AMC SIGDOC Business Meeting 2019

Minutes

Sunday, October 6, 2019. Called to order by Dan Richards at 9:14 a.m. Pacific.

Attendance

PRESENT

- *Executive Committee:* Daniel P. Richards (chair, program co-chair*), Sarah Read (vice chair, local co-chair*), Susan Youngblood (secretary/treasurer), Emma Rose (immediate 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)
- *2019 Conference Committee:* Ehren Pflugfelder (program co-chair), Timothy Amidon (program co-chair), Lars Soderlund (local co-chair), Sonia Stephens (Microsoft student research co-chair)
- *2020 Conference Committee:* Vincent Robles** (local co-chair)
- *Other members:* Andrew Mara, Michael Trice, Allegra Smith (outgoing student representative), Trinity Overmyer, Liz Lane

ABSENT

- **Board:** Sean Zdenek (access chair), Natasha Jones (member at large), Lisa Melonçon (organizational liaison), Manuela Aparicio (chair of EuroSIGDOC)
- **2019 Conference Committee:** Julie Staggers (conference chair), Jason Swarts (Microsoft student research co-chair), Jordan Frith (sponsorship chair)
- **2020 Conference Committee:** Stacey Pigg (conference chair), Chris Lam (local co-chair)

*role on the 2019 Conference Committee
**present virtually

Chair's Introduction

Financial overview. The overall financial health of SIGDOC is good.

Leadership and transition. The executive committee has transitioned. Dan provided a recap of the transition and existing roles on the executive committee. He noted that Kristen Moore remains available through the transition, though we do not officially include immediate past secretary/treasurer as a board position.

He outlined the board roles and introduced all of the attendees filling those roles. We no longer have a position for health and medicine liaison, previously filled by Kirk St.Amant, though we have room to consider that role. Some members who could not attend the meeting are staying on the board: Lisa Melonçon (organizational liaison) and Natasha Jones (member at large).

Sean Zdenek has been working on accessibility for individual conferences, and we are working toward the goal of having an access chair for the organization.

SIGDOC conference 2020. Sean Zdenek urges us to think holistically about accessibility before we choose a conference location. Stacey Pigg at NC State will serve as the conference chair. Vincent (Vince) Robles and Chris Lam are both at University of North Texas (UNT), the site of the SIGDOC 2020. They will serve as the local co-chairs. We have not yet decided the people who are going to the program chairs.

Immediate Past Chair's Commentary

Transition. Emma Rose summarized a smooth transition of the executive committee.

Communication team. Emma noted that the communication team—Adam Strantz, web manager; Jason Tham, social media manager; and Luke Thominet, communication manager—will remain intact, each member agreeing to continue to serve.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report

Susan Youngblood noted that SIGDOC's overall financial health is good. Our SIG ended the year with a little less than we began with, but we have a good cushion. That cushion has consistently grown over time thanks to responsible past management.

SIGDOC's largest revenue and expense streams are our conferences. This year's conference was in a more expensive location (Portland), so the costs are a bit higher. But the revenue was strong because of the excellent turnout, and the 2019 conference is in the black. Costs and revenue fluctuate occur over the long term. SIGDOC balances those costs by alternating locations between more costly and more affordable.

SIGDOC's second largest revenue stream is the revenue from the digital library, which has exceeded projections thanks to the CDQ team's work. The second largest expense is overhead, and the largest element of overhead is required travel, followed by grants and awards, which are an investment in the scholarship of our discipline.

Communication Team Report

Website. Adam Strantz explained that website has a lot of content, and he is reorganizing and has been working on how to make CDQ more prominent. The website is now backed up. He has worked a great deal on search engine optimization (SEO) and cleaned up the back end of the site. Adam requested feedback from the members in attendance (implying members in general): What do we want to see on the site? After that content assessment, he will focus on usability and redesign.

Social media. Jason Tham noted that Twitter is our main social media channel. SIGDOC's Facebook is a closed group that people can join by invitation only. Jason will be happy to take ideas. He is thinking of doing something similar to the Digital Rhetoric Collaborative (DRC) Blog Carnivals, which pull students together and include really short pieces.

Other SIGDOC-specific communication. Luke Thominet discussed how, as a member of the team, he works on Listservs, helps direct research, and tackles miscellaneous projects like last year tutorials. He is looking at including more original content and might look to find and collect the original (earlier) SIGDOC articles. He already has a written plan, but the recent activity has kept him particularly busy, so he has not yet had time to implement the plan.

Emma Rose, immediate vice chair, noted that our parent organization ACM notices the metrics when people access the digital conference materials and suggested we examine how to highlight that and get people to the digital library.

Other communication opportunities. Derek Ross, editor of CDQ, noted that the trade magazine Communications of the ACM is constantly looking for short articles with mainstream or cross-disciplinary focuses. The publication asks all the SIGs to send a couple of articles. ACM has a heavily technical audience. We could choose CDQ articles and edit them down for a broader ACM audience. Allegra Smith, past student representative, noted that ACM also has a full publication for students. Emma suggests that we could send award-winning papers.

