SIGDOC FY '21 Annual Report

Submitted by: Daniel P. Richards, SIGDOC Chair
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Overview

The ACM Special Interest Group for Design of Communication (SIGDOC) provides a forum for researchers and practitioners of the design of communication, including but not limited to those doing work in information architecture, information design, content management, user experience, user documentation (traditional and user-contributed), as well as governmental, scientific, and public participatory contexts. SIGDOC's overall mission is to: advance the state of knowledge; encourage the research; and support the interdisciplinary practice of the design of communication.

Health and Viability of SIGDOC

SIGDOC remains a consistently healthy organization, holding steady at around 200 members. Most of our members attend and participate actively in our yearly conference. For example, 158 of our 197 members registered for our virtual event last October 2020. The numbers for this year's October conference—again a virtual one—are higher so far in terms of submissions. Since our membership is so intimately tied to conference registration, we hope to have a slight uptick in membership for 2021. In terms of finances, SIGDOC continues to rest upon a significant surplus.

The current SIGDOC Executive Committee (EC) has agreed to stay on for a second two-year term (2021-2023), which means the chair, vice chair, secretary-treasurer, publication editor, and past chair will have been in leadership for a total of 4 years when the second terms end. This consistency has been good for the organization, given that there was a bit of a quick turnover from the past couple chairs. The consistency has allowed for the EC to revise bylaws to reflect current best practices and develop more robust documentation to aid in onboarding more easily volunteers for conferences. The revision of our bylaws (to be submitted by the end of 2021) reflects SIGDOC's commitment to equity and diversity and a vision towards building in more technical committees to extend its reach into other corners of industry.

Our main publication, *Communication Design Quarterly (CDQ)*, has continued to evolve into one of the more reputable publications in the field of technical communication, in no small part due to its commitment to publishing and reviewing in more equitable ways. As *CDQ* approaches its 10th volume in 2022, we expect submission numbers to continue to increase.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

There were two steps taken this year by the EC to further promote in both philosophical and practical ways diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The first step was the decision by the EC as a group and the individual members therein to sign the "Anti-Racist Scholarly Reviewing Practices: A Heuristic for Editors, Reviewers, and Authors."[1] This living document was composed by a diverse group of major scholars in the field of technical communication and co-signed by nearly all members of the field in significant editorial positions. The open, public document itself gives explicit guidance on how to engage in anti-racist review practices, guided by the question: "How might we dismantle the existing exclusionary and oppressive philosophies and practices of reviewing in the field of technical and professional communication and replace them with philosophies and practices that are explicitly anti-racist and inclusive?" The SIGDOC EC unequivocally supports this heuristic and is working on integrating its content into our own review practices pertaining to our publications and conference submission systems.

The second step was to allot for 2021 our new annual budgetary line item ($2000) dedicated to inclusion to pay a group of scholars in the field to conduct an audit of our organizational documentation through the lens of inclusion, equity, and diversity. This group was granted full access to the internal workings of SIDGOC and spent the summer evaluating our organization and composing a recommendation report for actions SIGDOC can take moving forward to improve its commitment to inclusion. The report, titled "SIGDOC Anti-Racist and Inclusion Consulting Recommendation Report" was submitted by Dr. Genevieve Garcia de Mueller, Dr. Donnie J. Sackey and Dr. Natasha N. Jones on June 30, 2021. The recommendations fell into two categories and were outlined as such:

1) Recommendation 1: Survey of SIGDOC Membership: "We recommend that SIGDOC Executive Committee survey members in order to find out how the members experience SIGDOC (as an organization) and also in order to identify possible opportunities for SIGDOC to build and expand on anti-racist and inclusive organization practices that are already in place."

2) Recommendation 2: Revision of Bylaws: "We reviewed the SIGDOC Bylaws in order to identify opportunities for integrating anti-racist and inclusive practices into the processes, procedures, and operations of the organization [and] we found that the bylaws are quite vague and that leadership interpretation of the bylaws in the future could potentially present problems and leave room for resistance to (or even refusal to) consider issues of racial equity, justice, accessibility, and inclusivity." To remedy the vagueness, the group recommended that we:
   a. Revise our organizational purpose.
   b. Expand the newly designated board position of Access Chair.
   c. Include demographic information in yearly reports.
   d. Emphasize diversity in our elections.

