How long does it take to publish an RFC?

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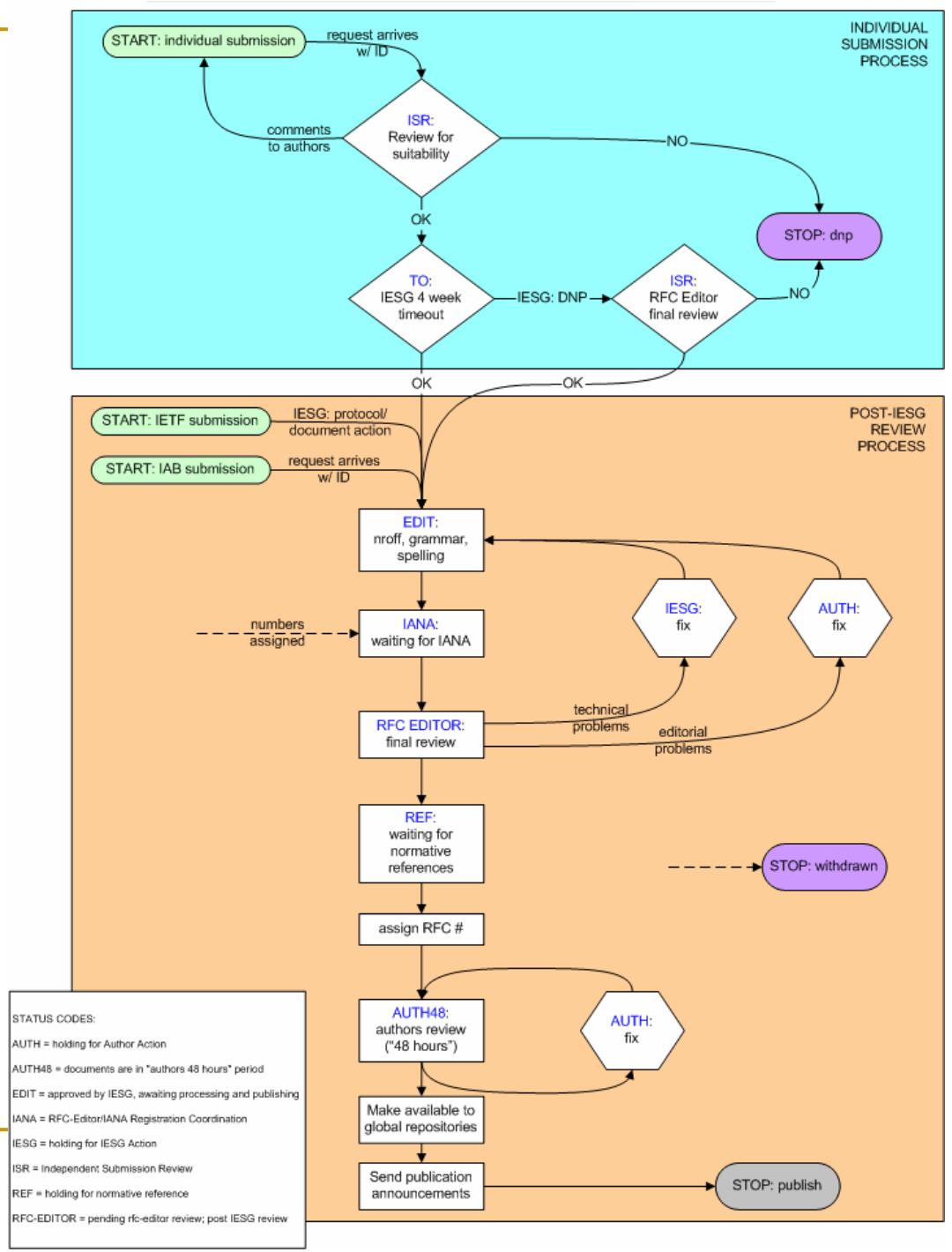
Background

- The RFC Editor has been concerned over the delays in processing RFCs
- We've spent some time analyzing the historical data on the queue
- This presentation is a chance to inform the community what we've learned
- The challenge with data is that it raises questions as it informs
  - We don't plan to do further analysis: these are just hints

The RFC Editor Process

- Flow and states are defined in this diagram

(this is online, link to follow…)



RFC Editor queue data from July 1999

- Caution: the data is noisy and incomplete
  - State names & definitions have evolved
- Missing data in spring ’02
  - *This is unfortunate because the delays became quite long in this period*
- Values shown are medians
  - Distributions have very long tails, means will be skewed by outliers

Measured Median Time to Publish an RFC

- Simplest path through the graph:
  - EDIT 7.1 wks
  - RFC-EDIT 3.8
  - AUTH48 1.6

