

Work the Line: Balancing Personal and Professional Life as a Visualization Scientist IEEE VisWeek 2012 Panel Proposal

Organizer: Robert S Laramée, Swansea University, UK

Panelists:

Robert M. Kirby, University of Utah, US
Robert J Moorhead, Mississippi State University, US
Klaus Mueller, SUNY Stony Brook, US
Melanie Tory, University of Victoria, Canada
Daniel Weiskopf, University of Stuttgart, Germany

1 INTRODUCTION

Most of us would agree that the pursuit of excellence in data visualization research is not a nine-to-five job. In fact, between a range of possible responsibilities including teaching, writing research papers, writing grant proposals, and developing software, there is no limit to the amount of work that can be done in the name of progress. As the famous Frits H. Post formerly of Delft University of Technology would say, "The only limit is death."

A corollary to this is that it can be very difficult to balance personal and professional life as a visualization researcher. Left to the devices of the workplace, life in data visualization may become unbalanced. Successful balance is key to a healthy lifestyle.

This panel discusses central topics related to obtaining a healthy balance of personal and professional life as a visualization scientist. From PhD candidates, to Postdocs, to Assistant Professors, and beyond, we have all experienced the pressure to keep up with our profession. This panel addresses unifying themes that affect us all. It features courageous members of the data visualization community to address important, core topics related to maintaining balance. These subjects include:

- ▲ How to recognize when one may not have a the right balance between personal and professional life in data visualization,
- ▲ Possible strategies to resolving the inherent conflict between personal and professional life as a visualization researcher.

Bold and knowledgeable panelists will share their experiences in their lifelong pursuit of achieving an effective balance between personal and professional life including strategies to recognizing imbalance and methods that may be used to re-balance by reconciling this inherent conflict. And yes, the volume of literature on this topic is abundant (Robinson 2007), however, who had time to read it?

Note that nowhere in this panel statement we claim to have found the ideal balance between private and professional life. The inspiration behind this panel is the common prevalence of this challenge. One of the goals is simply to create a dialogue to discuss strategies and thoughts towards this goal lead by visualization researchers who have faced this challenge for an extended period of time.

The theme of this panel aligns with previous IEEE VisWeek events and panels that address topics beyond core data visualization. Examples include the "Building a Research Group in Visualization" organized by Hamish Carr in 2008 and the panel "New Faculty Members and Postdoctoral Fellows Spill the Beans" organized by Alark Joshi featuring Jeffery Heer, Gordon Kindlmann, and Miriah Meyer at IEEE VisWeek in 2009.

2 LOGISTICS

The panelists will present their positions. The introductory remarks will be made by Dr. Laramée. His section will last for 5 minutes. Each subsequent panelist will be given 5-15 minutes, for a total of 45-60 minutes of presentations. This will allow for approximately 20-30 minutes of discussion concerning the important topics raised during the presentations.

3 POSITION STATEMENTS

R. Mike Kirby: Sailing Through Life Is More Challenging Than It Looks

Balance is not a static state in life. Rather, it is a dynamic state requiring concerted effort and continual adjustment. Much like the person sailing the seas, balance is a state attained through all the micro-adjustments made while moving forward along the journey. I will present my "lessons learned" while trying to maintain this balance. Sometimes circumstances are such that you get knocked over unexpectedly. If possible, you try to right yourself and continue forward. I will briefly discuss how I was clobbered by an unforeseen wave, and my attempts

to regain balance again.

Robert J Moorhead

As Mike stated one must re-balance as one moves through life. For me, the balancing starts from a question and answer in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Save the environment? Educate the masses? You need to look at where you want to be in 5, 10, and 20 years and seek to position yourself to get there. What do you want said in your obituary? There are many dimensions to balance. How important to you is fame, financial security, job security, or solving the world's problems? How important is family? Do you want to be a researcher, a professor, a university administrator, a company president, or a college president? How much weight do you want to put on your career, your family, and those for whom you become responsible? An honest appraisal of the pros and cons must be obtained. You can have a fancy title, a big income, or a secure job, but seldom all three.

Klaus Mueller

Frankly, when I was asked to be part of this panel, I took a moment to reflect what my life is really like. Even worse, when I told my wife that I was invited to serve on this panel, she could not stop laughing. Sadly, I was not perplexed upon her reaction. Indeed, maybe I do not have the right balance - at least not in her view. But the notion of balance is really in the eyes of the beholder. What is work and what is hobby? Didn't we pick this profession because we never wanted to grow up and go to the real world? Is reading IEEE TVCG work? Is reading IEEE Computer work? How about Wired Magazine, or a book on cognitive psychology? How about an inspiring trip to the Museum of Modern Art? What about changing diapers for a 6-month old baby? Or any type of committee work? My point is - these are all part of the package we have chosen. There are only two options: like it or not. It's just healthier and less stressful to look for the good aspects of everything and focus on those. Yes, it's a big mind cheat. But then one sees that even behind the smelliest diaper there is always a good thing lurking behind - in this case it's the smiling face of my little daughter.

