them suggestions for projects to join, what to look for in a project.

3:00pm-3:30pm Met a colleague in the hallway and discussed transfer course agreement with local community college. Agreed to meet for lunch to discuss it further.

3:30pm-3:45pm Met with student who needed permission to schedule a course that overlaps the course he is taking with me.

3:45pm-4:00pm Met with student mentor to discuss how the mentoring session had gone.

4:00pm-4:15pm Packed up to go home.

4:15pm-4:45pm Discussed volunteering for campus-wide committee assignments with two colleagues.

9:00pm-10:00pm Completed course schedule for Spring 2011. Emailed proposed schedule to Chair of Nursing to approve scheduling of service courses for nursing students, emailed faculty member whose schedule had changed to get her approval, emailed proposed schedule to adjunct instructor to see if he can teach on that schedule.

10:00pm-10:45pm Signed up for Share Project and wrote diary entry.

Uid 254

Today was a pretty typical Wednesday. I had morning and afternoon office hours and taught programming languages and introductory Java programming, both classes Iâ€™ve taught many times before.

I had a B.A. student come to office hours seeking advice on choosing a topic for his capstone project. When students are floundering like he is they often seem to grasp at any old project they think they can manage to complete before graduation. I tried to point him toward topics heâ€™s truly interested in and that will be helpful when he enters the job market.

One of the things that I notice as I get older is how my role as a parent influences my perspective on teaching. I was struck today by how close in age my students are to my eldest son, a junior in high school. I looked at a student who came to office hours because he couldnâ€™t get Java to work on his shiny, HS graduation gift laptop, and I thought to myself, â€œYou are SO young!â€

My 10-year-old is applying to be on the student council at his elementary school. Today I helped him write an email to ask a friend of the family for a letter of reference. I told him about the importance of giving the letter writer plenty of time to write the letter, of noting the application deadline, and of including additional information about his qualifications such as a resume, or in this case his answers to the application questions. Iâ€™ve known many graduating seniors who arenâ€™t aware of the proper etiquette to use when asking for a letter of reference. It brought to mind the disadvantage so many first generation and low income college students face as they try to navigate college.

Today all of the students in my PLC class created their language history presentations as Google sites. I wonder how Google will further infiltrate my teaching in the future?

As I prepared for Fridayâ€™s classes I was reminded how helpful it is to do a â€œbrain dumpâ€ after class, noting what went well, what should be tweaked, what needs to be thrown out entirely. Iâ€™ve gotten into the habit of adding this to the end of my notes immediately after class. It has been extremely helpful and has largely helped me avoid that â€œOh, crap! Now I remember, this looks fine on paper but it did not go all that well last time.â€ feeling right in the middle of using materials from a previous semester.

I assigned the first pair programming exercise in my CS1 class today. I gave my typical speech about how the research shows that students who pair program learn more, are happier, get better grades than solo programmers, etc. A student piped up and jokingly said, â€œAnd I suppose they get more sleep and lose weight too?â€ I replied, â€œYes, and they have lower cholesterol.â€

Uid 256

Background

I would describe myself as a part-time university teacher.

I am 78 years old, and male. I have been a teacher in tertiary education for 46 years, 45 years of which have been in a university. During all of that time, even when in a managerial post and in my 13 years of retirement, I have taught each year &#150; either with undergraduates or postgraduates or both. My subject coverage has ranged from structural engineering via mathematics to social sciences and now to management studies, at both levels.

Nowadays the bulk of my teaching is done in a virtual learning environment or relationship.

I still research and publish modestly, on educational topics, mostly related to the development of capabilities through facilitated reflection.

I am married, my wife and I are not in need of any kind of support, and we have three surviving children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, with all of whom we like to be in moderately frequent contact.

Diary for September 15th

6.30 am. Got up, prepared toast and coffee after checking emails for incoming messages from Taiwan and APER. Replied to three. (30 mins)

While breakfasting, I summarised the points to be made in review of APER paper &#150; still to be keyed up and in. (15 mins)

Now went on to spend time on first EPIGEUM course which I began reviewing yesterday&#133;&#133;.