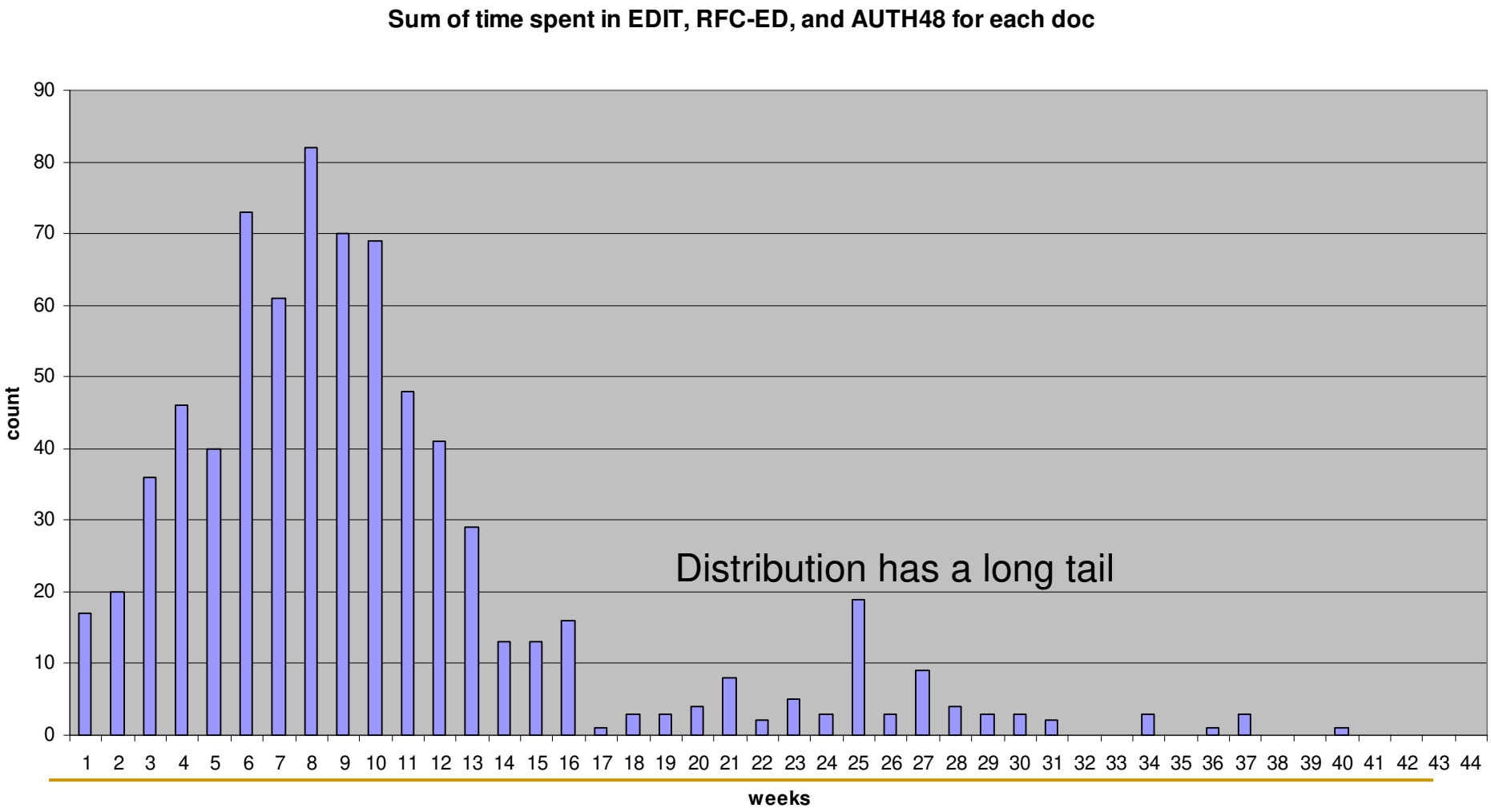
    9.7 wks
- For independent submission add:
  - ISR 5.2 wks
  - TO 5.8

    11.0 wks

Measured Median Time to Publish an RFC

- But a given RFC *might* also enter one or more of the following penalty boxes:
  - For AUTH add 1.2 wks
  - For IANA actions add 3.5 wks
  - For REF add 7.1 wks
  - For IESG noodling add 9.4 wks