Conference Report/Debriefing

LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson 1: Teamwork. Sarah Read, local co-chair, highlighted the hard and effective work of the conference team. She commented that teamwork, especially with diffusion over a regional area where members have an investment in one another, was particularly effective. Kristen Moore (secretary/treasurer at the time) and Emma Rose (chair at the time) initiated this successful team strategy. Dan Richards, one of three program co-chairs, made the daily schedule posters and the PowerPoints. Lars Soderlund, the other local co-chair, made the badges and had them shipped to the print shop. She gave other examples as well.

Lesson 2: Industry/local connections. The local arrangement committee (in this case, Emma and Sarah) is critical for connecting with industry. Sarah was able to reach out to industry through her personal network. That brought in participants for the Thursday Night Super Meetup (the Ignite talks). We could offer a Friday locals-only price, which was successful. Her personal network also brought in Megan Bigelow, our first keynote speaker of 2019.

Lesson 3: Project management. We're working on transparent project management. It's important to work across committees.

Lesson 4: Programs. Sarah and Dan continue to work with Stacey Pigg, the 2020 conference chair, on the issue of a template for proceedings. We would like to make it an easier process both for authors and the program committee.

Lesson 5: Cost, logistics, and attendance. We had 144 conference registrants this year (as compared to 74 last year). Attendance increased across all categories of registrants: students, locals from industry, presenters. Workshop attendance was way up. In the past, workshops cost extra. That led to low enrollment, even if they only cost a nominal fee like $10. This year, people signed up for the workshops because they were a part of the regular program. Another factor was that we had the conference in Portland, a location where many attendees had to arrive the night before.

OPEN INVITATION TO DISCUSS OTHER LESSONS

Accessibility. (Tim Amidon, one of three program co-chairs.) Sean Zdenek said to bring someone in as early as possible. He would like to come to the proposed conference space ahead of time; if that's not possible, someone could virtually walk him through a space. Accessibility issues arose with the proceedings templates. Consider how to get our scholarship into a form that's more accessible.

Program committee and proceedings. (Michael Trice and discussants, esp. Allegra and Emma.) Attendees may still present even if their papers are not accepted into the proceedings. Submitting to proceedings has been unrequired since Silver Springs (~2016). This year, around 45% of the people who presented submitted to the proceedings. This policy seems to be effective in driving attendance up. Proceedings are valuable to the presenters, though: they are highly cited.

Some attendees like to read presenters' papers in advance of presentations, but ACM's policy is you can't publish the proceedings before the presentation. In the past (2014?), attendees were given a flash drive with the proceedings to solve this problem. The proceedings were in the library 2-3 days ahead of the presentations. We now have an open link to the proceedings from the conference site but are limited by ACM rules.

At what point does it make sense to pay for a graduate student to help with the copyediting? How do we make funding that help sustainable? Other SIGs are enormous, so they have more money to fund that work.

Committee collaboration. (Collaborative committee members.) Is three (3) people the right number to have on the program committee? The committee had to do three rounds of work: 1) content, 2) editing, 3) formatting then crosschecking. We did not find an answer.

The local co-chairs thought they would each do a small amount of work, but the job was intense. Emma did a great deal of work consistently throughout the process. Sarah had ample hospitality work. Lars would be willing to be the "hype person" again in the future.

Moderation guidelines. (Timothy Amidon and discussants, esp. Sarah and Emma.) The pair & share guidance for moderation was a smart, valued move. It wasn't followed by everyone, so we have room to improve. We could put a reminder of the rules in each presentation room in the form of a poster. We could have an assigned moderator, but that would be extra labor and organization to match up people.

Poster guidelines and rubrics. (Nupoor Ranade and discussants, esp. Allegra Smith.) This conference is unique in our field because of its industry/academic nature. For some, including students, published standards for posters would help, as would a digital archive of posters. Most examples that presenters can find are in science, and those posters are substantially different than ours. The current rubric is really general; we could use a rubric that is more concrete. Also, having a mentorship program for students.

Mentorship of students. (Nupoor Ranade and discussants, esp. Allegra Smith.) Consider matching students with mentors, perhaps even more experienced graduate students. They could provide mentoring on what to do, how to write a proceedings, and how to meet someone. WPA GO has

a great model. They send a survey, match someone to a mentor, and then have a sponsored program.

Student Research Competition (SRC). (Sonia Stephens and discussants, esp. Andrew Mara.) If we are not fully taking advantage of the SRC, we are leaving so much money on the table. Microsoft pays $500 for travel for each student who gets into the research competition, then it provides the prize money. We have money to bring in 15 undergraduates and 15 graduate students. (On Oct. 16, after the meeting, Nanette Hernandez with the ACM Member Services Department confirmed that although we could bring in more students, it would stretch our budget.) We had only two undergrads and could bring in more. We should think strategically about the timing of announcing the competition and the deadline. Proposals were due in January, and completed projects were due at the conference in October. Undergrad submitters, practically speaking, need to be in their junior or senior years to have the right skillset. Student presenters technically still needed to be students in October, though we found a way to help a recent graduate or two with registration.

