

SIGDOC FY'12 Annual Report
July 2011 – June 2012
Submitted by: Robert Pierce, Chair

Overview

ACM SIGDOC Purpose and updates

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.

2012 has been a year of change and challenge for SIGDOC but also a year where great steps forward have been made. Because the SGB EC gave SIGDOC just a one year cycle until its next viability review, the need for rapid and effective change was deemed necessary. As such, SIGDOC board leadership changes were made soon after the EC decision was made known and a call to action was published in the quarterly newsletter in March (<http://sigdoc.acm.org/our-members/>).

Changes focused on new leadership, membership growth and fiscal policy were put immediately into place. The dialog for reaching decisions on changes included current board members, former leaders, and key members at large.

With these changes, membership growth increased (17.6%) for the first time in the past 5 years, a plan to curb costs and ensure better conference paper submissions and attendance, and the creation and engagement of new leadership positions (<http://sigdoc.acm.org/board/>) were all put into place.

ACM SIGDOC Mission Statement

<http://sigdoc.acm.org/about/>

SIGDOC's mission is to advance the state of knowledge, encourage the research, and support the interdisciplinary practice of the design of communication, particularly as related to computer-mediated information products.

The ACM Special Interest Group for Design of Communication provides a forum for the design of information communication including interface elements, information architecture, information design, documentation, and user assistance. The SIG fosters the study and publication of processes, methods, and technologies for communicating and designing these artifacts. Members include technical communication professionals, usability specialists, information architects, software engineers, educators, researchers, web designers, system developers, computer scientists, information technology professionals, and managers responsible for researching, producing, and/or supervising the creation of user interfaces, information architecture, technical materials, websites, and social media.

The mission of SIGDOC includes:

- encouraging interdisciplinary problem solving related to the [user-centered] design of informational communication
- studying and encouraging emerging modes of communication across organizations
- promoting the professional development of communication designers
- providing avenues for publication of research and exchange of best practices

- supporting the research and development of communication and processes, including applications, networks, and services

SIGDOC emphasizes the following areas of special interest to its members:

- design and evaluation methodologies that improve communication, such as user-centered and activity-centered design, participatory design, contextual design, and usability studies
- types of designed communication, including interface elements, information design, information architecture, documentation, and user assistance
- project management and content management as it relates to communication design projects
- qualitative and quantitative studies of how communications are designed and used
- practices, research, and theories relevant to any of these areas

What is Design of Communication?

Until 2003, ACM 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. SIGDOC:

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

While the name change for the DOC portion of SIGDOC has created some degree of less clarity in the scope of SIGDOC, the mission continues to be the same and has never been more relevant to computing machinery. The previous notion of “documentation” in both academia and industry has changed more to “communication” and “user technologies.” The name change accurately reflects the realities of current changes in the practices around technical communication – whereas writers used to create hard-copy documents (“DOC”) they now design, develop, and deliver user assistance (and other forms of information, including documentation), and commonly do this for many different languages.

The newer name for what DOC represents is a good reflection of the real world of current technical communication and of how both industry and academia have modified their scope and definition of former technical communication and computer science departments.

For example, at Indiana University, Bloomington, where SIGDOC 2009 took place, there is now a School of Informatics in which Computer Science is a department. Similarly, at the University of Washington, where the 2012 conference takes place in October, the school’s technical communication department was renamed to Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering (HCDE). The focus of this school is on designing and building innovative technologies and systems - research, design, and engineering interactions between humans and technology. Technical writing is currently a certificate program and a fraction of the department’s faculty and students.

Design of communication in SIGDOC is far more relevant to informatics and human centered design and engineering than is just documentation or technical communication.

In industry, job titles were and still are changing. For example, technical writing involves so much more than writing. Technical writing is more commonly known as information development and documentation is now just one form of user assistance. Former documentation groups work in user technologies groups which includes designers and usability professionals.

So, while the spectrum of subject areas for “design of communication” is broad, and not always completely clear and fixed to all parties, it does in fact encompass the multidisciplinary aspect of what is most definitely NOT just documentation anymore, and as such makes SIGDOC an important and relevant group in ACM.

The past 5 years have seen the discussion and forum for this discussion broaden. We’ve had presentations, panels, newsletter articles, and columns on this topic, and like the Talmud, it is healthy to NOT be pinned down as a fixed entity. SIGDOC Conference attendees seem to agree.

