

SIGDOC FY'08 Annual Report
July 2007 – June 2008
Submitted by: Brad Mehlenbacher, SIGDOC Chair

_SIGDOC Purpose

The Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Special Interest Group (SIG) on the Design of Communication (DOC) — ACM SIGDOC — emphasizes the design of communication for computer-mediated information products and systems. SIGDOC fosters the study and publication of processes, methods, and technologies for communicating and designing communication artifacts such as printed and online information, documentation designs and applications, multimedia and Web-based environments.

_SIGDOC Mission Statement

Until 2003, SIGDOC focused on documentation for hardware and software. With the shift in focus from documentation to the “design of communication,” SIGDOC better positioned itself to emphasize the potentials, the practices, and the problems of multiple kinds of communication technologies, such as Web applications, user interfaces, and online and print documentation. SIGDOC focuses on the design of communication as it is taught, practiced, researched, and theorized in various fields, including technical communication, software engineering, information architecture, and usability.

The mission of SIGDOC includes

- Promoting the professional development of its members
- Encouraging interdisciplinary problem solving related to online and print documentation and communication technologies
- Providing avenues for publication and the exchange of professional information
- Supporting research that focuses on the needs and goals of humans in technological contexts, and
- Supporting the development and improvement of communication technologies, including applications, interfaces, and documentation.

_SIGDOC Officers

The SIGDOC officers, effective July 1st, 2008, are

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| • Brad Mehlenbacher, NC State University | Chair |
| • Rob Pierce, IBM Rational Software | Vice-Chair
Newsletter Editor |
| • Shaun Slattery, DePaul University | Secretary/Treasurer |
| • Ashley Williams, Bridgeline Software | Information Director
Webmaster |
| • Michael Albers, East Carolina University | Graduate Competition Chair |
| • Gloria Reece, Researcher, New Media & IT | INTECOM Representative |
| • Scott Tilley, Florida Institute of Technology | Past Chair |
| • Shihong Huang, Florida Atlantic University | 2006 Conference Program Chair |
| • David Novick, University of Texas at El Paso | 2007 General Conference Chair
2007 Local Arrangements |
| • Clay Spinuzzi, University of Texas at Austin | 2007 Conference Program Co-Chair |
| • Henrique O’Neill, ISCTE | 2008 General Conference Chair |
| • Carlos J. Costa, ISCTE | 2008 Conference Program Co-Chair |
| • Kathy Haramundanis, Compaq | Member-at-Large |
| • Susan Jones, MIT | Member-at-Large |
| • Irene Frawley, ACM HQ | ACM Program Coordinator |

_Viability

SIGDOC was found viable in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004. In 2008, SIGDOC's viability review resulted in the following feedback:

The SGB congratulates SIGDOC on its operational performance and finds it viable to continue its status for the next 2 years. The SGB requests that SIGDOC undertake an evaluation of its decrease in membership and conference participation during that time, and that it present its conclusions and plan as part of its Spring 2010 viability review.

_SIGDOC Conference Updates

SIGDOC'07 was held at The University of Texas, El-Paso, TX, October 22nd-24th, 2007. David Novick served as Conference Chair and Clay Spinuzzi served as Program Chair. The conference broke even. Forty-two papers were submitted, between 60 and 70 percent of them from academics. The acceptance rate was 71 percent (lower than in recent years). The conference papers were published in the *Proceedings of the 25th Conference on Design of Communication* (ACM P).

The Invited Keynote Speaker was Dr. Michael Muller, an internationally recognized expert in participatory design, and research scientist and design researcher in the Collaborative User Experience group at IBM Research in Cambridge, MA. His research explores how people make use of social software, especially social-tagging services within enterprises and his previous work focused on human-to-human coordination and collaboration in complex work activities. Dr. Muller has a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology from Rutgers University and has worked in research and practice in usability, user-centered design, and work analysis at Microsoft, U.S. West Advanced Technologies, and Bellcore.

The recipient of the 2007 Diana Award (for organizational lifetime achievement in the field of communication design) was the Laboratory for Usability Testing and Evaluation / LUTE (<http://depts.washington.edu/uwtclute/index.php>), University of Washington. The award recognized LUTE for its balance of research, educational, and corporate partnership missions, its publication history, and its history of producing graduate-level technical communication research as well as faculty research. Dr. Judith Ramey, Professor and Department Chair of Technical Communication, and Director of LUTE, accepted the award.

Plans and arrangements for our upcoming annual conference, SIGDOC'08, which will be held in Lisbon, Portugal, were well ahead of schedule this year, thanks to our conference organizers, Henrique O'Neill (General Chair) and Carlos J. Costa (Program Chair). The conference Website is <http://www.sigdoc2008.net> and lists the conference theme, invited speakers, and co-recipients of the 2008 Rigo Award, Drs. Susanne Bødker and Pelle Ehn. The Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa / ISCTE (<http://iscte.pt/inicio.jsp>) is hosting the conference.

SIGDOC'09 conference is in the information-planning stages and will be held at the School of Informatics, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, from October 5th-7th, 2009. Jim Shea, of the School of Informatics, will be providing local support and arrangements, and Aristidis Protopsaltis (City University, London, UK) and Brad Mehlenbacher (NC State U, Raleigh, USA) will be Conference Co-Chairs.

Discussions have begun for SIGDOC'10 which the SIGDOC Board hopes will be held in Cambridge, MA, in 2010. Efforts to plan further in advance are related to our goals of increasing SIGDOC membership.

_Publications

SIGDOC's quarterly newsletter (<http://www.sigdoc.org/newsletter/current/>) is e-mailed to all SIGDOC members, and archived versions of past newsletters are also available (<http://www.sigdoc.org/newsletter/archives/>). The newsletter consists of news from members (notes from the chair and from the general conference chair), future conference information, interesting items, feature articles, and job market information. Our last three issues have featured articles focused on various definitions of communication design, given the SIGDOC name change, which has been a subject of lively debate among members.

_Partnerships

This year, SIGDOC committed to the following in cooperation agreements:

- AIRS 08: Asia Information Retrieval Symposium
- CNSR'09: Communications Networks and Services Research Conference
- DocEng 09: ACM Symposium on Document Engineering
- IWCMC'09: International Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing Conference

_Membership

SIGDOC currently has 316 members and this number has been dropping a little for the last several years. The SIGDOC Website now explicitly details the benefits of joining SIGDOC (<http://www.sigdoc.org/join/>) in addition to encouraging existing members to volunteer (<http://www.sigdoc.org/members>). Following this year's viability review, the SIGDOC Board has made it a priority to examine its membership and conference numbers and to write a plan for increasing them over the next several years. Conference planning for the next several conferences is currently ahead of schedule, reflecting this commitment.

_Key Issues for 2008-2009

Key issues for SIGDOC in the coming year include the following:

- To generate a plan for addressing the current falling membership numbers. Additional strategies for accomplishing this goal will be discussed at this year's annual SIG board meeting.
- To submit minor revisions of the SIGDOC Bylaws to reflect the 2003 renaming and orientation of the SIG.
- To establish conference locations and dates several years in advance.