

SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION STUDENT GROUP MANUAL

SLA has established requirements and guidelines for student groups, which are abbreviated in this guide for clarity and conciseness. Prospective and current student groups officers and faculty advisors shall assume responsibility for reviewing SLA resources in full, which are included at the end of this guide.

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Student and New Professionals Advisory Council (SNPAC)
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About SLA

What is SLA?

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) is a nonprofit global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners¹. Our members represent a broad spectrum of information professionals, including, but not limited to, corporate, academic, non-profit, and government information specialists. SLA promotes and strengthens its members' expertise through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives. If you are keen to develop your career, strengthen your professional competencies, and make an impact within your organization and profession, SLA is the association for you.

SLA student groups

To secure a foundation for the future of information professionals, SLA supports student groups from library and/or information science (LIS) degree programs. SLA student groups encourage student members to assume leadership roles and become involved in the greater SLA organization. They also provide resources, programs, and support to advance their fellow students' intellectual, professional, and social development.

SNPAC is here for you

SLA's Student and New Professionals Advisory Council (SNPAC)² is dedicated to meeting students' needs. We provide support, resources, and opportunities to help student members and student groups gain the most from their SLA affiliation. Each year, the SNPAC bestows SNPAC Merit Awards to honor the active involvement of student members in SLA Student Group activities and recognize SLA groups and divisions that support Student Group development.

¹ About SLA: <https://www.sla.org/about-sla/>

² Students and New Professionals Advisory Council:
<https://www.sla.org/governance/committees/councils/represents/students-and-new-professionals-advisory-council/>

About Student Groups

What is a student group?

Student groups are an integral component of SLA and aim to promote student participation in the association and contribute to the professional development of students interested in pursuing careers in special library and information center settings. Each student group has its own identity and purpose based on the needs and interests of group officers and members. While there are specific guidelines and reporting requirements to which SLA student groups are expected to conform, SLA student groups are as diverse as the academic programs that sponsor them. Many student groups offer a variety of extracurricular activities – including programs, events, and projects – to meet the needs of students. Student group officers play an essential leadership role in defining the direction of their group and ensuring the success of their group's initiatives.

Student group stakeholders

Student groups benefit many stakeholders, including students, faculty, and the greater SLA community.

- **Student group officers** are leaders in their degree programs. In this role, student group officers organize programs, events, projects, and other activities that contribute to their fellow students' professional and social development.
- **Faculty advisors** are mentors to student group officers. In this role, they help nurture the leadership potential of their students, foster student socialization into the LIS profession, and sustain relationships between the student group, SLA, and the broader academic and professional communities.
- **SLA** is a partner to student groups. As a sponsoring association, SLA and its Divisions, Chapters, Councils, Committees, and Caucuses work with student groups and their officers to help foster relationships between students and the broader SLA community through programs, events, projects, and other activities.

Establishing a New Student Group

Petition process

- Five or more student members of SLA enrolled in an LIS degree program may petition SLA for establishment of an SLA student group. All student petition signers must be dues-paying members of SLA.
- Petitions will be approved by the SLA CEO, who is authorized to act on behalf of the Board of Directors. The CEO will notify the advisor in writing of the acceptance of a petition. If information in the petition is incomplete, it will be returned to the advisor with a request for additional information.
- Questions or requests for additional information on the establishment of a Student Group should be addressed to Brennan McCoy, Coordinator of Member Engagement.

Petition requirements

New student group petitions must include the following information:

1. The name of the proposed student group (in the form: XYZ University/SLA),
2. A brief statement of the objectives of the proposed student group³,
3. The name of the proposed student group's advisor⁴, and
4. The names and titles of the proposed student group's elected officers.

³ Links to other SLA student groups' statement of mission and objectives for reference:

- McGill SLA's Constitution: <http://www.mcgill.ca/sis-students/sla/about/constitution>
- SLA/CUA Mission Statement: <https://sites.google.com/site/slacua/about-us>
- SLA@Simmons bylaws: <http://slis.simmons.edu/blogs/slasimmons/2015/09/10/slasimmons-bylaws/>

⁴ If the student group advisor is not an SLA member, the petition should include the student group's designated email and primary phone number.