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[1] Cagle., L. et al. (2021). *Anti-racist scholarly reviewing practices: A heuristic for editors, reviewers, and authors.* Retrieved from https://tinyurl.com/reviewheuristic.

We plan on implementing each recommendation. Further, and more immediately to honor recommendation 2c, we include the follow demographic information of our latest membership report, contextualized against the entire ACM membership demographics:

	A	B	C
1	**Gender Summarized**		
2	**SIG**	**GENDER**	**COUNT(***
181	ALL	Female	3,818
182	ALL	Male	16,546
183	ALL	NONE	1,850
184	ALL	Other	64
185	ALL	Prefer not to submit	790

	A	B	C
1	**Gender Summarized**		
2	**SIG**	**GENDER**	**COUNT(***
64	DOC	Female	65
65	DOC	Male	78
66	DOC	NONE	10
67	DOC	Prefer not to submit	5

Figure 1: Gender identification by all of ACM members (top) and SIGDOC (bottom). "None" means no response was given.

	A	B	C
1	Do you identify as being a member of an underrepresented racial or ethnic group(s) in the place you work? Which ones?		
2	SIG	DECODE(NVL(TRIM(UPPE	COUNT
3	ALL	NO	12,755
4	ALL	NONE	6,428
5	ALL	PREFER NOT TO SUBMIT	2,511
6	ALL	OTHER	1,067
7	ALL	YES	307
8			
9	SIG	GROUP	COUNT('
449	DOC	NO	93
450	DOC	NONE	39
451	DOC	PREFER NOT TO SUBMIT	9
452	DOC	YES	6
453	DOC	LATINX	2
454	DOC	ALASKA NATIVE	1
455	DOC	ASIAN	1
456	DOC	ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	1
457	DOC	CHICANO, LATINO, INDIGENOUS	1
458	DOC	JAPANESE-AMERICAN	1
459	DOC	LGBTQ+	1
460	DOC	MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN	1
461	DOC	NEPALI	1
462	DOC	WOMAN	1

Figure 2: Racial and ethnic identification by all of ACM members (top) and SIGDOC (bottom). "None" means no response was given.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Do you have a disability or special need that impacts your access to ACM conferences,				
2	special interest groups, publications, or digital resources?				
3					
4	SIG	VALUE	COUNT		
57	DOC	NO	110		
58	DOC	NONE	39		
59	DOC	Prefer not to submit	6		
60	DOC	YES	4		
158	ALL	NO	14,738		
159	ALL	NONE	6,432		
160	ALL	Prefer not to submit	1,728		
161	ALL	YES	224		

Figure 3: Disability identification by all of ACM members (bottom) and SIGDOC (top). "None" means no response was given.

	A	B	C
1	SIG	JOB	SUM(PERCENTAGE
93	DOC	Consultant	10
94	DOC	Educator	50
95	DOC	Manager	7
96	DOC	NONE	27
97	DOC	Other Primary Job Function	14
98	DOC	Practitioner	22
99	DOC	Researcher	30
271	ALL	Consultant	1,055
272	ALL	Educator	5,110
273	ALL	Manager	1,428
274	ALL	NONE	4,531
275	ALL	Other Primary Job Function	1,117
276	ALL	Practitioner	2,959
277	ALL	Researcher	6,868

Figure 4: Professional identification by all of ACM members (bottom) and SIGDOC (top). "None" means no response was given.

