Editorial

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Depending on when we start counting, this journal is celebrating (or has just passed) its 25th year of publication. SIGDOC, again depending on how we look at things, is celebrating its 20th anniversary as an “official” ACM special interest group. Hence, this is an excellent time to step out of our normal format and to publish reminiscences from several previous SIGDOC Chairs about the organization’s beginnings and its history.

Have you ever wondered about why this journal has an asterisk in its name? Joe Rigo, who was truly the founder of the SIG and for whom our annual award is named, offers a bemused account of his early and complicated interaction with the powers that be at the ACM, including how the asterisk came to be. Joe is retired and still lives in New York City.

Diana Patterson describes the dramatic changes that took place in the computer industry during the 80’s, including the effects they had on documentation people. She also describes the rapid growth of SIGDOC and some of its earliest conferences. Diana, for whom our award to outstanding organizations is named, currently teaches at Mount Royal College in Calgary, Alberta.

John Brockmann describes growth in the field that was so pronounced that we have actually become many sub-disciplines. He describes initiating the Diana Award to recognize organizations that have contributed to our discipline. And he discusses what was perhaps the most (in)famous event at any SIGDOC conference ever. John is still on the faculty at the University of Delaware, where he is also serving as the Episcopal Chaplain.

Kathy Haramundanis concludes by describing the last few years of the organization, the state of the profession today, and some ideas about where we are heading. She discusses the way new technologies have changed the profession, both related to the systems that we document and to the tools that we use to do so. Cathy continues to work at Compaq.

About the August Issue

In the next issue, we will return to the journal’s normal format, with a reprint article, several commentaries, and a reply by the original article’s author. We reiterate our request for new articles and especially for awareness essays, which are shorter articles about ongoing research, about new or innovative ideas, or about subjects that do not warrant full article treatment.