Student Group Governance

Reporting requirements

Student groups are currently required to submit two annual reports. One copy of each report must be sent to the Association Office, to the attention of the Brennan McCoy, Coordinator of Member Engagement, who will submit these reports to the Chair, Student and New Professionals Advisory Council:

- By **November 30**, student groups must submit a report that includes: A brief statement of the group's plans for programs and projects for the academic year (September-May); the names and titles of other elected officers; and, the name of the advisor. Ideally, the advisor of the student group should be an active SLA member.
- By **May 15**, student groups must submit a report that includes: A brief annual report on each group's programs and projects during the academic year (September–May); and, a list of the SLA student group members as of May 15th.

Failure to comply with SLA's reporting requirement will result in the student group being made inactive, barring any unforeseen circumstances. Each group will have the option to request for an extension for the May 15th Deadline.

Bylaws

Bylaws⁵ are a set codified policies, processes, and practices that govern how the student group is managed and operated. Bylaws address how the student group operates as an independent body and its interaction with the sponsoring academic program, higher education institution, and SLA. Bylaws help ensure consistency in group operations from term-to-term as new leaders assume responsibility for the group.

Student group bylaws should not conflict with either the bylaws of SLA⁶ or with the policies of the student group's sponsoring academic program or higher education institution.

Bylaws may, but are not required to, contain the following types of information:

- The name of your student group
- Purpose, objective(s), and/or mission

⁵ Links to other SLA student groups' bylaws for reference:

- iSchool at Illinois: www.ischool.illinois.edu/current-students/orgs/sla
- McGill SLA's Constitution: www.mcgill.ca/sis-students/sla/about/constitution
- Special Libraries@UCLA Constitution: <https://uclasla.wordpress.com/constitution/>

⁶ <https://www.sla.org/governance/governing-documents/bylaws/>

- Student group officers, including positions, responsibilities, terms of service, and election/volunteer processes
- Faculty advisor expectations and responsibilities
- Student group membership, including requirements and process for joining
- Meetings, including schedules, voting, and quorum requirements
- Amendments

Student group funding

Each year, each student group in good standing receives an annual allotment from SLA (as of 2016, that amount is \$100.00 per year). This amount is determined by the SLA Board of Directors. Each new student group receives an additional initial allotment. All student group checks are made payable to the advisors.

Student Group Officers

Recruitment, elections, and appointments

It can be useful to recruit prospective officers at the start of the term to provide your group with ample time to plan events. Elections will be necessary if your group has more interested student volunteers than officer positions or when elections are required by your program or institution. Elections should not conflict with policies governing student group elections that are established by your program or higher education institution.

Officer positions, roles, and responsibilities

Formal officer position descriptions serve multiple purposes. They help prospective officers understand the expectations associated with officer positions and help current officers remain accountable to fulfilling their position and contributing to the success of their group. Common officer positions and sample responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- **President:** Responsible for the overall management, leadership, and direction of the group.
- **Vice President:** Responsible for supporting the overall management, leadership, and direction of the group.
- **Secretary:** Responsible for recording meeting minutes and ensuring bylaws are followed.
- **Treasurer:** Responsible for managing funds and leading fundraising activities.
- **Membership Coordinator:** Responsible for overseeing elections, appointments, and recruitment.
- **Events Coordinator:** Responsible for organizing events and coordinating with external groups and individuals.
- **Web and Social Media Coordinator:** Responsible for web and social media content creation and management.
- **Alumni Representative:** Responsible for alumni outreach and support.
- **Advisor:** SLA has a detailed governance document for student group advisors: <https://www.sla.org/governance/governing-documents/policies-and-practices/practices-for-advisors-of-sla-student-groups/>. Advisors shall assume responsibility for reviewing this document in full and aligning their practices with those within said document.

Digital Presence

Establishing a digital presence is one of the best ways to connect with group members and with SLA as a larger body. The process of building a digital identity for your student group not only allows for the development of important professional skills but also helps broadcast the presence of your group to potential future members as well as potential collaborators. An effective group digital presence gives everyone an easy way to contact your group and for your group to connect with others without relying on the personal contact information of officers which frequently change.

Email

Often a student group decides to create an email for the group that is monitored by a designated officer. This allows for a permanent connection that is not based on individuals who may leave their positions after a year or two. This email should be named after your specific group, with a name and password that can be easily remembered. The email will be your main form of contact, so it should be easily recitable to potential collaborators. You should also use this as your main contact point for all SLA communication.

Website

A website can be an easy way to disseminate information, archive events that you sponsor, or promote your group. Whether you choose an external platform like WordPress or rely on a hosted service offered through your academic institution, be sure to assign maintenance of the page to an individual or group who will be responsible for keeping it up to date and adding content when needed.

