

# AMC SIGDOC Business Meeting 2020

## Minutes

October 6, 2020. Called to order by Dan Richards at 10:30 a.m. Central. Captioned by Sky.

## Attendance

### PRESENT

- **Executive Committee:** Daniel P. (Dan) Richards (chair), Sarah Read (vice chair), Susan Youngblood (secretary/treasurer), Emma Rose (past chair)
- **Board:** Derek Ross (editor of CDQ), Luke Thominet (communications manager), Adam Strantz (website manager), Jason Tham (social media manager), Nupoor Ranade (student representative), Lisa Dush (member at large)
- **2020 Conference Committee:** Stacey Pigg (conference chair), Daniel Hocutt (program co-chair), Josie Walwema (program co-chair), Chris Lam (local co-chair), Sonia Stephens (Microsoft student research competition [SRC] chair), Jordan Frith (sponsorship chair)
- **Other members:** Avery Edenfield (book review editor), Kristen Moore (past secretary/treasurer), Edzordzi Agbozo, Sweta Baniya, Natalie Butts-Ball, Lauren Cagle, Daniel Carter, Joyce Carter, Alexandra Cata, Dani DeVasto, Jenya Edelberg, Zhijun Gao, Andrew Gonzales, Laura Gonzales, Alisha Karbinus, Joey Kilrain, Liz Lane, Andrew Mara, Trinity Overmyer, Prashant Rajan, Enrique (Ricky) Reynoso, Lindsey Scheper, Joanna Schreiber, Michele Simmons, Jessica Ulmer, Quan Zhou

### ABSENT

- **Board:** Sean Zdenek (access chair), Natasha Jones (member at large), Lisa Melonçon (organizational liaison), Manuela Aparicio (chair of EuroSIGDOC)
- **2020 Conference Committee:** Autumn Hood (local co-chair)

## Chair's Welcome

Dan (Danial P.) Richards, chair, welcomed attendees.

## Secretary/Treasurer's Report

Susan Youngblood, secretary/treasurer, noted that SIGDOC's overall financial health is good. Like last year, our SIG ended the year with a little less than we began with, but we still have a good cushion. That cushion has consistently grown over time thanks to responsible past management, allowing us to dedicate a budget line to social justice work.

SIGDOC's largest revenue and expense streams typically are our conferences. This year's conference is not the largest source of revenue because of conscious choices we made to keep the conference affordable because of the nature of the digital conference and how the pandemic has affected attendees' travel budgets. We had excellent conference turnout. We had significant but wise expenditures associated with the conference, especially costs for the essential work to make the conference accessible.

SIGDOC's typically second largest revenue stream is the digital library, but this year it is our largest revenue stream. It again has exceeded projections thanks to the Communication Design Quarterly (CDQ) team's work. Our second largest expense is usually overhead, especially travel, but that expense has been cut because we are not doing much travel this year.

## Membership

Dan gave an overview of membership, which is often conference dependent, going up with attendance, though some members re-up after even if they don't attend the successive conference. Current membership: 178, near where we were last year. Goal: 200, and to be more of a "yearly organization" (with a sense of year-round purpose for members), less dependent on conference attendance.

## Communication Team Report

The communications team is open to feedback. If you have best practice ideas to share, we would appreciate sharing. (Kristen Moore, past secretary/treasurer, offered to chat with the team.) Also, the team welcomes those who want to get more involved: contact Dan or reach out directly, but be mindful of the workload Adam Strantz, website manager, is under at conference time if you reach out now.

**Website.** Adam reported that the website, also functioning to host the conference, was holding up well; 103 people signed up for login credentials on the site. Anyone still waiting for login credentials: let Adam know on Slack. Engagement is up on the website, not only for the conference but also because CDQ regularly draws visitors, thanks to Derek and his team. CDQ may be a point to leverage for year-round engagement. Most of the recent website work has been on the back end. We went many years without having backups, and now we backups and search engine optimization (SEO) is going well. We would like to give the site a front-end facelift, not this year, given how much work we poured into the online conference details. If you are interested in helping with front-end design—anyone with a UX or web design interest—please reach out, and even consider taking on the project as Adam's successor.

