

**Annual SIGDOC Report**  
**July 2000 to June 2001**  
**Submitted by Kathy Haramundanis - Chair**

SIGDOC has had a profitable year, with an exceptional surplus from the SIGDOC 2000 conference, which was held September, 2000 in Cambridge, Mass. jointly with our IEEE counterpart, PCS. At this conference we gave out several awards, including our Rigo Award, which was given to Dr. Barbara Mirel for her long-term, extraordinary contributions to the technical communications field, including usability and human factors, and our Diana Award, an institutional award, given to MIT Press for its commitment to exploring new fields and new modes of inquiry. In addition to these traditional SIGDOC awards, we were happy to award a winner in our Graduate Student category, and to provide a scholarship to an undergraduate (at Mercer College) in the field. These last are relatively new awards for SIGDOC, and this was the first year that we have given a scholarship in Technical Communication.

To try to stem the tide of vanishing memberships, SIGDOC distributed its membership brochure to colleagues teaching in the technical communications field, and continued its efforts to make schools aware of what SIGDOC is and what it does. A SIGDOC member in Toronto, Canada, indicated an interest in starting a student chapter. This request is under consideration but, due to SIGDOC's limited resources, has not been acted upon. It may be that this could be done by working with the local chapter of SIGCHI, a possibility that is being considered.

During this past year SIGDOC made the transition of its long-time Journal of Computer Documentation to a new editor and a new production system. Delays in the entire process of producing the Journal have meant that we have not been successful in meeting this member obligation over the past few months. Plans and actions are in place to ensure that the Journal will soon return to its normal production schedule. At the same time, SIGDOC changed its quarterly Newsletter from a print publication to an all-electronic publication, under a new Newsletter Editor. This electronic publication has been very successful, and provides our members with timely information about a variety of short topics of interest to SIG members.

Members of the SIGDOC Executive Board participated in FORUM 2000, a conference attended by organizers from other sister societies and hosted by the INTECOM umbrella society. This conference is held every three years to identify and work on issues and opportunities in technical communications. Members of the SIGDOC Executive Board also participated in SUMMIT 2001, a working meeting attended by representatives of all the major technical communications societies in the US. SIGDOC continues to represent a special part of the technical communications field not fully represented by the other groups such as IEEE PCS, STC, and others.

We held a successful election with a slate of six candidates, two for each of the three positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. A review of the SIGDOC By-laws revealed that we did not need separate candidates for the positions of Secretary and Treasurer, and we were able to conduct our election with six rather than eight candidates. The elected officers for 2001 – 2003 are: Kathy Haramundanis, Chair (re-elected), Michael Priestley, Vice-Chair, and Mike Albers, Secretary-Treasurer. We additionally have several appointed members of the Executive Board, including editors for the Newsletter, the Journal, an Information Officer, and the conference committees, with separate committees for each conference. We plan to continue to offer an annual conference and thereby continue to remain a multipurpose SIG.

In support of the Digital Library effort to have all past proceedings from SIGDOC conferences scanned and added to the Library, we instituted a search for all back volumes of these proceedings. Only one, from 1988, remains undiscovered.

There were several significant papers at the SIGDOC conference in October 2000, with two in particular that were outstanding, "Technical Communication Degress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," by Marjorie T. Davis, Mercer College, GA, which provided a vision of major changes occurring in the field, and "A Why-What-How Tool for Development and Documentation of Operating Procedures," by David G. Novick, EURISCO, which demonstrated the high value of using this approach for critical situations such as procedures for commercial pilots. These both provide plenty of food for thought and practical advice on ways to approach both these areas.

Our most pressing issue is decreasing membership, which, along with increasing costs, will require the SIGDOC Executive Board to reconsider how best to proceed to keep the SIG viable and of value to the field. The continued enthusiastic support of both practitioners and academicians in the field indicate that the SIG should remain in operation, but the key problem to solve remains identifying those items that retain the interest of the audience and convince them that a membership in the SIG brings rewards and benefits not found elsewhere.