Scientific Interest Group (SIG) Officers' Handbook

1. Introduction

Scientific Interest Groups (SIGs) play a vital role in advancing the mission of the American Crystallographic Association (ACA). They provide a platform for collaboration, scientific exchange, and professional development across specialized areas of crystallography. This handbook assists SIG officers in understanding their roles, responsibilities, and best practices for maintaining an active and engaged SIG.

2. Leadership Roles & Expectations

Each SIG is typically led by a Chair, Vice Chair (or Chair-Elect), and a Secretary or Secretary/Treasurer, depending on the group's structure. Incoming officers begin their terms on January 1.

Responsibilities include:

- Chair: Oversees all SIG activities, coordinates meetings, ensures timely reporting, and serves as the primary contact with ACA headquarters and Council liaison.

- Vice Chair / Chair-Elect: Assists the Chair, leads program planning, and ensures leadership continuity by preparing to assume the role of Chair in the next cycle.

- Secretary / Treasurer: Maintains meeting records, manages communications, and compiles annual reports.

3. Governance & Operations

SIGs operate under ACA's bylaws and report annually to the Council through their Council liaison. Officers should ensure their group remains active through regular meetings and participation in ACA initiatives.

4. Annual Meeting Program Planning

SIGs contribute to ACA's scientific programming by organizing microsymposia, workshops, and other events. Officers should collaborate with the Meeting Committee and other SIGs to ensure diverse and inclusive content.

Responsibilities include:

- Submitting symposium proposals by ACA deadlines.

- Coordinating session chairs.

- Selecting Etter Award Winners.

- Attending the future planning meeting.

5. Membership & Engagement

SIGs thrive through active participation. Officers are encouraged to promote membership, recruit new participants, and engage students and early-career scientists.

- **Annual Meeting of the SIG**: To promote accessibility and broad participation, ACA encourages all SIGs to hold their annual business meetings virtually. A virtual format allows members from across regions and time zones to engage without the barriers of travel or expense, ensuring that every interested member has an opportunity to contribute to discussions and decision-making. Virtual meetings also help maintain continuity between in-person conferences, strengthen communication within the SIG, and provide a convenient venue for planning upcoming activities, reviewing progress, and preparing reports for ACA leadership. ACA Headquarters will coordinate directly with SIG officers to schedule their virtual meetings, host the sessions, and notify SIG members of the confirmed date and time. This centralized approach ensures that all meetings are accessible, well-organized, and properly documented.

- **Yearly Activities**: SIGs are expected to maintain strong engagement throughout the year. Each SIG should identify two non-meeting-related activities annually.

  Examples include (but are not limited to):

  o SIG Coffee Chats – 30–45 minute informal Zoom discussions on timely topics.

  o Member Spotlights – Highlight SIG members with short bios and photos on ACA platforms.

  o Blog Articles – Share short updates, resources, or 'Did You Know?' pieces.

  o SIG Book Club – Host reading groups and post discussion recaps.

  o Resource Roundups – Share top tools, tips, or tutorials annually.

  o Educational Videos – Contribute two short videos to ACA's video library each year.

o   Opportunities to collaborate and promote Structural Dynamics.

6. Leadership Development & Succession Planning

At the beginning of the year, SIG Chairs are asked to identify two potential candidates for each leadership position that will open in the following year. Candidate names should be submitted by March 31 to be included in ACA's Leadership Track.

The ACA Leadership Track develops emerging leaders and fosters mentorship between current officers, Council, and up and coming leadership members. Participants gain valuable professional experience and help sustain an active leadership pipeline within ACA.

A small reception will be hosted at major ACA events where current SIG officers and Leadership Track candidates can meet Council members, share updates, and build connections.

7. Council Pairings

This initiative provides each SIG with a designated point of contact on Council. Council liaisons are former SIG officers and committee members familiar with SIG operations, expectations, and processes.

The program is intended to support SIG officers—particularly those new to their roles—by offering guidance, institutional context, and a trusted resource for questions. Pairings are made on a voluntary basis by Council members, who select SIGs with which they have experience or familiarity, and are communicated to incoming SIG officers at the December meeting prior to the start of their term. Use of the liaison relationship will vary by SIG based on individual needs.