For instance, Arizona State students had to present their ideas in classes early in their semester before they have worked on their projects. For a student, presenting an ambiguous idea is difficult. A better deadline might be near the end of the semester, after students have worked on a project.

Recruiting for SRC involved Sonia and Nupoor coming up with a list of ideas and a list of directors to contact. Sonia did the FAQ and infographic to make the competition more visible and explain the nature of the SRC, effectively to encourage participation. That infographic is available at http://sigdoc.acm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SIGDOC-SRC-Chart.jpg

Mission Statement Feedback

Each in turn, attendees introduced themselves, their relationship to SIGDOC (e.g., how they got involved, when they got involved), and their reaction to and thoughts on the mission statement. The themes below have been aggregated.

HOW PEOPLE DISCOVER SIGDOC

One began their membership with an Ignite talk. One as a grad student submitting to the conference. One when we were co-located with CPTSC. One began when Kirk St. Amant pulled them in. One began when the location was convenient to their job. A small theme emerged: several people didn't know at first that SIGDOC fit what they did until they participated.

STRENGTHS AND QUALITIES OF SIGDOC

We are supportive and keep adjusting as needed. SIGDOC moves at a faster pace than other organizations. And we are working on emphasizing transparency and accessibility.

We are responsive to big changes in the field, industry; for example, we are responsive to users' needs and implemented a harassment statement quickly.

We have industry connections—important and different than many of the other conferences in our field. We feel welcome and seen, including members from an industry background. SIGDOC provides an opportunity to identify with adjacent fields

Pubs in SIGDOC proceedings are often a member's most cited pubs. We are a "maker" conference (in a way similar to CPTSC, which is for makers of programs).

PRIORITIES/IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

It's important for students to be here. We can better helping to act as a liaison for students, helping them make connections. We focus on both design and applied research in the SRC and in other ways. Maybe we could add nonprofit or government organizations, thereby "widening the tent," though some present use "industry" to include those subsets. Make sure we stay relevant to industry. We need to have "solid" things to present on social media and the website.

CONFERENCE LOCATION AND TIMING

Look at the industry connections when locating conferences: we need the conference to be situated in an industry hub. But also mind costs of locations for conferences (e.g., the Northeast is not cost effective). We are typically in October, but we need to take care to not locate in the Southeast at this time of year because of storm threats. August is a "hot as hell" time and might work, but some have spoken against that shift. How can we more explicitly make coalitions for hosting? If we can lay out our locations a few years in advance, we will better suit ACM's timeframe and make life easier for ourselves.

CONFERENCE HOSTING

Perhaps we can formalize the process of situating the conference. Rather than gatekeeping, have a simple 1-page application. We would do well to line up 3-4 years of locations.

We received a number of hosting suggestions and tentative offers:

- U of Memphis (great location near industry).
- NC State (benefits are many programs, nearby universities, Speed Con for 2-3 years [like SIGDOC on a smaller scale]).
- DePaul U (industry-centered location in Chicago, central to the country, affordable airfare).
- Arizona State (eventually).
- Colorado State (about an hour's shuttle ride from Denver).

CAUTIONS / AREAS TO GROW / IDEAS

What doesn't work is bureaucracy forcing a conversation; instead, we need to "build the tent over the conversation." We need to watch out for burnout (e.g., all of the communication roles rolled into one). We take care with social media not to "jam the traffic." We can work more on mentoring and being inclusive, bringing more people in in the program. We can do more to reach people in other places, show them how the work that we do connects to the work that they do (writing studies). Consider how we can continue to build coalitions (e.g., writing studies, CPTSC). Can we do a panel from CPTSC or other groups (industry award, etc.)? Can we nominate and then invite?

COMMENTARY ON MISSION STATEMENT

The mission's first sentence is strong. Can we clarify the message? We think about industry partnerships because of our students and need to see if we can encourage students. The mission seems to have HCI, which is OK (though there's another SIG for HCI), but it has no writing part,

and some of us are in writing departments; think about the overlap or differentiation. The mission statement is largely for us. Maybe we can create a public facing statement of about 10 words to capture what we do and clear up misunderstandings.

CDQ Report

Growth. Derek Ross, editor, took over 2017. At that time, CDQ had zero articles in the pipeline. It now has three (3) out for review and three (3) under revision and has just accepted an article. The editorial board has grown to 48 people, and we have an editorial assistant (Sahajiya Nath) and an intern (Ailey Hall). Online First has been successful. Upwards of 400 people see an article, which is better than some of the top journals in the field. We are working on growing the research and teaching tools page.

Funding. We need to think about how to make the funding of the journal sustainable. The Department of English at Auburn University covers some of the costs associated with the journal—extra travel, our intern, photocopying zines for the conference. We need to develop a model that draws on funding internally rather than relying on the good graces of one department.

Access. Again, we have online first. We just released a searchable database of all CDQ articles back to 2001. CDQ is working with Sean Zdenek on making articles accessible. Adam Strantz's work on putting content in WordPress is complementary. Ailey is working on how other journals are dealing with articles.