ACM SIGDOC Officers

Rob Pierce, IBM Rational Software, USA	Chair, Newsletter Editor
Liza Potts, Michigan State University, USA	Vice-Chair
Kathy Gossett, Iowa State University, USA	Secretary/Treasurer
Jen Riehle, NC State University, USA	Information Director
Sarah Egan Warren, NC State University, USA	Student Chapter Officer
Michael Albers and Liza Potts, USA	CDQR Editors
Michael Albers, East Carolina University, USA	Graduate Competition Chair, 2011 Poster Sessions Chair
Carlos J. Costa, ISCTE, Portugal	EuroSIGDOC Chair and 2011 Program Co-Chair
Aristides Protopsaltis, Serious Games Institute, UK	2011 General Chair and European Representative
Mark Zachry, University of Washington, USA	2012 General Chair
Clay Spinuzzi, University of Texas at Austin, USA	2012 Program Chair, and Member-at-Large
David Novick, University of Texas at El Paso, USA	Senior Academic Representative

Jason Swarts, North Carolina State University, USA	Academic Representative
Kathy Haramundanis, Hewlett Packard Company, USA	Senior Industry Representative
Gerianne Bartocci, Intuitive Co., PA, USA	Industry Representative
Junia Anacleto, UFSCar, Brazil	South American Representative
Manuela Aparicio, Adetti/ ISCTE, Portugal	European Representative
Brad Mehlenbacher, NC State University, USA	Past Chair
Scott Tilley, Florida Institute of Technology, USA	Member-at-Large
Irene Frawley, ACM HQ, USA	ACM Program Coordinator

Conferences

ACM SIGDOC 2011 Conference Summary

The ACM SIGDOC 2011 29th International Conference on Design of Communication was held in Pisa, Italy. (<http://sigdoc.org/2011/>) and included collaboration and support from University of Pisa, Serious Games Institute, and University of Paris.

The conference was profitable despite its overseas location and small format. Like previous conferences, attendees cite the size as an attractive aspect of the conference and how it nurtures closer communication between attendees. The conference included a broad range of papers but was small enough to encourage lively conversations and collaborations. We'd hoped to attract attendees from the University of Pisa but that did not happen as it did in 2010 with attendees from universities in Sao Carlos, and in 2009 from attendees from Indiana University.

The conference was held at the Hotel Continental in Tirrenia from October 3-5 (<http://sigdoc.org/2011/>).

The SIGDOC 2011 Conference Committee:

- Conference Co-Chair: Aristidis Protopsaltis, The Serious Games Institute, UK
- Conference Co-Chair: Nicolas Spyrtos, University of Paris
- Program Co-Chair: Carlos Costa, ISCTE-IUL, Portugal
- Program Co-Chair: Carlo Meghini, University of Pisa

The program committee had 72 members (<http://sigdoc.org/2011/comm-pc.html>) comprising many academic and industry representatives from several different countries).

The conference call for papers attracted a wide range of papers, experience reports, workshops, and posters on the design of communication and games, organizational contexts, social media, the future of documentation, accessibility, interface design, and learning (<http://sigdoc.org/2011/schedule.html>).

This was the first year that the conference did not produce a printed version of the conference proceedings. This change is similar to what other SIGs and organizations have done and seems to be a prudent change.

The *Proceedings of the 29th Conference on Design of Communication* (ACM Press) were made available as a download to conference attendees and is also available in the ACM-DL (Digital Library) at <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2038476>.

Invited Speakers and Awards

Guest speakers - <http://sigdoc.org/2011/speakers.html>

Dr. Pamela M. Kato (University Medical Center Utrecht, the Netherlands) presented on serious games and how they can be used for education and training. Dr. Kato played a critical role in the design, development, and evaluation of the Re-Mission video game for young cancer patients (<http://www.re-mission.net/site/game>) and is currently serving as an Advisory Board Member for the European "Games for Health Europe" Commission.

Dr. Constantine Stephanidis, Professor of Computer Science at the University of Crete, Director of the Institute of Computer Science, Head of the Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory, and of the Center for Universal Access and Assistive Technologies, and Head of the Ambient Intelligence Programme at ICS-FORTH. spoke about natural interaction in ambient intelligent environments. Ambient Intelligence (Aml) environments emphasize the diversity of user needs, the dynamic nature of context, and the multifaceted characteristics of interactive technologies. Aml environments highlight the importance of important issues such as privacy, accessibility, security, and safety.

Using Serious Games to Improve Communication: Talking about a Revolution

Serious games engage users with video game technology and gameplay mechanics to educate and train. There is promising evidence that serious games can be used as a tool to improve communication. Evidence was presented of the impact of serious games on communication, especially in the area of games for health for young patients, and a recent serious game aimed to improve safety skills among young medical doctors was discussed. Because communication failure has been shown to be a root cause in a majority of medical errors that result in unintended deaths and injuries in hospitals, improving communication skills was a key aim of the project. Insights on why serious games can have an impact on improving communication among difficult to reach groups and how that can be done were also described.

Natural Interaction in Ambient Intelligent Environments

Constantine Stephanidis, Professor at the Department of Computer Science of the University of Crete, is the Director of the Institute of Computer Science, Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas, Head of the Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory, and of the Centre for Universal Access and Assistive Technologies, and Head of the Ambient Intelligence Programme of ICS-FORTH.