Comment: Review is something I probably do more thoroughly than others, but yet that is repeatedly appreciated and it&#146;s my only option, really, me being me. I must get seven done by 24th. And it looks like taking more than a day for each; though two I have already done at the draft stage, as the main reviewer. So I am pressurised. I&#146;m restricting myself as asked to suggestions about what should be added, or reconsidered. That calls for quite a lot of critical thinking, and ensuring my comments are up to date.

7.00 &#150; 8.00 &#133;&#133;.Half an hour on EPIGEUM (30 mins) plus a short time completing the review for APER (20 mins). 10 mins not working.

Comment: A bit fresher than yesterday evening. I was getting weary then. Interesting that the writer, and presumably her draft reviewer, have totally disregarded peer and self-assessment under &#147;assessment&#148;, and failed to pick up current thinking (and wording) on feedforward under &#147;feedback&#148;.

8.00 &#150; 9.00 Till 8.30 on EPIGEUM. (30 mins). Getting on well with the assessment course. Fresh

Then wash, shave and shower.(40 min)

9.10 &#150; 10.00 Look out papers (10 mins). Travel to meeting on research discussion. (40 mins)

Comment: A relative of my wife, into educational research, contacted me to ask if I could suggest how to research disadvantage/advantage for students accustomed to use word processors when asked to take exams in handwritten form. I had agreed to meet her, and have assembled a few quite original thoughts, including findings from a wee experiment on myself, comparing keying and writing.

10.00 &#150; 11.00 (problems with timings not changing on hours!) Discussion about possible research approaches (80 mins). I brainstormed a number of new suggestions and revisions, as well as tabling my original thoughts.

11.00 &#150; 12.00 Finished discussion.

Travel home (20 mins)

Worked on flyer for focus group for this research, while it was still in my mind (20 mins)

12.00 &#150; 13.00 Business e-mails (20 mins)

Finishing flyer and sent to N for her comments (40 mins)

13.00 &#150; 14.00 Lunch (30 mins)

Business e-mails (30 mins)

Comment: e-mails had piled up, as my wife and I had a week&#146;s vacation last week.

14.00 &#150; 15.00 Took blind neighbour to hospital to see his wife (40 mins)

Kept up this diary (10 mins)

Started again on EPIGEUM (10 mins)

15.00 &#150; 16.00 EPIGEUM comments (10 mins)

Old friends came to visit (50 mins)

16.00 &#150; 21.00 Social visit from friends. Oh dear, time is slipping past on EPIGEUM!

21.00 &#150; 22.00 Re-read re-submitted BJET paper for my comments (45 mins)

Posting judgement to BJET website (15 mins)

Comment: Writer has written very helpful responses to first comments from us all.

22.00 &#150; 23.00 Reading N&#146;s suggested changes to my paper for the research project focus group (30 mins)

Then off to bed to sleep

Comment: A frustrating day. Lots on my work schedule, and many important commitments intervened

(Added later) The most important feature of today&#146;s record, I suppose, is the way I have &#150; even as a male &#150; been multi-tasking. The demands on me for constructive comment, to writers and to students; and for creative suggestions in relation to a research programme, are very assorted. And I jump around between them, in my own way being a retired academic who can choose.

Uid 257

The half hour after midnight is finishing a report on the conferences I attended over the summer, to email in advance of my group's meeting tomorrow, and to inform the Graduate School and Staff Development.

I get up after 0730, walk to the campus 9-10am (a good time for considering work issues), catch up with email, read documents for meetings today, sort out correspondence from students wrt to concessions and extensions on coursework until 1230.