Social media

A social media presence can be an effective way to spread news quickly, to connect groups whose members may be geographically dispersed, and to participate in the larger information professional community. Use social media platforms that are already well-used by your student community. If students would be better reached with another social media site like Tumblr, Instagram, or Snapchat, don't be afraid to try those out as well. If establishing a social media presence through the help of a number of student volunteers, the group may wish to adopt a Social Media Policy to set guidelines for postings.

Each social media platform has its own strengths and weaknesses, but here are some general suggested uses:

- To announce meetings, publicize events, and recruit officers.
- To participate in the occasional SLA twitter chats
- To live tweet an event that you're hosting to reach a broader audience
- To host your own twitter chat, inviting other groups, to discuss relevant issues (e.g., the job search, your LIS programs, etc.).

Events

Events are fun opportunities to connect with your fellow students and LIS professionals. As a student group officer, the skills you gain from hosting an in-person event are transferable and can be used in a job or other contexts.

Event ideas

- **Panels:** Contact local information professionals and have them answer questions regarding their work. You can have the audience ask them questions as well. Other ideas include a panel of advanced students telling newer students about how to make the most of their LIS program, or have a panel of students who already have work experience in the LIS field talk about their experiences. Panels can be facilitated in-person and online.
- **Networking events:** Host socials for librarians and information professional around your area to meet and connect with students and for students to connect with each other! If you have previous connections to professionals in the area, start there. You can also consider co-hosting a networking event with your local SLA Chapter.
- **Career building events:** Recruit information professionals to review student resumes and cover letters, practice interview skills, or share practica, internship, and career opportunities. Professionals can also give presentations about the job market, how to be an effective professional, how to apply for jobs, etiquette lessons, leadership, or anything else you think would be beneficial to your group's professional development.
- **Tours:** One of the cool things about special librarianship is that they have some of the best professionals and unique collections and collection spaces! If there's a special library in your area, gather a group to tour the library and speak to the librarian. The library can be a corporate or scientific library, or a special branch on an academic campus. If you find it special, it counts! Don't forget hospital, prison, or even museum libraries. Seeing a variety of information spaces is the best way to figure out what your own path could be. Groups may also want to arrange tours of a number of facilities in another location, making a day trip or even a short weekend trip.

Organizing an event

There are four key steps to organizing an event. These steps may apply to an in-person, an online, or a mixed-platform event that engages participants in-person and virtually. Each event is unique and, as a result, will face certain variables. Be sure to tailor these steps to meet your

needs, have backup plans, and be professional. If you need assistance, talk to your group advisor or school administration. You could even ask members of your local SLA chapter.

- **Plan:** Think about the who, what, when, where and how of the event.
 - Who is leading this event and who will attend?
 - What is the reason for the event and what kind of event is it?
 - When and where will it be held?
 - What steps will need to be taken in order to ensure the event is successful?
 - How will you be supporting attendance and engagement? For example, you may need to consider video conferencing for an online event or choose a hashtag to support virtual engagement.
- **Coordinate:** Assign people to manage the details and assure viability.
 - Is there food involved? Who will make sure it arrives? Who is responsible for payment?
 - Do you need to reserve a room or other area? If your event is online, who can help with technical setup and troubleshooting before and during the event?
 - Are you inviting people from outside your academic program?
 - Who will help facilitate and moderate the event?
 - Be sure to plan for any accommodation requests. Campus services may be able to help accommodate accessibility and disability requests.
- **Promote:** Let people know that the event is happening, and often.
 - Mention it when speaking to classmates
 - Send emails and social media blasts.
 - Hang flyers, posters, or other signage in an area where people will see them.
 - If you plan to open the event to attendees outside of your academic program, promote the event to your alumni, on your professional listservs, and SLA Connect communities.
 - Schedule promotional messages in the hours leading up to the event – this can help attract last minute attendees.
- **Do it!** The day of, ensure that everything and everyone is in place.
 - Arrive early to set-up and conduct a test-run of any technologies ahead of time to avoid issues during your event.
 - Start on time, knowing that “on time” may mean a few minutes late.
 - Do not worry if a little detail changes or if everything doesn’t proceed as perfectly as you had planned.
 - After the event, be sure to clean up any common areas or rented space.

- Give thank you notes, signed by student group officers, to your guest speakers and/or hosts.
- Celebrate your accomplishments!