Over the past 25 years, Prof. Stephanidis has been engaged as the Scientific Responsible in more than 50 National and European Commission funded projects in the fields of Human-Computer Interaction, Universal Access and Assistive Technologies.

In the beginning of the '90s he introduced the concept and principles of Design for All in Human-

Machine Interaction and for Universal Access in the evolving Information Society. He has published more than 550 technical papers in scientific archival journals, proceedings of international conferences and workshops related to his fields of expertise. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Springer international journal "Universal Access in the Information Society". He is the Editor and (co-)author of 14 of the 30-chapters book "User Interfaces for All - concepts, methods and tools" published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (2001). He is also Editor and (co-)author of many chapters of "The Universal Access Handbook" published in June 2009 by CRC Press Taylor & Francis Group. During 1995 - 2006, he was the Founding Chair of the ERCIM Working Group "User Interfaces for All" and General Chair of its 9 international Workshops. During 1997 - 2000, he was the Founding Chair of the International Scientific Forum "Towards an Information Society for All", where he edited White Papers concerning the roadmap and R&D agenda towards an Information Society for All.

Since 2001 he has been the Founding Chair of the International Conference "Universal Access in Human - Computer Interaction". Since 2007 he has been the General Chair of the HCI International Conference that takes place every two years with around 2,000 participants.

SAP - Diana award winner - <http://sigdoc.org/2011/awards-diana.html>

SAP was the 2011 recipient of the prestigious Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on Design of Communication (ACM SIGDOC) Diana Award. The Diana Award is named after Diana Patterson, past President of ACM SIGDOC. Every two years, the ACM SIGDOC gives the Diana Award to an organization, institution, or business that has made an outstanding life-time contribution to the field of communication design. Previous Diana Award winners include Adobe, IBM, RPI, W3C, Carnegie Mellon's Communication Design Center, Apple, MIT Press, and Xerox Parc. The contributions that single SAP out for the award were numerous. SAP's history of providing creative support for users of their enterprise software applications includes, for example, offering comprehensive training for its customers and improved user interfaces back in the 1980s, expanding and collaborating to meet the localized needs of different countries and corporations in the 1990s, taking the lead on e-business solutions and tailored company portals at the turn of the century and, up to the present, winning numerous awards as best place to work while developing 360 customer environments that continue to engage their growing customer base.

We were honored, at ACM SIGDOC 2011, to have two representatives from SAP, Dr. Anja Kellerman and Dr. Sven Leukert, receive the Diana Award and to talk about communication design challenges and opportunities for the future. Dr. Anja Kellerman has a background in language training and linguistics and holds a PhD in sociolinguistics. She joined SAP in 1997 as a technical writer documenting financial business applications and has since moved into managing documentation projects and teams of technical writers and translators in various development areas of SAP. Today she is head of the knowledge management team in the development of areas that drive innovation and standardization for SAP. Dr. Sven Leukert has been with SAP since 1998, after completing his PhD in mathematics at UNC Chapel Hill in North Carolina (USA). At SAP, he started out in a product management role and, since, has moved into a management role, focusing on knowledge management, documentation, and translation. He is currently responsible for the technical documentation in the Technology and Innovation Platform board area, leading teams around the globe.

Planning for future conferences

To stem potential loss of opportunity for existing members to attend the annual conference, changes were made to promote more domestic conference activity. A new leader to help with student chapter creation was also appointed, who will be giving a presentation at the 2012 conference.

- ACM SIGDOC 2012, to be held in October at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA
- ACM SIGDOC 2013, to be held in September at Coastal Carolina University, Conway, SC. This domestic location was agreed upon once we decided that the annual conference needed to be kept closer to where the majority of SIGDOC members reside.
- SIGDOC conference planned to be held in October, 2013 at Waseda University, Kyoto, JP – Was originally planned to be the ACM SIGDOC 2013 conference but due to membership, finances, and viability concerns we determined this location was not feasible. We've proposed that this conference become an AsiaSIGDOC conference or Pan-Pacific ACM SIGDOC conference but not yet clear these alternatives will be acceptable.

Chapters

SIGDOC has active chapters and plans are in progress for new regional and student chapters. Efforts are currently underway for establishing a new AsiaSIGDOC chapter as well as new student chapters at Michigan State and Iowa State.

