SIGDOC FY'06 Annual Report
July 2005 – June 2006
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, 2005, are

- Brad Mehlenbacher, NC State University   Chair
  Graduate Competition

- Rob Pierce, IBM Rational Software   Vice-Chair
  Newsletter Editor
  2006 Conference Program Co-Chair

- Ashley Williams, Bridgeline Software   Secretary/Treasurer
  Webmaster

- Scott Tilley, Florida Institute of Technology   Immediate Past Chair

  2005 General Conference Chair

- Bob Newman, Coventry University, UK   2005 Conference Program Chair

- Michael Albers, University of Memphis   Undergraduate Scholarship

- Shihong Huang, Florida Atlantic University   2006 General Conference Chair

- John Stamey, Coastal Carolina University   2006 Conference Program Co-Chair

- Steve Sheel, Coastal Carolina University   2006   Local Arrangements

- David Novick, University of Texas at El Paso   Member-at-Large

- Clay Spinuzzi, University of Texas at Austin   Member-at-Large

- Irene Frawley, ACM HQ   ACM Program Coordinator

_SIGDOC Conference Updates

SIGDOC'05 was held in Coventry, UK, September 21st-23rd, 2005. The conference made a small profit despite conference attendance being lower than expected (most likely due to travel expenses associated with the location). SIGDOC'05 was the first conference to be held outside of North America.

Thirty-one papers were submitted and 24 papers were accepted. The conference papers were published in the Proceedings of the 23rd International Conference on Design of Communication: Documenting and Designing for Pervasive Information (S. Tilley & R. Newman, Eds., ACM P). Publications for the conference could be broadly separated into the following five categories:

• Information design principles and methods (5 papers)

• Usability (4 papers)

- Document authoring, production, and management (4 papers)

- Graphical and visual information (5 papers)

- Pervasive documentation systems (6 papers).

The recipient of the 2005 Diana Award (named after Diana Patterson, past President of SIGDOC for three terms) was The British Computer Society (http://www.bcs.org). The award is given to an organization, institution, or business for their long-term contribution to the field of communication design.

Plans, arrangements, and site planning for our upcoming annual conference, SIGDOC'06, which will be held in Myrtle Beach, SC, from October 18th-20th, 2006, are well underway. The conference Website is http://www.sigdoc2006.org and lists the conference theme and invited speakers. Coastal Carolina University, SC, will host the conference which should result in reduced costs. The proposal/paper reviews have just been completed.

The SIGDOC'07 conference will be located in El Paso, TX, using on-campus facilities. David Novick of the University of Texas at El Paso will serve as the General Conference

Chair and Clay Spinuzzi of the University of Texas at Austin will serve as Conference Program Chair.

_SIGDOC Website Redesign

One of the more significant efforts this year was to redesign and evaluate SIGDOC's Website (http://www.sigdoc.org/). Ashley Williams served as Webmaster for the redesign in addition to coordinating the evaluation process prior to release of the new Website. Feedback from SIGDOC members has been overwhelmingly positive.

_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.

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Partnerships

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

• ACMSE'06: 44th ACM Southeast Conference, Melbourne, FL, March 10th-12th, 2006 (http://acmse2006.cs.fit.edu)

•   AH'06: International Conference on Adaptive Hypermedia and Adaptive Web-Based Systems, Dublin, Ireland, June 20th-23rd, 2006 (http://www.ah2006.org)

•   CNSR'06: Communications Networks and Services Research Conference, Moncton, NB, May 23rd-25th, 2006

•   IWCMC'06: International Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing Conference, Vancouver, BC, July 3rd-6th, 2006

_Membership

SIGDOC currently has 316 members and this number is consistent with the ACM-wide decline in membership. 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).

_Key Issues for 2006-2007

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

• To maintain and/or increase the current membership numbers (through relationships with other SIG Chairs, word-of-mouth and advocacy at other conferences, inviting new board members, and distributing the newsletter to colleagues in related disciplines)

• To begin a review of the SIGDOC Bylaws to reflect the 2003 renaming and orientation of the SIG.

• To develop a multidisciplinary research base that contributes significantly to applied efforts in communication design (in collaboration with groups such as SIGCHI and SIGGRAPH, SIGACCESS, SIGMM, SIGUCCS, SIGWEB, etc.), and

• To broaden the identity of SIGDOC to include, not only manual and documentation design, but emerging information genres such as EPSSs, intelligent tutors, query-based instruction, Web-based training, blogsheres, digital entertainment spaces.