

Existential Risk / Opportunity Singularity Management

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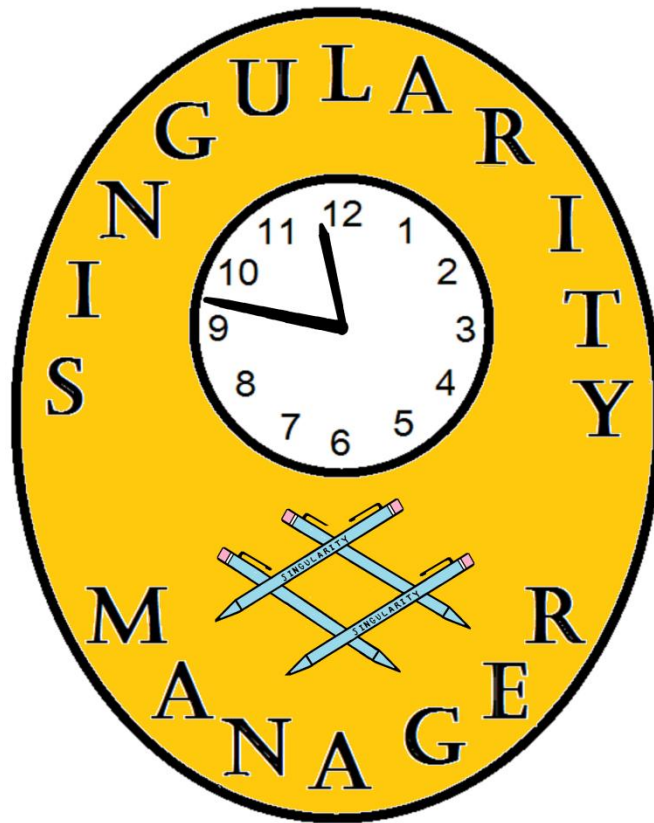
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Regalia Delphi

by James Blodgett

Regalia are badges, uniforms, and insignia that signify commitment, membership, and rank. The Delphi exercise is named after the Delphi Oracle in ancient Greece, an oracle that people consulted to learn the truth about things. Delphi exercises are sets of structured questions and discussions among experts that help to clarify strategic choices. EROSM supports a quest to advocate appropriate management of singularities, a quest that is mainly intellectual but that advocates appropriate actions. My take is that the appropriate uniform for intellectual advocates is on the informal side of business casual, but I also believe in trying lots of things in the hope that something works. Regalia helps members of some organizations symbolize and commit to their mission, so let's do a Delphi exercise on regalia that might work for us.

Recently I found a shirt that had the look of a Star Trek uniform, so I tacked on a Star Trek communicator badge. It was sort of fun, the kind of cosplay that the Big Bang Theory cast did frequently. Then I thought of making a badge for my real quest. I am still working on that badge. My initial effort is on the next page.



The symbols on this badge represent major singularities in our human past. Our human development of language had some aspects of a singularity, but some animals have limited signaling abilities that border on being language. Our first real transcendence was writing, which takes signaling into a totally different medium with many advantages. Indeed, I am writing right now. The crossed pencils are a symbol for the many forms of writing instruments, many of which look somewhat like a pencil. Note that these are Singularity brand pencils. The clock is a symbol for two other human breakthroughs: measurement of time, which is important for management, and also clockwork, which connotes all forms of machinery. Singularities have scary potential dangers, symbolized by scary aspects of these symbols. First, the clock and crossed pencils are reminiscent of the pirate symbol, a skull and crossbones. Two pencils would come closer to evoking that symbol, so I prefer four, but the evocation is appropriate because humans at times do have a nasty side, and that is one of the obstacles with which we have to contend. The second scary evocation is that our clock can be seen as a version of the Doomsday Clock, developed in 1947 by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to symbolize threats to humanity. In January 2020 it was moved to 100 seconds before midnight because of what they see as increasing threats of nuclear miscalculation and of global warming. My version symbolizes both optimism and danger. It is optimistic because I make the setting a bit less ominous than theirs, because we are on the job!! I set the clock a few minutes earlier, to a setting that expresses both

danger and optimism. I set the clock at an unlucky thirteen minutes before midnight, but this also symbolizes my contention that even a miniscule tweak in the odds is a big deal because of the mathematics of expected value (probability times value) because the value could be trillions upon trillions of human lives. A tweak is also important for this unlucky setting, because even a small tweak in the odds symbolized by this clock will move it away from this unlucky number.