1230-1430, starting with sandwich lunch, a termly Unit for the Enhancement of Learning & Teaching general meeting, mainly hearing from each sub-group team. Then preparing for my own group (Academic Practice Team)'s mtg (including clearing up the meeting room) for half an hour, the mtg itself from 1500-1630. More correspondence concerning students and organising files to 1840, then walk back (considering work issues), 1945-2030 dinner. 2030-2300, writing annual report on SRHE PG Issues Network and correspondence on future events planning, then writing up these notes. Lights out 2330.

Uid 258

I was on annual leave

But I still accessed my work emails via my iPhone and responded (briefly) to a couple

Uid 260

I am on vacation in rural England accompanied by my colleague Dr Bluestocking. Most years I take my vacation in September in a vain attempt to avoid the usual flurry of pre-semester meetings. This year the first week of my vacation was largely taken up with a spate of resit exam papers from a Northern university where I am an external examiner. I have declined their invitation to attend their resit Exam Board next week. However, I am also an external examiner at a Southern university and I have (reluctantly) agreed to interrupt my vacation next week and attend their Board which would otherwise be inquorate. That attendance will cost me the better part of two days of annual leave such is the journey time getting from my vacation location to their university. Matters are not helped by my being invited to peruse a pile of dissertations in my hotel the night before their Board as they cannot get them to me sooner since they have yet to be second marked.

How do I spend today? I arise early but Dr Bluestocking slumbers on for a couple of hours. I spend most of the morning reading Chris Mullin's A View from the Foothills. Dr Bluestocking eventually swings into action and begins virtuously preparing audio-visual Moodle materials for a course that she has taken over from me. She periodically interrupts my reading to check on various items of proposed content. Eventually I take myself off for a walk leaving Dr Bluestocking tapping away at her notebook - one of us has to remain in the house to take delivery of a package from Amazon. We change places and while Dr B is off on a walk I check out my university e-mails for the first time this week. I deal with various queries from the above mentioned Southern university about its Board next week. I ignore most other e-mails from my own university and resolve not to read any more e-mails until Sunday. I read a couple of chapters from a monograph that is relevant to a paper I am writing and then I return to the Chris Mullin Diaries.

I will be cooking supper. We will spend the evening watching a couple of Peter Greenaway films on DVD.

Uid 261

7:00 and 9:00am

I was up at seven, dressed, and put a load of washing in the machine, before unloading the dishwasher and getting the breakfast things together. I got my eldest boy up for secondary school and together with my husband we had tea and cereal for breakfast. Then I woke my nine year old son and four year old daughter up and tried to persuade them to get out of bed and get dressed. Then I gave up and shouted at them, followed by violently removing their covers and forcing them out of bed. Then I kissed my eldest son goodbye as he set off for the bus to school. By the time the youngest two were fed, dressed and ready for school the washing machine had finished so I pegged the washing out on the line and wiped the kitchen table before bundling kids and bags into the car and leaving for the school run. Ten minutes in the car and we were at school for 8:35. I called into the school to speak to the afterschool club assistant. Saw daughter into reception class as it is her first week at school, had to stay to make sure she was settled in ok – fortunately didn’t take long. I was back in the car for 8:55 and up the hill, into the car park at work for 9:05.

9:00 – 10:00am

Arrived at work at 9:05, greeted colleagues, turned computer on, made a cup of coffee. Drank coffee whilst going through emails that had arrived the evening before. Mainly junk but an interesting seminar in London to register for, a query from a current student, a query from a prospective student, agendas for the meetings I’ll attend in the afternoon. Main thing is a student who has emailed me an essay draft to check through prior to submission. Check he hasn’t already handed the work in. Find the relevant learning outcomes. Read through the essay and make notes. Email him some comments – luckily it’s a good piece of work.

10:00 – 12:30pm

Working on an article for the REF. It’s a chapter from my PhD thesis I first submitted to a special issue of an international journal over a year ago. I’ve had two emails since asking me to make minor corrections and agreeing the article is publishable. I’ve now been sent a third email asking me to make some more substantial changes. I’m aware that some of what’s being pointed to as being in need of change are actually points where the reviewer politically disagrees with the points I am making in my article. I try to negotiate this as best I can, without wanting to compromise my initial work. I find it hard work. I’m interrupted at about 11:00 by the head of section to ask if, in the absence of two senior colleagues, I will provide a report on what our team have been up to over the past few months at the meeting due to start at 12:30. I scribble some notes on a piece of paper and return to correcting the journal article.

