

2009 The Year in Review

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I should start out with a summary of changes at work, since it is the biggest change for me in 2009. A couple of major shifts took place, Autodesk had another reduction in force (RIF) and the geospatial division was rolled into the architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) division.

This RIF is the third or fourth I've witnessed. None of them were pleasant, but this one was particularly scary due to my vulnerable position - having just moved to Switzerland and needing to stay employed to stay in the country. The trend is to cut jobs in western countries and shift them to the far east due to salary differences. I thought my number was up; it may still be. In hindsight, the move to Switzerland was probably not wise, since the guy I moved here to work for was one of the people cut.

The ramifications of the shift to AEC are still reverberating. I made a choice not to go back into software development for the reasons outlined above, but instead start another career in product design (PD). This means I'm now two levels of organization below where I was last year. At Autodesk, PD is only part of a larger category which goes by the touchy-feely name 'user experience' (UX). Next year, I might be changing job titles yet again, to subject matter expert (SME), which apparently fits me more closely; although I am not an expert, don't matter and failed many subjects.

We traveled quite a lot in the past year, as I used up the vacation balance I carried forward from Canada. Within Switzerland, we visited Geneva, Lausanne, Lugano, Vals, the Interlaken, Ballenberg, Gstaad and Freiburg. Outside Switzerland, we travelled to Liechtenstein; Munich, Donaueschingen and Freiburg in Germany; Milan in Italy; Ronchamps, Arc-et-Senans and Le Pradet in France; Innsbruck in Austria; and vacationed in Greece. Next year we're not sure where to go, there's nowhere left - NOT! Perhaps I can convince Jackie to take a cycling tour through Europe on a tandem.

Everyone is in good health. Jackie and I are still struggling with language. We took a German course and Jackie has followed up with another German adult education course. We're considering buying a house or maybe an apartment or condo; assuming I don't lose my job. We can probably use the proceeds from our paid off house in Canada as a small down payment.

Samantha finished third year architecture at the University of Waterloo. She did a summer work term in Geneva, which was apparently fun but not very lucrative. In 2010 she starts an 8 month work term,

hopefully in Montreal or Lausanne, followed by the Rome Program.

Alexandra turned sixteen this year, which in Switzerland means she's basically an adult - able to buy beer and wine, paying full fare for entry, etc. I think she's thriving, managing to get perfect marks in chemistry (in German no less) and excellent marks in other subjects, winning medals in gymnastics and still playing violin.

Best wishes to everyone, and have a healthy and happy 2010.