**Social media.** Jason Tham, social media manager, described how the main effort since last year was creating an official Facebook page, moving official communication on Facebook from a closed group to a public presence. The official public page now has 305 followers. We are maintaining the group as well since it has 540 members and acts as an open forum where anyone can post announcements and respond. Twitter, our main social media channel, has 949 followers; we hope the conference brings us to the 1,000 milestone. We've revived our YouTube activities this year given the online forum of the conference.

**Other SIGDOC-specific communication.** Luke Thominet, communication manager, commented that our LinkedIn account is not really active. He keeps Wikipedia updated. We're using Listservs, sometimes supplemented with email to membership/conference lists, depending on purpose; specifically, we're using SIGDOC Connect (which may need a recipient list update to include all membership), Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication

(CPTSC), and Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW). A review of strategic approaches to communication has had to wait given the urgency of the conference. Dan followed up that we have a helpdesk for the conference on Slack.

## Communication Design Quarterly

Derek Ross, editor of CDQ, shouted out to Adam, Luke, and Jason for publicity for the publication, including to boost submissions. He urges everyone to market the publication, soliciting submissions, proposals for special issues, and readership.

***State of the publication, need for special issues.*** We have published seven—nearly eight—articles since the last business meeting. Each quarterly issue is usually two articles and a couple of book reviews. Our current queue/pipeline has seven manuscripts in revise & resubmit stages, one rejected, and one out for review. We would like to have even more, but compare that to a couple of years ago when the pipeline was empty. Avery Edenfield, our new book review editor, is doing a great job, keeping many coming in and coming up with ways to rethink the book review. We have had a couple of proposals for special issues that fell through, so it's time for a special issue. If you have a good idea and interest, please contact Derek, who will walk you through the proposal process and shepherd you through the editorial process. Guest editing is excellent experience and is good for promotion and tenure (P&T).

For each article, Derek and his editorial assistant do layout in InDesign and create a PDF for Adam to share, but Adam also goes through the extra, labor-intensive work to create the web text and make the work accessible, including complex images like flowcharts. Any help or tips for streamlining would be welcomed.

***Supplementary affiliated publications.*** The [CDQ abstract showcase zine](#), shared within the last week as a fully accessible PDF, is a great way to give people an overview of the work we are doing in the publication. The showcase spotlights authors and their work. Please share widely. Also, we are starting a podcast with Ed Youngblood at Auburn University. We're envisioning quarterly podcasts spotlighting someone from each issue, but perhaps as many seven per year. The focus for the first episode has already been chosen: a wonderful piece on technical communication and Jewish cemeteries, about to be published. We've recently put out a white paper on accessibility in journals (written with our editorial assistant and interns), which is informing what CDQ does to become more accessible. We invite you to use it for classes, etc. We may develop it into an article.

***Inclusivity.*** We're trying to make the journal more accessible (see above). We're also working to make it inclusive in other ways and antiracist. Derek solicited feedback on the review policy from the entire editorial board to make the policies support this goal. The board gave excellent feedback, and he is trying to condense it into a single page of review guidelines that are concise and effective at signposting how not to be racist, how to be inclusive.

***Thanks.*** Thanks to Adam (above) and to Sahajiya Nath, editorial assistant, for her hard work on many facets of CDQ.

***Converting proceedings to articles.*** Emma Rose, past chair, and others reminded attendees to work with us to craft proceedings into larger, significantly different articles that reach a wider

audience via CDQ. Often it's a matter of filling in gaps. Attend the editors' roundtable for more info. You can get direction for your piece.