12:30 – 2:40pm

A section meeting with sandwiches for lunch. I present information on what members of my team have been up to over the past few months: mainly marking, preparing for teaching, writing for publication, attending conferences, reading, preparing conference papers. Listen to what other teams have been up to. Contribute to discussion on future directions for the university and team.

2:40 – 3:00pm

Twenty minutes before the next meeting starts. Chance for a cup of tea and catch up on emails again mixture of junk/admin requests/questions from students. 10 more minutes grabbed on article. Admin query with departmental administrator re status of current student.

3:00 – 4:30pm

Meeting number two. Team meeting. Much more academic focus. Plans for next term’s teaching. Research update, pleased with what I have to report. Discuss teaching in London which would mean long commute and late night. Discuss student numbers – going up.

4:30 – 4:45

Final email check of the day. Tidy up desk. Sort papers. Discuss student's progress with colleague.

4:45 – 5:15

Pick middle son up from after-school club, return home. Daughter been picked up by husband from friend’s house.

5:15 – 6:10

Bring washing in. Fold up and put away. Get first son to do homework. Cook dinner. Cook dinner for tomorrow in the slow cooker. Shout at first son to concentrate on homework. Shout at second son to set table for dinner. Check daughter is still awake. Attempt conversation with husband.

6:10 – 6:40

Dinner. Glass of wine. Find out what everyone’s been doing all day.

6:40 – 7:00

Clear up dinner things. Load up dishwasher. Check son’s homework. Check his bag is packed for tomorrow. Put more washing in washing machine.

7:00 – 8:00pm

Take daughter for bath and bed time stories. Reassure her when she bursts into tears and says she never wants to be too old to cuddle her pink blanky and fluffy doggy, tell her that she never will be and she can still have them when she is a grown up. Puzzle over what to say when she asks me about when she is dead and how she will be able to cuddle them when she is dead. She cries a lot more……

8:00pm

See nine year old into bed, try to persuade him to read a book with more words and fewer pictures. Husband and eldest son watching football. I read the newspaper, tired now. At 9:00pm watch The Big School Lottery and think about social inequality and the importance of education. Fall asleep shortly after 10:00 listening to the news on radio 4. Woken up in the night by the booming noise of my daughter’s Mog the Cat CD. Have to get out of bed to turn the volume down. Find it very hard to get back to sleep and listen to The World Service for a couple of hours in the middle of the night.

Uid 264

Yesterday (the 15th) I taught 2 one-hour lectures. One at 9 a.m. to 200 students in first year and the second to about 30 students in 2nd year.

In between I held office hours, frantically posted an assignment on the web, prepared for the 2nd lecture, posted lecture notes for the first and answered email.

Uid 267

Wed 15 September 2010

Uid 268

Sept 15th.

I spent much of the day trying to sort out the logistics and structure of the big module that I am running. As I'm new to the department, I have to check everything. I want to have a hand-in date after Christmas – will this work for international students? I want to ask the teaching assistants to do tutorials – are there enough hours? This kind of fiddly detail keeps me on e-mail and constantly revising the course document.

I am also looking at the handouts for students doing presentations. As this is a modification of a module that ran last year, there is quite a bit of existing material that I can borrow from, but I want to make the module my own and some of the questions proposed for students to focus on seem a bit leading, to me. Something along the lines of 'Need we bother with Brecht's Marxism? Brecht's theory and practice did not always match up. Discuss whether his theatre was able to have any radical effect whatsoever.' I am exaggerating, clearly. This is a gross caricature.

