Retirement progress report: what I did in 2016

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> http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mjcg/plans/Report.2017.html

Preface

After retiring I made a web page to help me decide what to do. A year has passed, so I've made another page – this one – to review my first year of retirement as an aid to thinking about what to do next.

Actually, I'm not yet fully retired – I'm no longer on the faculty of the Computer Laboratory, but I continue to be employed for 20% of my time "in an unestablished capacity". This continues until 30 September, 2017, when I become fully retired. I keep my office for another year and then the official plan is that I can use SC32, the office for retired members of the department.

My first year of retirement

It takes a while to drop off various admin databases, so after I stopped being a University Teaching Officer (UTO) I still got assigned the occasional academic task, e.g. reviewing PhD student progress reports and Researchfish grants reporting. I'm also spending time on activities that will probably never go away, like reviewing papers and writing reference letters. I still participate in a few other academic activities, such as meetings related to the REMS project (I'm still a co-investigator for this) and helping to plan and attending external scientific events (e.g. this).

The remaining time, when not in full-blown retirement mode – e.g. reading novels or snoozing on the sofa – has been spent browsing science books (e.g. this) and papers (e.g. this), auditing MOOCs (e.g. this), listening to podcasts (e.g. this) whilst improving my brain by going on walks, and randomly surfing the web. One of my goals has been to find out about topics that over the years I haven't kept up with. . . . or didn't even knew existed. I Wrote a couple of articles on subjects I knew little about as a way to improve my knowledge of them. I also wrote articles without any teach-myself goal.

Articles written

The articles I wrote in the last year fell into three categories.

- Tutorials on technical areas I wanted to learn about – the writing of the article being a way to make me think about and understand the material.

- Autobiographical notes, partly written for fun, but also because I'm supposed to supply biographical data for the records of the Royal Society.

- Miscellaneous reports on non-academic activities that I've participated in during the last year – I view this as an experiment in journalistic-style writing.

Links to these articles are at: http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/~mjcg/plans/Articles.html.

Thoughts on what to do next

I've enjoyed writing articles and have ideas for more. Reading the background material needed to write expositions of technical stuff seems like a good way to keep my ageing brain healthy . . . and it reminds me of halcyon days as a PhD student in Edinburgh, when I'd sometimes go for days to the George Square Library to try to understand just one paper.

For a while I thought I might write something with the goal of updating my knowledge of functional programming – until recently this had barely changed since being acquired in the 1970s when I worked for Robin Milner. Random surfing lead me to Miran Lipovača's lucid and entertaining Haskell tutorial and Bartosz Milewski's charmingly droll and remarkably intelligible writings and YouTube videos. Absorbing these is sufficient to achieve my goal . . . so I'm now looking for another article idea.

In parallel with transient bursts of one-off article writing, I'd also like to find a longer term writing project.

I had thought I'd attend more scientific meetings as I still have access to grant money to pay the expenses, but I'm finding that conferences seem less alluring than I expected, perhaps because I no longer need to network for research collaborations and funding. I still hope to go to the occasional one to keep in touch and learn about new things.

I feel pretty happy at the moment and I want to remain so as I age. To this end I've been exploring how to transition psychologically from work to retirement – see my article on failing to learn mindfulness. Other possibilities I'm toying with include another attempt to get mindfulness training, taking classes in tai chi or qigong, reading about existentialism and attending a Stoicon conference. As far as I know the only terminal condition I suffer from is life itself, but articles like this suggest a few LSD or psilocybin trips might improve my attitude to living and to my inevitable demise . . . alas this is tricky to implement.

I wrote in my retirement-planning web page that retirement feels like being on sabbatical without any worries that time is running out and academic chores will soon be back . . . it still does.

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