	A	B	C
1	SIG	AGE	COUNT(
119	DOC	18-25	7
120	DOC	26-35	32
121	DOC	36-45	38
122	DOC	46-55	34
123	DOC	56-65	20
124	DOC	66-75	6
125	DOC	76+	1
126	DOC	Prefer not to submit	10
127	DOC	NONE	10
347	ALL	17 and under	18
348	ALL	18-25	1,456
349	ALL	26-35	4,288
350	ALL	36-45	4,972
351	ALL	46-55	4,683
352	ALL	56-65	3,609
353	ALL	66-75	988
354	ALL	76+	153
355	ALL	Prefer not to submit	1,072
356	ALL	NONE	1,829

Figure 5: Age identification by all of ACM members (bottom) and SIGDOC (top). "None" means no response was given.

We will continue to include demographic information from our yearly membership reports into our annual reports to the purpose of transparency and data-supported organizational action.

Awards and Recipients
The following awards and recognitions were given over the past year:
1. **Career Advancement Research Grants**:
    a. "Exploring Risk and Crisis Communication Practices of Transnational Feminists in Ensuring Equity and Justice During COVID-19" — Sweta Baniya, Ph.D, Virginia Tech
    b. "Queer Becomings: The Ethics, Rhetoric, and Materiality of Care in Trans Networks" — Avery Edenfield, Ph.D, Utah State University
2. **Best Paper** (in conference proceedings):
    a. 2020 Best Paper Award goes to "Migrants as Place-Makers: The Role of Technical Communicators in (re)Locating Place" by Gabriel Lorenzo Aguilar
    b. 2020 Honorable Mention in the Best Paper Award goes to "Preparing Future UX Professionals: Skills, Dispositions, and Competencies" by Emma Rose (University of Washington – Tacoma), Cynthia Putnam (DePaul University), and Craig M. McDonald (Pratt Institute).
3. **Diana Award**, given to an organization, institution, or business for their long-term contribution to the field of communication design: Writing, Information, and Digital Experience (WIDE) Lab at MSU

4. **Student Research Competitions** (from 2020 Conference), see Table 1:

Graduate Division

Name	Affiliation	Title
(1st) Danielle Stambler	University of Minnesota	"Eating Right" and User Experience with an Employee Wellness Program
(2nd) Sarah Fadem	Rutgers University	Designing a Decision Aid for Patients Considering Bone Marrow Transplant
(3rd) Nicole Lowman	SUNY University at Buffalo	Advising the Buffalo Police Advisory Board: Toward a More Usable Technology

Undergraduate Division

Name	Affiliation	Title
(1st) Sanjana Ponnada	Arizona State University	Improving user experience and accessibility of CDC's COVID-19 symptoms self-checker with better design practices
(2nd) Rita Flanagan	University of Pittsburgh	Principles of Technical and Public Communication as a Provisional Framework for Undergraduate Researchers Writing with and About Indigenous Peoples
(3rd) Kenyan Burnham, Adam Narine, Christopher Trotter	Texas Tech, Ontario Technical University, University of Minnesota	Instructor Roles in Higher Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 1: Microsoft Student Research Competition Award winners.

We plan on given the same awards next year, save for the switching to the Rigo Award (alternating years for Diana and Rigo Awards).

Significant Proceedings Papers

Some significant proceedings papers, based on clicks, downloads, and citations, are as follows:

- Quan Zhou. 2020. Building Design Thinking into Content Strategy. In Proceedings of the 38th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication (SIGDOC '20). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 3, 1–5. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3380851.3416738
- Jenya Edelberg and Joseph Kilrain. 2020. Design Systems: Consistency, Efficiency & Collaboration in Creating Digital Products. In Proceedings of the 38th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication (SIGDOC '20). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 8, 1–3. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3380851.3416743
- Jessica Lynn Campbell. 2020. A Mixed-methods Approach to Evaluating the Usability of Telemedicine Communications. In Proceedings of the 38th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication (SIGDOC '20). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 20, 1–6. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3380851.3416755
- Michael Meng, Stephanie M. Steinhardt, and Andreas Schubert. 2020. Optimizing API Documentation: Some Guidelines and Effects. In Proceedings of the 38th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication (SIGDOC '20). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 24, 1–11. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3380851.3416759
- Claire Lauer and Shaun O'Brien. 2020. The Deceptive Potential of Common Design Tactics Used in Data Visualizations. In Proceedings of the 38th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication (SIGDOC '20). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 27, 1–9. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3380851.3416762
- Alison Cardinal, Laura Gonzales, and Emma J. Rose. 2020. Language as Participation: Multilingual User Experience Design. In Proceedings of the 38th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication (SIGDOC '20). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, Article 28, 1–7. DOI:https://doi.org/10.1145/3380851.3416763

These pieces also do a good job at representing the various areas of expertise of our members.