I feel I am riffling back through the archives in my brain, because I've been teaching on a BA course that focuses almost exclusively on devising and live art, so the big theatre practitioners seem very distant, dusty and shadowy figures. Sepia-tinted men with moustaches from cold countries where one could be shot for a bit of symbolism.

I also did a few research tasks, but in all it felt rather a slow day, so I took some reading to bed with me. I read a chapter on Stanislavski and found a good quote from Nemirovich-Danchenko that could be the basis for an essay/presentation question. Felt like Jack Horner pulling out a plum.

I then had to pause to get my daughter up for the toilet (to stop her wetting the bed). She had a complete tantrum, as she does, sometimes. After hitting out, screaming and refusing to get off the toilet for some time, she said she wanted Daddy. Daddy was asleep on the sofa and had to be woken twice. I went back to bed and tried to read about Edward Gordon Craig. Couldn't focus. Eventually I put the book down and went back into my daughter's room where she was now falling asleep. I gave her a kiss and she smiled, sleepily and said, 'I love you', as though the last half hour hadn't happened.

Uid 273

On my first time through I am not sure what this is about!

Uid 274

My diary shows I'm in for a very varied day today.

I need to finish writing 15 multiple choice questions for an online test for a new unit we're developing - due to be delivered in Semester 2 to over 600 second year students.

Never written these before but have been to a workshop so am aware of some of the pitfalls and trying to avoid them! The questions will form part of a question bank. Having a bit of a last minute hitch as the password protected access to one of the key documents I want to ask questions on has been changed by the host research centre and I'm frantically emailing and live-web-chatting with library staff to get this resolved!

Uid 275

main activity of the day was preparing for and then holding a review meeting of an assessment and feedback good practice event held in July. the review was overdue but summer and staff holidays had caused the delays.

decided on the key aspects of what we needed to cover in the review ie sharing participant evaluations, getting feedback from the organising team and deciding on how best to store the resources emanating from the event in ways that would be useful and accessible.

we also needed to decide on how to encourage participants at the event to take their contributions forward for a much bigger and externally facing conference. also how we might support academics with less experience/expertise in publishing and presenting their work to do this.

Uid 276

Woke up early in a budget hotel, as I had travelled to a UK conference the day before. I presented my research by oral presentation in the morning – which was a good time slot as people were still fresh! The actual conference turnout was quite disappointing though: a lot of delegates had simply not turned up (despite paying very large registration fees) so there were a lot of cancelled sessions. I reckon the actual number of people at the whole event was less than 60, so too small and select for good networking. Still, my session went well and sparked off a new international contact so probably worth the effort. Spent the day drinking tea and eating lots of cakes at the various breaks, so I thought I’d better get some exercise and go on the city walking tour before the conference dinner. Got very windswept and rather damp on the excursion but it was really interesting, so I’m very glad I went and learned something. Phoned home before the dinner and talked to the family: they were all well and coping without me (two nights away is not so bad). The venue for the meal was amazing and I found myself on a table with a lot of interesting people who were very good company. The wine was fine but the food was average – oh well, you can’t have everything!

Uid 279

I only teach FE classes on a Wednesday. My first class was with ND Interactive Media Year 1. This was their first teaching week, but the second class that I have had with them this week. I was pleased with the groups progress this morning, although a couple of students came in a little late for class, overall it was productive. I have tried a different approach this year and so far it is working well. I have got the students straight into working towards Task 1 of their assignment (Animated Character), which is to evaluate other 2D animations. I was amazed that the students really got stuck into it and progressed well. I was also pleased that a student that who had refused the offer of learning assistance in induction took help from our learning support assistant who was in class for part of the morning. I had discussed TG with the LSA and we were very subtle in our handling of offering help with his written evaluative document and we were amazed that this worked :). GD has learning difficulties and I am very concerned that he will struggle with the course, but although I had to ask him not to sketch during our discussion at the beginning of class, with the help of the LSA, he seems to be coping so far. I was also concerned that the group would pick on him, so I have been very vigilant in listening to the students reactions to him and thankfully they are treating him well.