## Conference Report/Debriefing

**Shift to virtual.** Stacey Pigg, conference chair, debriefed attendees. We began the preparations for SIGDOC 2020 by intending to co-locate with CPTSC on the campus of the University of North Texas (UNT) in Denton. We planned to have an inclusive theme to invite ample presentations as, including many different technologies and on many forms of design. Room scheduling issues led us to shift to reserving a nearby hotel. Then COVID hit. At the end of April, guided by the executive committee (EC), we decided to shift to virtual event, cognizant of the labor issues—labor that already went into the conference by the committee and submitters and that would arise with a shift to virtual (increased labor). One goal at the time included publishing the 2020 proceedings as planned. With the future uncertain, we based the decision on health and safety, acknowledging current economic realities, time constraints, and the value of the work done already, as well as the work to be done in the shift.

**Goals and thanks.** We also aimed to offer speaking opportunities for individuals working on timely issues, to provide opportunities for networking and mentorship, and to create an inclusive, accessible space. We were successful, thanks to the team. Josie Walwema and Daniel Hocutt, program co-chairs, have been fantastic, from designing the theme and call, to shepherding everyone through the process, to handling the proceedings (which are wonderful). Because of Sonia Stephens, Microsoft student research competition (SRC) chair, a huge number of SRC students are presenting this year. Chris Lam and Autumn Hood, local co-chairs, worked with local arrangements and then made the difficult to shift to moving things online, doing a great job. They continued to recruit speakers from the Denton area to give as much local flavor as possible. Adam has done a wonderful job making presentation content available and accessible on the website and devising a content presentation framework that allows attendees to revisit the presentations. Sean Zdenek, access chair, advised on accessibility; if you notice any problems, please let us know. Jason helped us get news out on social media. Jordan Frith, sponsorship chair, worked on sponsorship so we could fund what we're doing.

**Lessons learned.** We've learned much about technology platforms (opportunities and limitations), but we won't be able to fully process lessons learned until the end of the week; we're eager to do so we can improve. Further, like as with online teaching, our online conference should offer lessons that improve our in-person experience, too.

**Sponsorships.** Jordan pointed out that we're always looking for sponsorships, acknowledging that budgets have changed given the pandemic. We raised \$1,250 this year, down from \$2,000 (he thinks) last year. More was pledged, but the pandemic affected follow-through. Many thanks to those who were able to sponsor. Consider placing ads, using those as an opportunity to support doc design, or even making donations. The following figures are from memory so may be inaccurate. For \$250, you get an ad in the proceedings, promoted on social media, and your logo on the website. For \$500, you get event named after you. In a typical year for the in-person conference, we also accept books, media, etc. to distribute, though we had to decline those this

year. Jordan can send specific info for sponsorships, which are processed through ACM. Also, we are looking for ways to make that sponsorship year-round, not just centered on the conference.

**Student participation.** The posters online are working well, better than at some conferences. Students get exposure to a number of populations here for networking; even if they don't write an extended abstract for the proceedings, the product is something they can showcase as an artifact (not just an ephemeral vitae line); attendees can access their work in multiple forms; and the accompanying commentary is excellent. Getting students to participate (even incorporating the SRC into a syllabus) increases the chance of integrating students into the organization at an earlier time. Thanks to Sonia for facilitating the structure and encouraging us to think beyond the traditional poster presentation, supporting our values. Now we need to consider what we want to foreground and what we should keep online, what to preserve.

## Justice-centered budget line

**Overview.** Dan noted that we now have a justice-centered initiative as a SIGDOC budgetary line, not just part of the conference, that we developed as an EC. Follow the link to read the statement and learn about our vision behind it. We invite the larger SIGDOC community to examine what that work might look like, leveraging your expertise and insights.

**Short-term and long-term responses.** Dan and the EC explained that we have two immediate responses to injustice: First, apply a theme to this year's career advancement grants, two of which are given every year and that especially support students and early career faculty, especially people of color. The theme is work that actively supports dismantling systemic injustice, uses the current momentum. Second, have a sustainable budget line of \$2,000 dedicated to supporting justice-center initiatives in the design of communication, to put concrete action behind good intentions and the statement.