EuroSIGDOC: ACM SIGDOC European Chapter <http://eurosigdoc.acm.org/>

EuroSIGDOC has now hosted workshops on Open Source and Design of Communication in Lisbon, Portugal for the past 3 years. (<http://eurosigdoc.acm.org/osdoc2010/> , <http://eurosigdoc.acm.org/osdoc2011/> , <http://eurosigdoc.acm.org/osdoc2012/>

EuroSIGDOC was featured in ACM chapter news - <http://europe.acm.org/mn-europe/>

"In this issue we feature EuroSIGDOC, a group of researchers and practitioners pursuing the SIGDOC mission in a European context. SIGDOC is ACM's Special Interest Group on the Design of Communication. Like SIGDOC, EuroSIGDOC focuses on the design of communication as it is taught, practiced, researched, and conceptualized in various fields, including technical communication, software engineering, information architecture and usability.

On June 11 the chapter is sponsoring the Open Source and Design of Communication (OSDOC2012) workshop and the Information Systems and Design of Communication (ISDOC2012) workshop in Lisbon. At both workshops, researchers and practitioners will have opportunities to exchange information in areas relevant to the design of communication, processes, methods, and technologies for communicating and designing communication artifacts such as printed documents, online text, and hypermedia applications.

New student relations leadership – Sarah Egan Warren, at NC State.

We now have a student chapter leader who will help drive and support the creation of new student chapters. See, <http://sigdoc.acm.org/about/student-chapters/>

See also, SIGDOC at NC State University (<http://ncsu.orgsync.com/org/sigdoc>)

Programs and Services

Many new efforts are underway to address the need for an immediate call to action based on the most recent SIGDOC viability review.

Other activities now in place: New website, new journal-like newsletter, now making all back issues of the newsletter available in the DL, reinvigorated and expanded leadership, new student chapter leadership and web page resources, significant membership growth by email offer to former members, new efforts to expand sponsorships for greater SIGDOC visibility (ATTW is the best example) and also sponsorship of DocEng2012.

In addition to annual conferences, maintaining a website and publishing a quarterly newsletter, ACM SIGDOC is also actively engaged in various social media spaces (for example, Facebook, LinkedIn, Slideshare, Twitter, and Wikipedia).

Membership

ACM SIGDOC Membership

ACM SIGDOC began FY 2012 with 187 members and currently now has 220 members.

This is the first membership increase in several years and bodes well for future improvements. This new membership number indicates a significant increase (17.6%) for 2012 membership growth despite dwindling membership over several previous years also seen in similar organizations.

The membership increase is largely due to an offer we made to the more than 1000 former members to rejoin SIGDOC. We'll continue to use this mechanism each year, in the hope of attracting former members.

Membership brochure made available on our Website:

<http://sigdoc.acm.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/sigdocBrochure-press.pdf>

Website

New in FY 2012 is new and much improved SIGDOC Website. This site now offers a more collaborative environment for member contributions. It also has updated and improved history, mission statement, and membership benefits sections, in part to try attracting more people to join SIGDOC (<http://sigdoc.acm.org/join/>) in addition to encouraging existing members to volunteer (<http://sigdoc.acm.org/members/get-involved/>).

The SIGDOC Board continued to focus on strategies for addressing membership numbers. We agreed to aim at encouraging greater graduate student/campus involvement, to establish international collaborations and membership, and to reach out to the broader communities of writers, information engineers, technical communicators, and information technology professionals working with information.

ACM SIGDOC Publications

The ACM SIGDOC quarterly newsletter is made available on the SIG website and as of 2012 is also now available in the ACM digital library.

Release of the newsletter is announced each quarter via the ACM SIGDOC members' listserv and is available in general via the ACM SIGDOC website (<http://sigdoc.acm.org/publications/newsletter/>). Archived versions of all past newsletters are also now available in pdf format on the ACM digital library.

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.

For the available past newsletters on the ACM digital library, see the Table of Contents tab from here:

<http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=J1351&CFID=125274874&CFTOKEN=16792716>

Communication Design Quarterly Review

New in 2012 will be the transition from the newsletter of the past 12 years to a newer journal-like format, the Communication Design Quarterly Review. The first new format newsletter will be made available in September.

See, <http://sigdoc.acm.org/publications/>

Key issues for next 2-3 years

Key Issues for ACM SIGDOC in coming year include:

- Support the development of new (regional and student) SIG chapters (such as EuroSIGDOC and NC State University), and develop policies for managing them effectively and for increasing SIG chapter activities. Having a student chapter leader should help these efforts.
- Now that we've completed the development of a more collaborative environment for the new ACM SIGDOC web pages, we need to drive the use of it, especially for leaders to share tips, experiences and lessons learned from previous conferences for current and upcoming conference leaders.
- Serve the needs of our current members and find ways to increase our membership by attracting new members, volunteers, and board officers. Good efforts were made in 2012 and lessons were learned that should help continue to drive future improvements.
- Launch and support Communication Design Quarterly Review (CDQR), our redesigned and much more robust newsletter for cutting edge research in the design of communication.
- Nurture publication of papers in newer focus areas both for theory and practice such as learning resources and design of communication for a wider diversity of audiences and contexts in terms of culture, language, education, and economic resources.