I have a break between this class and I spent some time on finishing a document that I had been preparing at home at the weekend. I had searched for a range of links for stop motion animations for the class later on in the afternoon. I had started to add images alongside the links, so the students were more visually stimulated by the document. When I finished this I wanted to add this and the assignment and the minischeme of work to e-campus (moodle) for the students to have access. I realised that I did not have access to the Media section as this will be the first year that I have taught on the course. I then went and spoke to B, who added me to the course so that I was able to access Media and I asked her to add me to the Foundation Degree in Photography course, as I will be new to teaching them in Semester B - this will save having to worry about that later. Now I was added I could put all the documents on to the e-campus page.

Next I checked that the hard drive was available for this afternoons lesson. I needed this so that I could download previous students work for the ND Interactive Media Year 2's assignment (Typomania). The reason I have to do this is that we work on Mac's and we have always had our own Mac server, but the College decided that they wanted the Macs on a PC system, so we had to download all of the server files onto this hard drive. The new system has been a nightmare because although they promised that we could have a similar system as before, which worked really well - it hasn't been like that at all. We do not have students listed by names, we cannot access course groups and 60 % of the Macs are not yet connected.... None of the software is in the docks anymore, the printers are not printing... it all adds to the uphill struggle of starting a new academic year! Our old technician retired in May and the new technician is struggling with trying to sort things out. I sorted out where the hard drive was, so that I could got to class early and download the examples of previous work for the students.

I grabbed a bowl of salad from the canteen and came back to my desk to eat it and it was nearly time to get down to class.

The ND IM Year 2's were a particularly difficult class last year, but some of the most difficult students have not returned this year, so I'm hoping that will have calmed down a little - although it was very disappointing that one of the lively, but very talented students had felt pressured to take a full time job as security at a shopping centre rather than complete his course. T could have done so well within this area.

Uid 281

Annual Leave - in Greece as yesterday was friends wedding on Meganissi. Today went on tourist boat out to Meganissi, Scorpios and elsewhere. Swam, snorkelled, did crosswords. Arrived back at Nidri and checked emails including work ones. Not unusual whilst on holiday. Sorted out some student extension requests and pre-Exam Board administration, tried to get staffing proposals out of recalcitrant colleagues again. Emailed back final marked resubmission to second marker for last, last checking before External sees it. Aferwards dinner at local Taberna and then an early night - seemingly doing about 3 hours swimming/snorkelling was a tiring thing.

Uid 282

Office hours 9-12am. (time required to be available for student advising)

Tasks attended to during office hours and the rest of the day:

three online classes (checked course mail and responded to students on forums in each class);

clerical tasks: record keeping; advising 5 graduate students; planning for annual school board planning meeting (reserved meeting room, contacted caterer and chose menu for luncheon, contacted all members of committee via email);

supervised student worker and assigned the task of sending parking passes to members of school board planning meeting (Annual School Board workshop is set for May 19, 2011);

processed grant applications for recipients (system grant of $250,000 over five years)

Uid 284

Wednesday 9/15/2010

2 hours lecturing

2 hours preparing classes

1 hour writing quizzes and assignments

1.5 hours helping students at office hours

1.5 hours grading quizzes and papers

1 hour committee and administrative stuff

Uid 286

14 days after it was due, I spent the day trying to make sense of the admin details for my EU project - money spent - hours used and so on. I went in and out of last years documents and eventually created the neccesary report. The last email of my day was sent at 9.58pm - this was an aopolgy to the head of research as a document that he wanted was also late:-)

I also chased up a website design and completed some work on a call for an EU workshop from a different project.

I actually was feeling pretty ropey that day as I had a nasty cold.

I actually went into work for about 11am.... and spent earger more time than I should have trying to make sense of the HR processes at work.

Uid 287

On Wednesday 15th September I was on annual leave.