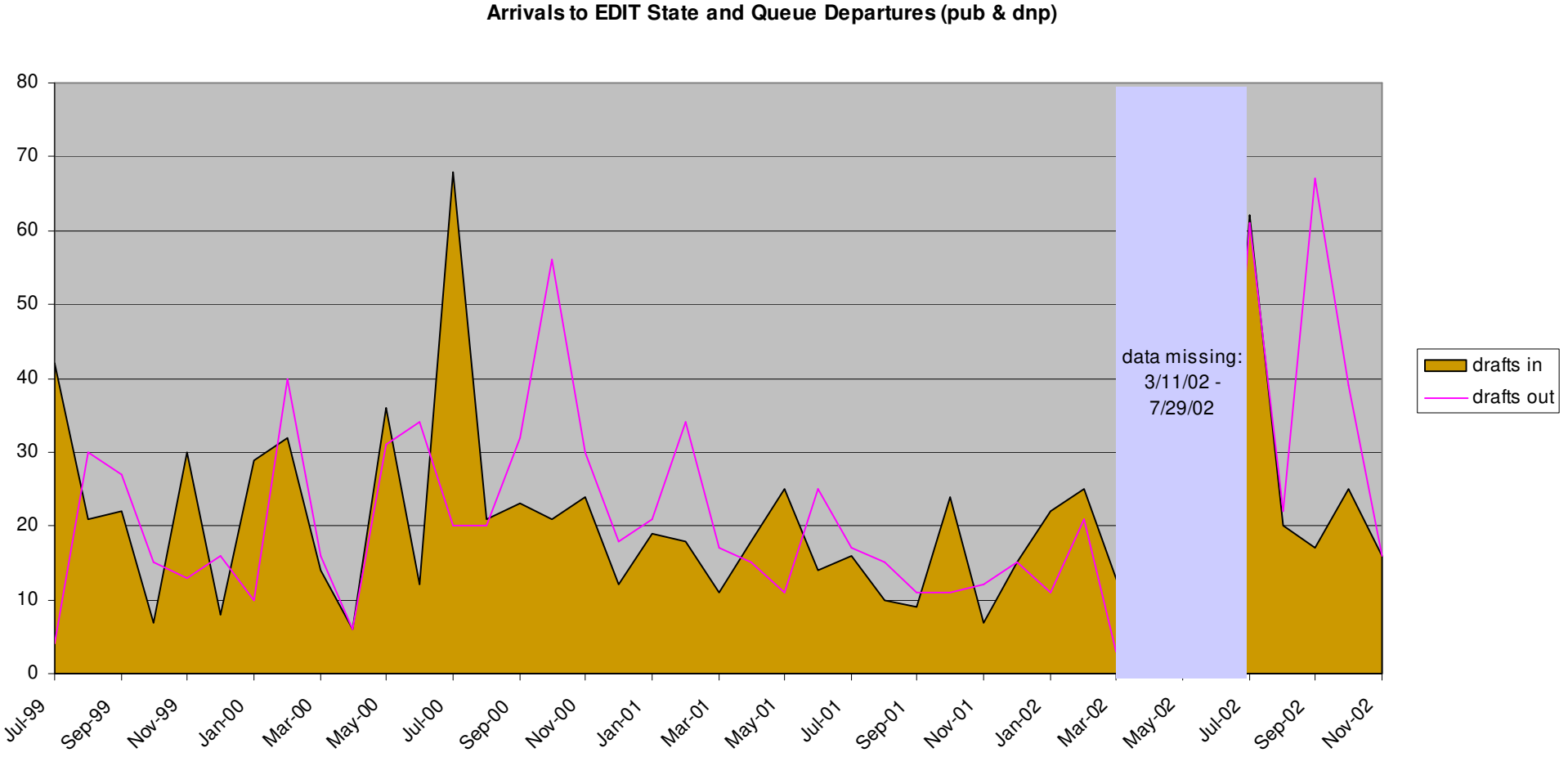
If the median is 2.5 months, why does it feel like it's taking longer?



Why have some documents been delayed so long?

