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## **Interest Groups FAQ**

### **What are “Interest Groups”?**

In 2008 ACRL members voted to create Interest Groups as a way to easily create a “home” within ACRL for areas of current interest to members which are not otherwise well represented. Interest Groups are designed to provide a more dynamic system for members to form groups around important emerging issues in the profession, and to increase opportunities for involvement within our organization. Interest Groups are intended to be very fluid, and can be formed easily and disband quickly in response to environmental changes.

### **What is the relationship between Interest Groups and “Communities of Practice”?**

All three groups – Sections, Discussion Groups, and Interest Groups – are considered “communities of practice.” ACRL continues to support Sections and Discussion Groups, and will take care to approve new Interest Groups that complement, not duplicate, existing groups. Like all component groups of ACRL, the Board of Directors establishes the policies within which these groups operate.

### **Who can join Interest Groups?**

As part of the dues, each ACRL member can pick a combination of Sections and Interest Groups, (with a maximum of 2 Sections as is current policy). For example: 2 Sections and 1 Interest Group; 1 Section and 2 Interest Groups; or 3 Interest Groups. Additional memberships are \$5 each. Current Interest Groups will be listed under “About ACRL” on the ACRL website.

### **What is the process for creating an Interest Group?**

Any ACRL member can propose the creation of an Interest Group. Proposals consist of the completion of the Interest Group Proposal Form including a complementary petition with 25 ACRL member signatures. Completed proposals should be emailed to [acrl@ala.org](mailto:acrl@ala.org) for submission to the Board of Directors for approval. If an existing unit seems to duplicate the intent of the new Interest Group, the Board will ask the associated groups to work together to see if a single entity can address the topic. If approved, the identified convener(s) will sign formal appointment forms.

### **What are the convener’s responsibilities?**

Interest Group conveners are responsible for participating in the Communities of Practice Assembly, scheduling any desired meetings for ALA conferences, maintaining communication with the ACRL Staff about changes in membership, following ALA policies and procedures, ensuring the written operating procedures are developed and remain current, and submitting a Strategic Plan Implementation Report to the Board of Directors around May. If an Interest Group seeks to continue beyond each three year term, the convener is responsible for submitting a report and rationale for the continuation at least six months before the Interest Group’s sunset date.

### **What types of activities can Interest Groups undertake?**

Interest Groups may carry out activities year-round including the sponsorship of formal conference programs, institutes, and seminars, or preparation of publications; these activities will follow the same processes and policies that guide all Committees and Communities of Practice. Interest Groups may meet virtually if that supports the type of interaction and exchange of information that their members desire, and may choose to schedule face-to-face meetings at the ALA conferences. Interest Groups may choose to initiate electronic newsletters or develop web spaces as complements to their charge and interests. Interest Groups may create any informal teams or ad hoc working groups within their membership that helps them accomplish aspects of their approved charge; these working groups will not require formal appointment forms and will not be listed in the *ALA Handbook of Organization*.

### **How are Interest Groups governed?**

Interest Groups are governed by a steering committee consisting of a convener, incoming convener and past convener. The steering committee is the only group that would appear in the *ALA Handbook of Organization* since they are the only members who need to sign formal appointment acceptance forms. Each Interest Group will determine the mechanism for selecting its incoming conveners. Like all Communities of Practice, each Interest Group shall adopt written operating procedures, following a model provided by the Board of Directors, which shall be affirmed by the membership of the group and a copy provided to the Executive Director.

### **How do Interest Groups fit within the ACRL structure and communication channels?**

A "Communities of Practice" Assembly will be formed that consists of the chairs and vice-chairs of Sections and conveners and incoming conveners of Interest Groups. The function of this Assembly is to facilitate the exchange of ideas among the various Communities of Practice.

### **What types of support do Interest Groups have from ACRL?**

Through ALA, Interest Groups have access to web server space, list software, online community software, and support for other electronic communications. An Interest Group choosing to use these services should identify a member of their group to serve as an editor or point person for that service. ACRL staff will maintain a page listing all currently active Interest Groups. Interest Groups are allocated \$150 per year which can be used toward conference programming; policies and procedures governing all Communities of Practice (such as those related to speakers, contracts, and scheduling) apply. Interest Groups proposing special projects that directly support the ACRL Strategic Plan are also eligible for and encouraged to submit an Action Plan Proposal to apply for special funding for the project.

### **How do Interest Groups terminate?**

Interest Groups must conduct a review every three years as they approach their sunset date. At the renewal stage, an Interest Group may request to be dissolved, may request to be renewed with the same charge, or may propose a replacement group with a different name and charge. As with all Communities of Practice, at any time an Interest Group may be dissolved by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors if the group is determined by the Board to be inactive or ineffective or if it drops below a minimum membership size determined by the Board in consultation with the group.

### **Who can I contact if I have questions about Interest Groups?**

Mary Jane Petrowski at [mpetrowski@ala.org](mailto:mpetrowski@ala.org)