Melanie Tory

The term "work-life balance" is backwards; it puts work first! What we need more generally is life balance. Of course the right level of balance is different for everyone, and therefore has to be based on one's personal priorities. In my opinion, defining these priorities is the first key to success. Personally, my top priorities are my family and my health. Work comes only after these, and this is what I remember when conflicts force me to make choices between them. In this panel I will share my experiences with managing the stress of competing priorities, focusing

on strategies that have helped me to survive the challenges of a demanding career while also maintaining life balance. Time management is critical. So is strategic mediocrity. (Want to know what that means? Come to the panel.)

Daniel Weiskopf

In my presentation, I will approach the discussion of work-life balance from the specific aspects that are related to the work as an academic and a faculty member. I will talk about my experiences from about 15 years of work in visualization research, discussing issues that concern setting priorities, time management, strategic decision making, and the advantages and disadvantages of the profession of a university professor.

4 BIOGRAPHIES

R. Mike Kirby

Robert M. (Mike) Kirby: Robert M. Kirby received the M.S. degree in applied mathematics, the M.S. degree in computer science, and the Ph.D. degree in applied mathematics from Brown University, Providence, RI, in 1999, 2001, and 2002, respectively. He was promoted and received tenure at Utah in 2008. During his 2008-2009 sabbatical year, he taught a Michaelmas term course in High-Performance Scientific Computing at the Cavendish Laboratory at Cambridge University, UK and for the academic year was the Leverhulme Visiting Professor of Aeronautics at Imperial College London, UK. He is currently an Associate Professor of computer science with the School of Computing, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, where he is also an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Departments of Bioengineering and Mathematics and a member of the Scientific Computing and Imaging Institute. His current research interests include scientific computing and visualization. On a personal (balancing) note, Mike is married and has three children ages 10, 7 and 5. From 2009 to present, he has battled multiple myeloma with amyloid involvement and its complications. Currently, he remains a cancer survivor.

Robert J Moorhead

Robert J. Moorhead II received a BSEE from Geneva College in 1980 and a MSEE and his Ph.D. from North Carolina State University in 1982 and 1985 respectively. He is currently the Billie J Bill Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at Mississippi State University, as well as Director of both the Geosystems Research and Northern Gulf Institutes. He was previously a Research Staff Member at the IBM T.J. Watson Research Center. His current research interests include computationally demanding visualization and analysis issues, proving the value of visualization, and showing the relative value of different visualization techniques. Dr. Moorhead has published more than 100 peer-reviewed manuscripts. On a personal (balancing)

note, Robert is married to another computer engineer, has a grown son practicing computer engineering after having had both his mom and dad as instructors in college, a middle-child beginning to navigate college, and a high school daughter who will be a bio-engineer when she's not playing soccer.

Klaus Mueller

Klaus Mueller has a PhD degree in computer science from The Ohio State University and is currently an Associate Professor in the Computer Science Department at Stony Brook University. His current research interests are computer and volume graphics, visualization, visual analytics, medical imaging and computer vision. He won the US National Science Foundation CAREER award in 2001 and the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity in 2011. He served both as general chair and as paper chair at IEEE Visualization, and he has authored and co-authored more than 150 peer-reviewed journal and conference papers, which were cited more than 3,500 times according to Google Scholar. He has also participated in 15 tutorials at international conferences on various topics in visualization and medical imaging. He is a senior member of the IEEE and the IEEE Computer Society. For more information see <http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~mueller>

Melanie Tory

Dr. Melanie Tory is an Associate Professor of Computer Science at the University of Victoria. She received a B.Sc. degree (1999) at the University of British Columbia and a Ph.D. (2004) in Visualization at Simon Fraser University. She also held an NSERC

post-doctoral fellowship at the University of British Columbia (2004-2006). Dr. Tory's research lies at the intersection of Visualization, Human Computer Interaction, and Computer-Supported Cooperative Work. Her goal is to design and evaluate visualization and interaction techniques that allow people to effectively analyze data and make decisions in a wide variety of application domains. She is particularly interested in designing visualization techniques based on human perceptual capabilities, as well as designing for multiple co-located users (collaborative visualization). Empirical research methods are a major emphasis of her work. On a personal level, Dr. Tory has an 8-year old son.

Daniel Weiskopf

Daniel Weiskopf is a professor of computer science at the University of Stuttgart, Germany. His research interests include visualization, visual analytics, GPU methods, computer graphics, and special and general relativity. He received the Diplom (MSc) degree and the Dr. rer. nat. (PhD) degree, both in physics, from the University of Tübingen, Germany. His Habilitation degree in computer science is from the University of Stuttgart.

References

Bryan E. Robinson, **Chained to the Desk: A Guidebook for Workaholics, Their Partners and Children, and the Clinicians Who Treat Them**, New York University Press; 2nd Revised edition edition (15 Nov 2007)