

Reflections on Alan's DReaM

Liber Amicorum for Alan Bundy

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My contract as a Research Associate within the DReaM group started on January 1st 1990. Looking back, this was an anxious time. I had just completed my PhD and was in a post-doc phase of uncertainty. Could I really make an impact within a group of so many talented people? Could I make a career as an academic? This was at a time when the rippling ideas were starting to blossom and Alan was writing up-wards of 5 blue book notes a week. But from the outset, Alan gave strong support and guidance. I was set a concrete task, and my first blue book note followed shortly there after. I still recall the associated DReaM meeting – the whole group squeezed into Alan's old South Bridge office. The challenge of thinking on your feet while writing on the white board, making sure not to knock over a coffee mug. That experience led to a contribution in my first publication within the group. I felt part of the team.

My 5 years as a Research Associate were a real period of development for me. My eyes were opened to a new way of working, involving self reflection and critical thinking. It taught me the importance of being able to communicate ideas both in papers and presentations. But this was no accident, it was down to the way in which Alan nurtured his group.

Alan's vision and energy for proof planning was always infectious. I still find the whole idea of developing a "A Science of Reasoning" such an exciting enterprise. I recall how shortly after joining the group I spent an afternoon reading through the blue book note folders. What I found was a rich tapestry of ideas – a tapestry through which I could trace the evolution of the explicit notion of a proof plan. What struck me then, and now, is how precious such a record is. A record of so many embryonic ideas – a record made possible by the sense of trust that Alan instilled within his group.

My first glimpse of the proof planning vision, however, pre-dated my time within the group by some 3 years. I recently I came across notes that I had made at a seminar. They were dated March 4th 1987. The venue was Strathclyde University and the speaker was Alan Bundy – talking about the "use of proof plans to guide inductive proofs". In my notes I highlighted "patch plan dynamically". Alan obviously sowed some seeds in my head that day – seeds that would help to shape my work on proof critics and dynamic proof patching some 5 years later.

The proof planning vision has had a significant impact on my research. I am immensely grateful to Alan for his support and guidance over the last 15 years, and I will always be very proud to have been part of his DReaM group.