Uid 290

The day started as the final few minutes of the return journey from a two-day postgraduate recruitment trip I had made to France. It had made me think that I really should sign up for the staff-development language training course in French this academic year if I am likely to go again. The bureaucratic overhead of the sign up process is slightly inhibitory, however. Despite the early hour of the morning and the exertions of travel, sleep took a while to arrive as I reflected on the the trip; only to have to restart the day again a few hours later.

I filled in the director of graduate studies on the outcome of the trip. There had also been some interest from the French side in pursuing exchange possibilities with other departments, but the director was sceptical that there would be any interest. Finding someone who thinks it will be important enough to devote time to is not easy, despite the potential income value.

With the start of term just two weeks away, I needed to think about how I was going to provide information to the departmental administrator to enable her to organise students into classes. That necessitated a request to a colleague to adapt a questionnaire to elicit the required information from students. It was very helpful that he was happy to do that within a short time frame.

I had just over two weeks left to complete some conference paper reviews but didn't want to leave them to the last minute. I usually like to look them through once, and then once again before writing up my comments. So I looked over my assignments and noticed that one had almost completely failed to anonymise their submission, as required by the submission guidelines. I sent an email to the programme committee to ascertain their views on this and received a reply a few hours later acknowledging the problem but saying, in essence, that they weren't really bothered. I was left wondering why they keep the requirement in there if it makes no difference to acceptance? Given that they are never short of submissions, they could easily afford to tighten things up a bit.

Uid 291

Wednesday was a sunny day and I am on holiday in France. Did I think about teaching? Well just a little as I spent part of the afternoon sitting in the sun and clearing old e-mail from the last 2 years which included many from students, and (re-)reading Gravity's Rainbow (or at least the first quarter).

Strange to have enough time to tidy things up, let alone reading a novel.

Uid 295

Quiet day, all in all.

Cycled in to work and answered any quesries from emails.

Made some preparations for the QAA visit in October. rpinted out all of the evidence as requested by QAA and filed it neatly with dividers.

Spoke to a couple of course coordinators about how many they could recruit and then to a school director about the lunacy of staff approaching me to make a decision on numbers when I have no knowledge of school's business plans.

Cycled home.

Uid 298

Having joined the survey in October this diary is a retrospective one.

15th September was spent working from home. It is the deadline for the last of the paper work on an EU project I have been co-ordinating. The project ended in December 2009 but the EU’s experts have asked for extra annexes on the final activity report. They then asked for further amendments in mid July and at the same time the finance authorities in Brussels have asked for all the accounts to be presented in a revised format. As is the normal UK practice the contracts for project staff ended in December so I am chasing all this up with just the aid of our finance department and the good will of the project partners. Some bits of information from partners have only arrived late on the 14th.

[00:01 – 02:30] The boundary between the 14th and 15th is blurred. I am a night owl so 00:01am on 15th finds me proof reading the final reports. I have committed all but the final management report to PDF files by 2:30 am.

[08:00 - 08:10] Four of the five documents required emailed to the commission officers as they arrive for work.

[09:00 – 16:00 minus lunch] The last document has no research or teaching value and is just a report on the resources used. This just collates what has already been sent to the commission in three annual reports. Despite the fact that it will add nothing of substance to the documents sent at 8 am, without it none of the partners in the project will get paid. I email my apologies for the Department meeting this afternoon and spend the rest of the day editing the text from the three periodic reports to tell a coherent story. It is a frustrating task – we did everything that was required within the budget – but the commission needs all the details broken down by partner and by work package! However, it is done before the commission notice it wasn’t in the 8 am batch.

[1-2hr evening] I start to read a PhD thesis I am examining next week. It is very gratifying to find a student at another University is already taking ideas from my EU project and building on them.

Uid 300

Not a normal day as I'm at a friend's wedding. Lots of colleagues here though, so work is not entirely forgotten (and crops up in conversation from time-to-time!). After the wedding and party, I spend an hour catching up on email before finally getting to sleep in the early hours.

Please report problems to cs-syshelp@kent.ac.uk