Conference Activity

Our flagship conference is our annual SIGDOC conference, which typically takes place in the summer or fall of each year. The SIGDOC 2020 conference took place in October (5th through 9th) virtually and was originally scheduled to be held at the University of North Texas in Denton, TX, USA.

The theme was "A New Decade of Technology and Design," which invited scholars, practitioners, and teachers to consider looking forward to the possibilities and pitfalls of new academic and industry practices, technologies, audiences, and contexts. The conference committee included:

- Conference Chair: Stacey Pigg, North Carolina State University
- Local Conference Co-Chairs: Chris Lam (University of North Texas) & Autumn Hood (Sabre)
- Program Co-Chairs: Daniel Hocutt (University of Richmond) and Josephine Walwema (University of Washington)
- Student Research Competition Co-Chairs: Jason Swarts (NC State University) and Sonia Stephens (University of Central Florida)
- Sponsorship Chair: Jordan Frith, Clemson University
- Accessibility Chair: Sean Zdenek, University of Delaware
- Social Media Manager: Jason Tham, Texas Tech University
- Communications Manager: Luke Thominet, Florida International University
- Website Manager: Adam Strantz, Miami University (Ohio)
- Student Representative: Nupoor Ranade

We had 58 items that were peer reviewed and published in the proceedings, including 43 papers and panel abstracts and 15 poster abstracts as part of the Student Research Competition. The 58 items represent the highest number of peer reviewed pieces we have ever published in the proceedings. In all, we had 155 attendees registered for the conference (another record). We saw a robust engagement with graduate and undergraduate students who participated in our Microsoft Student Research Competition. At the conference, we included the following features:

- Keynote by: Women of Color in Computing Collaborative
- Live topical conversations on: Pandemic-Related Communication and Antiracist and Social Justice Activism
- Editors' roundtable
- Workshops
- Ignite talks featuring industry practitioners in the great Dallas/Denton area

The research that our members are presenting at our conference continues to address salient issues and themes in the fields of communication design, user experience, and technical communication.

Special Projects

There are currently three special projects at various stages of development:

1. *History*. The EC applied for an ACM History Committee Fellowship but did not receive funding. We intend to reapply next year and continue to work towards making our history more visible to new members.
2. *Technical Committees*. We are currently in talks with the OASIS DITA Adoption Committee to facilitate a transition of their team from OASIS to SIGDOC. This would be our first official technical committee.

3. *Open Access Resources*. The SIGDOC Chair and some members are working towards a project titled DART (data repository), which would provide open access data from various publications in the field of technical communication.

Key Issues for the Future

We have identified the following issues and plans that will occupy our time over the next 2 years:

- *Virtual conferences*. SIGDOC 2021 will be our second virtual event and we are thinking through what it might mean to always offer a virtual attendance option. This also means thinking through how to balance accessibility budgets and the subsequent increase in registration costs.
- *Conference siting*. We will continue to work on formalizing our conference site selection framework.
- *Revise bylaws*. Our bylaws are out of date, and we wish to update them to reflect our current practices and values. These will be submitted in 2021.
- *Connecting to industry*. We are still committed to community partnerships through the development of a Community Liaison position on the board, whose responsibility would be to do outreach for community partners and solicit and program at least one community-driven panel. We also think investing more in Technical Committees can help connect to industry in substantial ways.

In addition to these new strategies, we will continue working with Women in Technical Communication and supporting the Microsoft Student Research Competition.