This program is not intended for Council to direct SIG activities. Rather, Council liaisons serve as a resource to help SIG officers navigate responsibilities and engage with Council more confidently and effectively.

8. Communication & Reporting

Each December, as SIG officers transition, ACA hosts a SIG Activation Meeting. Current officers provide a bi-annual SIG report, while incoming officers meet their counterparts and learn about ongoing initiatives. This supports continuity, collaboration, and shared purpose across all SIGs. Council will also pair each SIG with a designated Council liaison to maintain open communication throughout the year. Bi-annual SIG reports summarizing activities and membership updates should be submitted to ACA HQ in December & June ahead of the meeting with council.

9. Available Activations

Each SIG has a dedicated webpage accessible to its members, which includes all past reports submitted to ACA leadership. SIGs are encouraged to share additional resources, links, or materials of interest to be featured on their page.

The ACA also maintains a public events **calendar**. SIGs are encouraged to submit events, webinars, or activities that may interest their members so they can be added and promoted to the broader community.

To strengthen communication and collaboration, ACA provides several **online forums**, including a dedicated leadership forum for officers. SIGs are encouraged to share discussion topics, post opportunities, and highlight news or developments relevant to their members.

Each January, SIG officers should remind their members to review and update their communication preferences to ensure they receive notifications when new posts or discussions are added.

If a SIG is interested in hosting its own discussion space, **ACA Headquarters can activate a dedicated SIG forum upon request**. This provides an additional platform for members to exchange ideas, share resources, and stay connected throughout the year.

Additionally, the **ACA Job Board** is available to all members. SIGs should encourage their members to share open positions and opportunities for inclusion on the website, helping connect talent within the crystallography community.

10. ACA Headquarters as a Resource

ACA Headquarters serves as a key resource for all SIGs, offering assistance with communication, coordination, and member engagement efforts. If a SIG needs help identifying the most effective way to reach its members—whether through a targeted email, forum post, website update, or other communication channel—HQ can provide guidance and technical support. Officers are encouraged to contact HQ whenever they need assistance distributing information, promoting SIG activities, or coordinating outreach. The HQ team is here to ensure that SIG communications are timely, consistent, and reach the widest possible audience.

10. Key Dates & Reference Information

Please note that meeting planning timelines may be adjusted by the Meeting Committee or Council as needed to align with the schedule of upcoming ACA or meeting.

- January
    - Host a virtual welcome meeting for SIG members.
    - Promote Structural Dynamics and encourage participation in upcoming Special Collections.
    - Identify and confirm two SIG engagement activities for the year; recruit volunteers to lead them.
    - Announce the upcoming SIG leadership cycle and invite expressions of interest for next year's officer positions.
    - Solicit session and workshop topic ideas and gather names of potential session chairs for the next ACA conference.
    - Select the date and time of your SIG's virtual meeting to be held prior to the Annual Conference (typically in April).

- March
    - Review the list of potential session and workshop topics distributed by ACA Headquarters.
    - Submit Leadership Track candidate names to ACA HQ.
    - Prepare slides or agenda for SIG meeting in April.

- April
    - Host your virtual SIG meeting.
    - Finalize session topics and identify session chairs.
    - Review any proposed workshop ideas and determine interest in preparing formal submissions.

- June
    - Submit your mid-year (bi-annual) SIG report to ACA HQ (include updates on Structural Dynamics outreach, engagement activities, and overall SIG progress).
    - Meet with ACA Council and participate in planning discussions* as appropriate.

- During the Annual Meeting
    - Arrange for a SIG Meet-up or activity at the Annual Meeting
    - Attend the Future Planning Meeting*

- October–November
    - Encourage SIG members to participate in the ACA election process and promote leadership involvement.

- December
    - Submit the year-end SIG report to ACA HQ.
    - Attend the SIG Activation Meeting to meet with Council and incoming officers, share updates, and support leadership transitions.

*To ensure full representation, each SIG is asked to have at least one officer attend the Annual Planning Meeting. If attending requires an extra night at the conference hotel, the ACA will reimburse one representative for that additional night.