

Origins of the BCS SIGIST

Presented (online) 19th June 2024

Dorothy Graham

email: info@dorothygraham.co.uk

[linkedin.com/in/dorothygraham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dorothygraham)

© Dorothy Graham 2024

Contents

- how the SIGIST started – 35 years ago
- what testing was like then and now
- what about the next 35 years?

The SIGIST

- London, 27 Jan 1989, Imperial College
- started by Geoff Quentin, around 30 people
- I joined the committee as “speaker finder”
- we joined BCS later on
- 4 full-day meetings year
 - small expo, vendor talks
- printed booklets
- I had quite a collection!
 - donated to the BCS in 2018 – now lost?



What was testing like 35 years ago?

- seen as
 - “a [necessary] evil”
 - if thought of at all!
- few training courses
 - by individuals
- no qualifications
 - “anyone can test”
- few conferences
 - SIGIST, Unicom (UK)
 - USPDI, STAR
- few commercial tools, expensive
 - at an expo of dev tools:
 - “if you buy this [development] tool, you won’t need to test”!
- waterfall development
 - testing mostly manual, ad hoc, squeezed ~~in~~ out at the end
- systems less complex

Never mind my specs,
look at the computer!



Technology

- my new computer (89)
 - Apple Macintosh SE/30 HD 2/40
 - Motorola 68030 processor - 16 Mhz
 - 40 MB disc, 2MB RAM
 - black & white screen
- cost: £2223 (nearly £6000 today)
- no connection to outside world
 - no internet, no email, no mobile phones!



what's in your mobile phone?

How to find out about things?

- then

- buy (and read) books
- subscribe to journals, weekly computing mags
- go to the library
 - read other journals
 - request “reprints” of articles
 - pick up or sent by post
- phone calls, printed docs
- go on a training course
- attend a conference
 - in person

- now

- internet / google
 - podcasts, blogs, videos
 - social media
- go on a training course
 - in person or online
- attend a conference
 - in person or online
- read a book?

How did the SIGIST help testers?

- most common reaction for new people: “I’m not alone!” [No web, no social media]
- focus for sharing stories, tips, knowledge
- networking with other testers
- a model for European testing groups
- major initiatives in the 90s:
 - the first European software testing conference
 - a standard for software testing

The first EuroSTAR, 1993

- BCS SIGiST was the “host organisation”
 - committee appointed me Programme Chair
- SQE’s support enabled it to go ahead
 - UK people to do bookings, marketing etc
- we came up with name before the train!



What's missing?

International Conferences and Exhibitions on

Software Testing Analysis & Review

STAR '93 MAY 2-6 MONTEREY, CA

EURO STAR '93 OCT. 25-28 LONDON, UK

Featuring:
Al Davis
Ken Farber
Daniel Freedman
David Gelperin
Tom Gilb
Dorothy Graham
Les Hatton
Dave Johnson
Ted Keller
Nancy Leveson
Tom Repede

For more information on either of these significant events call:
904-268-8639 (US) or
071-385 1848 (UK)

Testing then and now

- seen as
 - “a [necessary] evil”
 - if thought of at all!
 - few training courses
 - by individuals
 - no qualifications
 - “anyone can test”
 - few conferences
 - SIGIST, Unicom (UK)
 - USPDI, STAR
- recognised as necessary, respected
 - a good career choice
 - lots of training
 - live, online, books
 - qualifications
 - ISTQB, BBST, MOT, others
 - many conferences on testing
 - international, local, web-based

Testing then and now

- few commercial tools, expensive
 - “if you buy this [development] tool, you won’t need to test”!
- waterfall development
 - testing mostly manual, ad hoc, squeezed out at the end
- systems less complex
- commercial tools, lots of open source tools
- agile development
 - testers part of teams, more testing knowledge, lots of automated testing
 - still need human testing
- systems interconnected & very complex
 - The Internet!
 - Mobile, IoT, ML, LLMs, AI

What has changed?

- a growing profession
 - from a few books to lots
 - from “[un]necessary evil” to a respected profession
 - from none to international qualifications for testers
 - from “tester” to specialisms within testing
- technical change
 - from mainframes to mobile apps, cloud, IoT, ChatGPT/AI
 - from homegrown utilities to commercial & free tools
 - from KB to GB to TB
 - from books, post & phone, to blogs, videos, social media
 - from “turnarounds” to continuous integration

What hasn't changed?

- tester's greatest asset: the “tester mindset”
- testing is still testing; people are still people
 - relationships are critical
- new technology, constant change
 - testing follows the technology
- managers don't understand testing (exceptions)?
- testing seldom taught at university?
- tools are seen as a panacea/silver bullet syndrome
- people new to testing don't know much
- lots of people are new to testing

The future of testing?

- testing will always be needed
 - but in different forms (collaborative not confrontational, monitoring, analytics, A/B, partial oracles for AI)
 - earlier detection, defect prevention? or ship then fix/back out?
- the essence of testing
 - what could go wrong? what if it isn't? have you thought of...
- automation is necessary but not sufficient
 - structure is needed even with open source tools
 - automated chaos is still chaos
 - tools only run stuff, they don't do testing

The future of testers?

- out of a job?
 - because developers now test so well...?
 - because AI has taken over everything?
 - AI is on the Hype curve – significant danger here
- tester role
 - quality advisors, not quality police
 - collaborative, in agile teams (but with tester skills)
 - more technical, write (automation) code
 - **DANGER**: tester skills are different to development skills!
Don't under-value or lose those skills!

Conclusion: past, present and future

- congratulations to the SIGIST for 35 years!
- support and community of testers is important
- technology always changes
- testing (by humans!) will always be needed
- testing is a great career – all the best to all of you

Origins of the BCS SIGIST

Questions?

info@dorothygraham.co.uk

[linkedin.com/in/dorothygraham](https://www.linkedin.com/in/dorothygraham)