

Subject: ETHOS - initial thoughts and suggestions

Date: Sat, 21 Mar 1998 08:33:01 +0000

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Hi Klaus,

Have just been looking at your paper and have formulated some initial thoughts and suggestions. I realise you're in Hanover at the moment so I won't expect to hear back from you for a while ... although I hope it isn't *too* long before you make contact :-). Hope you enjoyed CeBit.

Usually when I do shepherding I try to split my comments up into 'presentational' (suggestions for improvement in the layout, areas which I think are too terse or too long-winded, that kind of thing) and 'fundamental/structural' (suggestions for approaching the pattern in a different way to bring new aspects out, suggestions for refactoring the pattern in new ways, ...). The presentational suggestions shouldn't require too much work (although they may require some effort :-), the fundamental/structural suggestions probably require a lot of work and may take the pattern into areas you haven't considered or feel are unsuitable. It's up to you which of the suggestions you act on and to what degree. I think we should start off small and do this iteratively: I'll make some suggestions, you make some changes and pass it back to me, I'll make some more suggestions and so on. Certainly I don't think you should act on all the suggestions below for the first pass, some you might want to keep in your mind for later on.

Presentational suggestions

I think the pattern form does need explaining and I'm glad you've done so. However, I would suggest that you put the material on page two in the form of a table relating section name to section contents/purpose as this will reduce the space required and make it easier to read. Also, you might want to think a bit about being a bit more explicit about the purpose of each section. Most are okay but some are a bit obscure (e.g. Structure, "description of the pattern's elements". What does 'elements' refer to in this context - obviously not the pattern sections).

In the Motivation section I didn't understand what the line "to follow a red thread..." meant. Could you expand this a bit?

Contraindications (BTW, I find this an odd word - is it a pun on contradictions? I noticed that it is part of the standard pedagogical pattern form, though :-), "None identified yet". I'm not a believer in the perfect solution - every solution has bad as well as good consequences. I think you need to consider what the limitations of your solution are. One place to start might be to look at the Consequences. For example, you say "ETHOS favours breadth before depth". Most of the teaching I've done has taken the opposite approach. I know this has many limitations but I've always considered the benefits to be over-riding. Why do you feel breadth-first is a good way to teach, and why might it not be so good?

Consequences, "it supports cohesive learning". What do you mean by 'cohesive learning'. Why is this a good thing?

Okay, so these are relatively small things that you may want to consider in the next draft. I also have some fundamental/structural suggestions that you may want to keep in mind as you work on the next draft, maybe for inclusion later on or may just to inform later work.

One of the things that I am missing in your paper (which doesn't mean you don't have a handle on it - just that I can't see it), is any real

sense of motivation or context. For example, why do you want to give variety to your lectures? Doesn't variety imply inconsistency? Is this a problem? Does ETHOS allow for small variation whilst maintaining broader coherency?

Again: why do you want to widen the student's perspective to interdisciplinary aspects? Why don't you want to focus their attention on something small so they get a good understanding of it before moving their attention to the wider world? What are the pros and cons of either of these approaches?

It's not that I agree or disagree with you on these aspects, just that I can't see where you're coming from in this paper. I can't see the forces that act in your environment that would push you down this way of structuring lectures.

Something else that I miss is a real guide to the solution (which seems to be split between the Idea and the Structure section). ETHOS reminds me that a solution to an engineer's problem commonly comprises Economic, Technical, Human, Organisational and Social aspects, but how do I relate this to structuring my lectures such that I get kaleidoscopic lectures and cohesive learning? This is not something that I can see from your example - You have a long list of lectures and material which have some over-riding organisational theme to them but I can't see how this is necessarily better than some other organisations we might come up with. What I would really like you to think about is how ETHOS really makes a difference, why it is something good in the world of teaching software, how it benefits students and lecturers alike.

These latter thoughts and suggestions are very challenging and I don't want you to be put off by them. The shepherding process is not dictatorial: you don't have to think about these at all if you don't wish. But, whether you follow them or not, I hope that they will spark off your own thoughts and ideas that will allow us to make this the best paper it could be. One firm suggestion though: start off small - don't tackle all these issues once.

Good luck, looking forward to seeing the next draft.

Cheers,

Paul

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