Projects

Projects are excellent opportunities for students to engage in ongoing initiatives and activities.

Project ideas

- **Professional Experience.** Facilitate opportunities for students to gain professional experience by connecting students with special libraries and information centers that offer internship, practica, or other experiential learning opportunities. You can also organize one-day projects or ongoing volunteer programs in local organizations.
- **Community Engagement.** Work with your program's alumni association or local SLA chapter to establish a mentoring program for students to connect meaningfully with local professionals in the field. Contact local special libraries and other information organizations to see if they have needs you can fulfill and that are relevant to the mission of your student group.
- **Curriculum Development.** As library trends constantly change, keeping a relevant curriculum is difficult for schools. Join an existing committee or start your own to help introduce special librarianship into your program's courses. The newly updated SLA Competencies are as a good resource for curricular development ideas <https://www.sla.org/about-sla/competencies/>.
- **Ask students what they want.** The goal of your student group is to connect new professionals with amazing opportunities. Find out what types of projects and events students are interested in and what type of skills and experiences they deem most valuable. Whether you offer a resume review service, regular webinars on technical skills, web development projects, or mock interview services, your projects will be most successful if they are designed to meet your members' needs and interests.

Project teams

Project teams work best with clear roles, responsibilities, and leadership. Team leaders should assume responsibility for organizing and maintaining the project and report back to the student group on their progress, challenges, and accomplishments. Leaders may also assume responsibility for liaising with outside organizations, establishing desired outcomes from the project, creating project guidelines, and evaluating project progress and value.

Planning Calendar

Time of year	Activity
At the start of each semester, as needed	Recruit new student group officers
May 15, every year	Submit required semi-annual student group report
June, every year	Attend the SNPAC meetup at the SLA Annual Conference
November 30, every year	Submit required semi-annual student group report
As needed	Send updated contact information to SLA HQ

The culture of your academic institution will guide your programming schedule.

- **Fall:** Interest in student group events and projects may be of greater interest at this time due to an influx of new students who are eager to get involved. Attending your academic program's orientation events can be a valuable opportunity to connect with new students, promote your student group's upcoming events and projects, recruit new student group officers, and determine the interests of new students.
- **Spring:** Student groups, including event attendance and project participation, may be less active in the spring semester as students focus on graduation. Career-oriented events, such as resume reviews, employer panels, and mock-interviews, may be particularly useful for students who will be graduating and entering the job market.
- **Summer:** Many academic programs avoid scheduling events and activities during the summer months, which may impact your student group's event offerings. Organizing an event related to the SLA Annual Conference, such as a conference-related Twitter chat or a panel of conference presenters and/or attendees, can help connect your student group to the conference.
- You may also consider organizing student group events to coincide with national library events. Scheduling events at these times often generates more interest. Some examples include:

Month	Activity
March	Freedom of Information Day
April	National Library Week National Library Workers' Day Preservation Week
May	Choose Privacy Week National Library Legislative Day
June	GLBT Book Month™
September	Banned Books Week International Literacy Day

Additional Resources

Appendices

- Student Group Biannual Report Template
- Student Group-of-the-Year Criteria & Checklist

Useful contacts

- SNPAC Council member list:
<https://www.sla.org/governance/committeescouncilsreps/students-and-new-professionals-advisory-council/>
- SLA Staff Directory: <https://www.sla.org/about-sla/staff/>
- Chapter and division officers, particularly membership, programming, and student relations officer, may be interested in co-organizing, sponsoring, or supporting student chapter events and projects:
 - Chapter list: <https://www.sla.org/get-involved/chapters/>
 - Divisions list: <https://www.sla.org/get-involved/divisions/>
- Your faculty advisor can help connect you with practicing professionals and organizations who have worked with your student group in the past.
- Your academic program's alumni association, and your student group's former officers, can help your student group in a variety of ways. They could serve as guest speakers at events, participate in a mentorship program or resume review event, or help with fundraising.

Web links

- About SLA: <https://www.sla.org/about-sla/>
- SLA Student Groups: <https://www.sla.org/get-involved/student-groups/>
- SLA Students and New Professionals Advisory Council (SNPAC):
<https://www.sla.org/governance/committeescouncilsreps/students-and-new-professionals-advisory-council/>
- Practices for SLA Student Groups: <https://www.sla.org/governance/governing-documents/policies-and-practices/practices-for-sla-student-groups/>