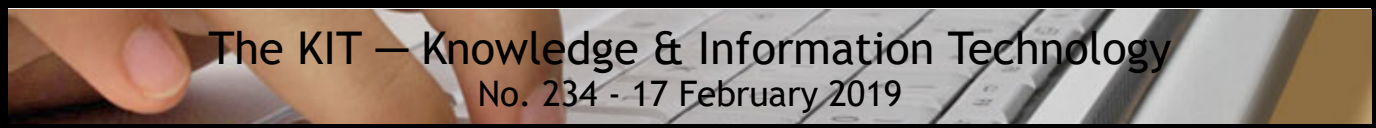SHARE:

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→ The KIT Loses a Faithful Reader

If you've been reading the KIT for a while, I'm sure you saw regular comments about security posts from Bertrand du Castel, noted computer scientist and authors whose contributions ranged from software for oilfield interpretation to inventing the Java smartcard. Bertrand, who had lived in Austin with his wife Catherine for many years, passed away in Geneva last week after a battle with leukemia. He was 67 years old.

A common Schlumberger colleague reminded me of one of Bertrand's many metaphors. The difference between France and the USA, he said, can be summed up by noting that "France has 3 religions and 100 cheeses; the US has 100 religions and 3 cheeses." Betrand's intellect, wit, accent (and his rapid reaction to incorrect information) will be missed by his many friends, colleagues and mentees.

-- Claude Baudoin

→ "Intelligent Software Engineering"

Subtitled "Synergy Between AI and Software Engineering," this ACM talk by Prof. Tao Xie (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) will be broadcast on Thursday, Feb. 21 at 9 am Pacific / noon Eastern / 1800 CET. Register here.

→ "Emerging Standards for Model-Based Systems Engineering"

If you're in a learning mood on the same day, you can also attend this talk, an hour earlier (February 21 at 8 am Pacific, 11 am Eastern, 1700 CET), by Don Tolle, industry expert in product lifecycle management (PLM) and computer-aided engineering (CAE). Register here for this talk hosted by NAFEMS (formerly the National Agency for Finite Element Methods and Standards).

MBSE consists of "defining and adopting model-based processes and technologies for developing and maintaining complex systems." It answers the needs for continuous development and delivery to replace the traditional, sequential "stage gate" model, as well as for the coordination of distributed development teams. While the MDSE community tends not to use the term "agile development," the first of these two arguments for MBSE is similar to that for agile software development instead of a waterfall model.

The speaker will focus on the limitations of existing product description and modeling languages, and some of the advances being made, including the evolution of the SysML language. a standard of the Object Management Group.

→ What is a Weaki?

Remember that you saw it here first: we just made this term up (or let us know if you heard it before, and where). A "weaki" is a weak wiki -- a software module, usually part of a bigger package, that provides some collaborative web authoring capability to users, is called a wiki by its creators, but is missing many of the features that make a wiki really usable. Missing features may include:

- "Special pages" that give easy access to the most prolific contributors, the longest/shortest/newest/oldest items, the most/lead read items, etc.
- "Talk pages" that are automatically attached to each content page, allowing users to discuss potential changes among themselves before agreeing on edits to the main page.
- Lack of templates to allow the easy creation of a collection of pages that follow the same format.
- Lack of category tags, or lack of a category hierarchy.
- Conformance to a common wikitext markup language (either the industry-standard Mediawiki syntax or the Creole standard), without which porting the content from wiki to wiki is difficult.
- Version tracking, and the ability to revert a page to any previous version in case of errors or vandalism of a page.
- Rich access control features, with multiple user roles.
- A library of extensions providing extra functionality "à la carte."

This is why some electronic content managemency (ECM) products, including the market's 500-pound gorilla, Microsoft SharePoint, provided minimal and cumbersome wiki-like capabilities. The thing is, there is really no excuse to provide a weaki, giving that there are open-source platforms such as Mediawiki, Dokuwiki and others that provide some or all of these features and can be integrated into an ECM product.

→ Learning at Scale

The Learning at Scale ("L@S") conference will take place in Chicago on June 24-25. The event "investigates large-scale, technology-mediated learning environments, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), intelligent tutoring systems, open learning courseware, learning games, and communities of citizen scientists, collaborative programmers, tutorial systems, shared critiques, and more."

→ Seen Recently…

"As an industry we tend to build overly complex solutions and dedicate our careers justifying their existence. This typically results in technical debt and ultimately bankruptcy."

-- Kelsey Hightower, who gives his title as "minimalist"