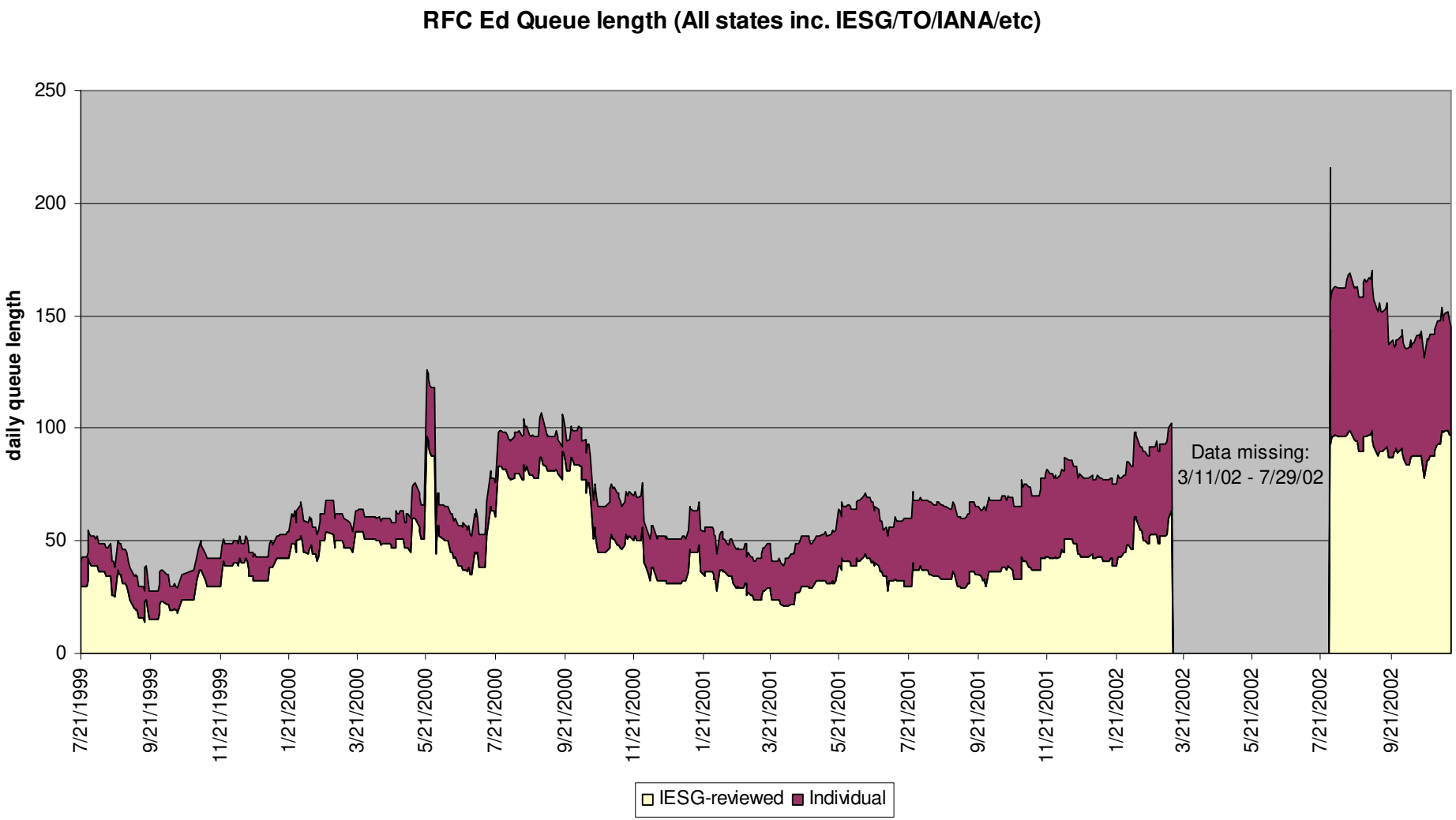
- The RFC Editor is a small team
  - Attention to quality requires time
  - Staffing issues have enhanced visibility
- Document arrivals are very bursty
- “Authors 48 hours” is not

Queue arrival & departure rate per month



Note bursts in recent queue

Queue Size


RFC Ed Queue length (All states inc. IESG/TO/IANA/etc)
daily queue length
250
200
150
100
50
0
7/21/1999
9/21/1999
11/21/1999
1/21/2000
3/21/2000
5/21/2000
7/21/2000
9/21/2000
11/21/2000
1/21/2001
3/21/2001
5/21/2001
7/21/2001
9/21/2001
11/21/2001
1/21/2002
3/21/2002
5/21/2002
7/21/2002
9/21/2002
Data missing:
3/11/02 - 7/29/02
IESG-reviewed
Individual

Things are getting better…

- Have new management tools for tracking progress
  - Helps ensure no docs slip through cracks (particularly important with IETF review of Individual Submissions)
  - Bill Fenner's web page checking IESG/RFC-Ed queue consistancy
- Short term staffing issues are largely solved
  - Increased editing capacity
- Recent arrival burst has largely passed
  - SIP, SNMPv3 docs
  - But another may come along any time…

Challenges Remain

- RFC Editor appears to be operating near capacity
- Auth48 is a critical step in ensuring quality
  - Again, at a cost of processing delays

What Can Authors Do?

- Submit quality documents
  - Clear, concise writing
- Pay attention to formatting
  - 2223bis has editorial policies
- Be responsive
  - Need all authors for final approval

Links

- RFC Editor Process flow available at ftp://ftp.rfc-editor.org/in-notes/rfc-editor/rfc-editor-process.gif
- RFC Editor Queue at http://www.rfc-editor.org/queue.html