

Preface

The world was in a very unstable state before this Festschrift. It waited, impatiently, for a lightest touch to explode with thousands of messages flown across the globe. The messages have turned into stories, and the stories have turned into this book.

As the reader is undoubtedly aware, this book is dedicated to Alex Yakovlev on the occasion of his 60th birthday, but let us not confuse the occasion with the underlying cause, which is: *everybody loves Alex!* His open mind, infectious enthusiasm, and positive thinking are driving the community, and we – his students, colleagues and friends – thank him here, in writing.

It is important to note that not everyone was able to complete their writing in time to be included into this edition of the book. But fear not: as a self-appointed editor I declare this book fully asynchronous and unbounded. Let us celebrate the variability of the contributions with respect to their completion time (which is likely to follow Alex’s favourite long-tail distribution), as well as their topic and length, and welcome new contributors, who will become part of future editions of the book¹.

One of the many lessons I learned from Alex is that ‘when’ is just as important as ‘what’ and ‘why’. We present our stories to Alex on his 60th anniversary; at best, I can only half understand the magnitude of this number in my 30s, therefore let me delegate the task of arguing that “60 is not just a number” to a philosopher in our community:

Professor Alex Yakovlev.

The days of our years are threescore years and ten. Respect our forefathers, as you become one. Marvel at their wise words and institutions; the giant shoulders to our improbable but superlative technical edifice. The next 40yrs will be as exciting as the last, but you will not lead its charge. Time now to set aside personal aspiration and firm the shoulder for those who follow. As life takes you to this new and scary place, remember you are not alone in the dark.

Though ships that pass, I am very pleased to have known, shared and laughed with you o’er years beyond number. And equally pleased to count you friend and colleague.

60 is not just a number; it’s the end of childhood.

Ian Phillips (ARM)

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this book, sent their words of encouragement and support, and helped with the editing. And with no further ado, ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join Alex and turn this page.

*Andrey Mokhov
July 2016, Newcastle*

¹ Please contact me by email andrey.mokhov@ncl.ac.uk if you would like to contribute a paper or for any other queries.