Delphi Questions

Readers are welcome to answer any or all of the following questions. Email your answers to me. See below regarding my email address. I may quote answers and results in a follow-up article. Good answers may deserve to be their own article.

1. On a scale of one to ten, how do you rate this idea?
2. Could you suggest better regalia?
3. Could you suggest a better idea?
4. If you had one of these badges, would you wear it? How often and on what occasions?
5. If you had made some small contribution to singularity management and was awarded this as a prize, would you be proud of it? Would you be more or less proud of it if your contribution was a big one?
6. Prizes would be more effective if there was money involved. Does anyone know a rich person who might donate?
7. What we try to do is a form of management, but management usually implies that one has appropriate authority and appropriate resources. It is difficult to manage something as big as a singularity, partly because our human polity is not what Nick Bostrom calls a "singleton." See <https://www.nickbostrom.com/fut/singleton.html> . So the word "manager" may be a bit hubristic. It might be more realistic to call ourselves strategists or advocates. As strategists we don't need authority because we present our strategy to others who make the decision, others who in a democratic society include voters. If we deleted the word "manager" and substituted the word "strategist" or the word "advocate," would this make the badge feel more personally appropriate?
8. Would you like the idea of having three types of badges, for advocates, strategists and managers, representing different types and levels of achievement and responsibility?

9. Let's make this more of a real market test. If we proceed with this, I expect we can authorize some level of badge for all SIG members. Wear one to a Mensa Annual Gathering, and see if we can top the regalia of Hell's M's (i.e. Hell's Mensans, a takeoff on Hell's Angels, "the party SIG of American Mensa." See <https://www.hellsms.com>) Meanwhile, I declare that during the market test, the current version is appropriate for all SIG members. I have talked with a local badge maker, but I hesitate to manufacture and ship something during Covid times, so the workaround is to make it ourselves. Print out a copy of the newsletter, paste the logo on thin cardboard, and after the paste dries, cut out carefully around the precise outside edge of the ellipse. When I tried this, I used a marking pen on the cardboard edge so it looked black too. Then I pasted a cardboard attachment device to the back of the badge so I could attach it to my shirt. If you print a larger version, it can be framed and put on the wall. It will be a successful market test if I can convince several members to make one of these, so let me know if you do.

The original graphics were done with the Windows 8 paint program, using fairly high resolution pixel graphics. I think the original file has more detail than what can be pulled from EROSM, so ask me for a copy of the original if you think it will help. Professional illustrators prefer to use vector graphics, so I am playing with Inkscape to see if I can do a better job.

My Email Address

Email to the address on our contact page at <http://www.global-risk-sig.org/contacts.htm> . It is written in letters that hopefully aren't readable by spammers. Use the word "email," as listed, not my name. We have occasional problems with that email address, so I will send a reply email to let you know that I received your message. If Mensa members don't receive it within a week, send email or snail mail to me at the addresses listed in my Mensa Member Profile. American Mensa members can find this on <https://www.us.mensa.org> . Log in with your email address and password. Run your mouse pointer over the word "connect" on the blue bar, and this will open a drop down menu. Click on "member directory" on this menu. Put my name into the resulting form, and press "search". Click on my name on the "Member Directory Search Result", and you will see my personal email address. Our SIG has associate members and international Mensa members and who are not members of US Mensa, and EROSM is posted on a website that is available to all, so the Mensa contact information may not be available to external readers and some types of members. The website contact address usually works. I also currently have two postal addresses, in Albany and in Cohoes. With a little work, I was able to find them on line.