**Soliciting input.** A session at this year's conference will help inform the budget line's use. The EC has shared ideas of samples—creating a database, starting a local nonprofit, other work related to communication design as it pertains to facilitating social justice on community to global levels. But we want input, from clarifying qualifying projects (research, tangible projects) to dividing the sum versus giving it all to one recipient. The budgetary line will remain, but the ideas may evolve.

**Responses.** The response, via voice and chat, was substantial. Attendees expressed that they were happy that the EC has put money behind justice work, not just words.

- **Work beyond academia.** Kristen noted that community-based work goes beyond the academy or industry; valuable work is not necessarily tied to a university.
- **Equitable process for the call.** Derek urged us to think about distribution and how the call will go out equitably so it reaches not just privileged people at their computers who can respond quickly. Further, some people who are doing the work and driving change might not think to put themselves forward for these sorts of awards. Cagle (Lauren Cagle) proposed an application window after the call and extending not just self-nominations but also mentor-based nominations. Sarah Read, vice chair, and Alisha Karbinus echoed the value of having mentors nominate (which would expand nominations to those who don't realize the impact of their work and would further encourage such work).

- ***Mentors for applying.*** Also, mentoring could be built into the application. We also need to demystify the application process for folks who aren't the usual applicants.
- ***Defining a justice project.*** Kristen asked, What is a justice project? Who gets to define it? Does it include addressing ableism, for instance? We have to be careful not to get lost in the procedural details and get away what's at the heart of this funding. We may need a steward for the process of defining such projects. Dan supported the idea that we have to do collaborative definitional work in the process. One possible approach is to be open and see what proposals come in, and another is to define more specifically. Ricky (Enrique) Reynoso proposed a coalition to help define the work (stemming off of a discussion of Black, Indigenous, and people of color [BIPOC] expertise).
- ***Justice work as a core, not ancillary to other activities, not ephemeral.*** Josie added that social justice and equity are, she hopes, practiced by all of us, but some don't have the luxury of compartmentalizing work /research from their lives because of their statuses as minorities, etc. For some, the work, while appreciated, is "a thing they get to publish" before they move on. Also, the current political situation is working against such research and teaching, that when an administration ties federal monetary support to ***not*** working in critical theory, some universities respond by discontinuing critical theory in training, etc. (noting news about Iowa State as an example). Academia needs to see such work less as a special area of focus and more as a core to how people are treated equally.
- ***Supporting expertise with funding, not just a service line.*** Kristen and Cagle suggested using the funds the first year to help people make institutional/organizational decisions, paying people for their expertise, especially BIPOC community members who have lived experience. Too often, BIPOC community members are tapped for such service without compensation, which ends up being a tax on time and leads to emotional burnout.
- ***Moving forward.*** This is a long-term issue that doesn't have to be rushed. Please share your ideas via email. The EC will continue working through details. We want to create an equitable infrastructure that allows us to honor existing work (not just projects that are a temporary focus), to honor the people who can't take off the "hat" of doing justice work.

## Conference siting

See the [Google Doc on conference siting](#), and please write any thoughts or comments you have regarding conference siting by the end of October, perhaps into November. Comments may be procedural or experiential; they could include the online format (addressing uncertainties, addressing possible hybrids to retain the best of the virtual conference, etc.). Before COVID, the EC strongly wanted to develop a strategic process for conference siting that looks several years out. Doing so would give conference committees more time to plan and be strategic. Stacey aptly summarized what happened after COVID. Since then, we postponed making any commitments about the format or the site for next year's conference until after this week so we can draw on lessons learned. The shape of the conference is in flux. It might even be a fully online experience with perhaps a regional in-person experience at multiple locations, or regional in-person gatherings with remote access. We will need to consider the economic and safety impacts of COVID that may affect us for several years. Joey Kilrain and Sarah offered to share input on managing group calls (e.g., Teams, Zoom).