



IMAGES ALBERTA
CAMERA CLUB

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIG) LEADERS' GUIDELINES

Written by Jim Kelcher, SIG Chair, April 24, 2018

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Special Interest Groups (SIG) Leaders' Guidelines is to provide useful information for both current and new SIG Leaders, and those considering assuming that role.

The SIG Leaders' Guidelines follow from the document titled "Policy with Respect to Special Interest Groups," which is intended to define the role that SIGs play within Images Alberta Camera Club (IACC), and which can be found on the Club website. Whereas the SIG policy document attempts to achieve consistency of operation of the SIGs within the IACC framework, the SIG Leaders' Guidelines present information that has been gathered from the experience of the various SIGs, and to present it in a form that is useful to the SIG leaders to organize and operate their groups.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS CONCEPT

Members of a SIG share a common interest in a particular topic or area within photography.

SIGs provide an opportunity for their members to pursue common areas of photographic interest for pleasure and learning, and offer an additional means for social interaction and camaraderie within IACC.

One must be a member of IACC in order to join a SIG.

In general, activities are intended for the SIG members only, but there may be occasions when it is possible to extend an invitation to the IACC general membership. When feasible, this is encouraged as it gives other Club members an opportunity to experience the SIG first hand. When this type of activity is proposed, the SIG leader should involve the SIG Chair, who will provide coordination between the SIG and the Club.

Other ways for a SIG to interface with the Club are to take part in exhibits, slide shows, talks or presentations. This benefits the Club members by giving them exposure to what the SIG does. The SIG benefits from establishing and maintaining a profile of their group, and the SIGs, in general, within the Club.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Each SIG has a Leader or Co-Leaders, who coordinate their individual group.

The primary responsibilities of the SIG Leader(s) are to provide overall coordination for the group and to serve as the focal point of communications within the group, and between the group and the SIG Chair.

It is important to note that the SIG Leader does not carry all the responsibility for the functioning of the group. In parallel with the concept of SIG members pursuing a common area of photographic interest, is the idea that SIG members will also share in the responsibilities of the operation of their group.

Members of a SIG can contribute in a number of ways:

- actively participating in the group's activities
- providing ideas for group activities
- sharing in the organization, hosting, and coordination of meetings, outings and workshops
- teaching and mentoring other group members
- providing input in determining the future direction of the SIG.

The SIG Leader will receive ongoing support from the SIG Chair in the following ways:

- assisting with the initial setup of the SIG
- promoting the SIGs within IACC and communicating relevant information between the SIG and the Club membership
- coordinating the SIG registration process for Club members and providing updated registration information to SIG leaders
- helping with specific issues, as needed.

FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SIGs

SIGs carry out their activities outside of the Club's formal structure. Generally speaking, SIGs operate in an independent fashion from the Club, and are self-managed.

IACC supports the SIGs in: polling Club membership for new SIG suggestions, facilitating the formation of new SIGs, providing promotion within the Club, communicating to Club members, and assisting with SIG initiations, operations, and, when necessary, disbandment.

SIG Initiation

The initial meeting of a new SIG can be arranged and chaired by a representative of the group and/or the SIG Chair. The SIG Chair will ensure that an announcement is made to the Club membership to give members an opportunity to participate.

Topics that should be addressed at the first meeting or soon after should include:

- agreement on the scope of the special interest to be pursued and the name of the group
- location of meetings
- dates and time for meetings (e.g., second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm)
- selection of a leader/coordinator for the group
- the structure of activities for the group (meetings, outings, workshops, etc.)
- funding the group, if applicable.

It is not necessary to finalize all of the above items at the first meeting. Some of these may evolve and change over time, but the more defined they are at the beginning, the better.

When setting the schedule for future meetings, try to avoid schedule conflicts between the new SIG and Club activities (e.g., outings, workshops). The Club activity should take precedence if it has already been booked. Also, it is advisable to avoid schedule conflicts between the new SIG meetings and those of other SIGs. The SIG Chair can provide guidance on the meeting schedule for other SIGs. Most scheduled SIG activities are shown on the IACC website calendar.

Some SIGs, by their nature, have a classroom workshop focus and structure. Historically, these have been classified as SIGs versus Club workshops, as they are multi-session, and carry on for an extended period of time, compared to single-session workshops that are offered as Club workshops. They are often initiated by a member of the Club with particular expertise in an area, and will often be led by this individual. With this type of SIG, it is helpful if the leader provides a description and list of topics to be covered, available to Club members before registering, to help them decide whether the SIG is appropriate for them. Many of the first meeting topics mentioned earlier will likely have been addressed by the SIG Leader by the time the group meets.

SIG Operation

SIG activities should be chosen within the agreed upon scope of the group's area of interest.

Most SIGs hold regularly scheduled meetings and may also organize and take part in occasional outings and/or workshops in their area of interest. However, they are not limited to only these activities if they choose to structure the group in other ways.

SIG members should remember that when they are in public spaces (outings, etc.) they are ambassadors for IACC and should always act in a manner that reflects well on IACC and its membership.

Experience level of SIG members can be quite broad within the group. One of the challenges for a SIG is to strike a balance between having an environment where less experienced members are encouraged to participate and ask questions without feeling intimidated, while also allowing the group to explore concepts that appeal to advanced members.

Meetings

Most groups meet once per month or every second month. Meeting venues may include:

- members' residences
- employer meeting space
- rented space (the SIG Chair may be able to provide guidance about possible sources of rental space, contact persons and estimated costs)
- sponsor-donated space (e.g., London Drugs, Vistek) (the use of this space must be booked well in advance).

The structure of meetings is up to the group; however, for most SIGs it includes one or more of the following: review of members' images, critique, presentation by a group member or guest speaker, discussion of upcoming activities.

Outings

Either occasionally, or as a regular part of the group's operation, a SIG may organize a group outing at a location or event that suits the nature of the group's special interest area.

Outings should be planned and carried out in a manner that ensures safety for both the group members and the public.

Workshops

A SIG may occasionally hold a workshop to cover a particular aspect of the groups' special interest. Most often, workshops are led by an experienced member of the SIG or by a guest. Considerations for workshop planning should include: space requirement, selection of an appropriate venue, and equipment requirements.

Communication

When SIG meetings and other events have been scheduled by the group, information such as event description, date and time should be communicated to either the IACC Webmaster or the SIG Chair so that the event can be added to the Club's website calendar. If communicated directly to the Webmaster, the SIG Chair should also be copied on the message.

In addition, the SIG Leader will often send a reminder e-mail to the SIG members in advance of the event. This may include a request for members to RSVP their planned attendance at the event, so that the leader and host of the event can prepare for it appropriately.

Throughout the year, the SIG Chair maintains a list of Club members who are registered in SIGs overall, based on the Club's SIG registration process. The SIG Chair will communicate to the SIG Leader, the names and contact information of registered members of the SIG. When registration changes occur that involve a SIG, the SIG Chair will advise its leader.

The SIG Leader may occasionally poll members of the group to get a sense of how well they think that the group is functioning, and to consider suggestions for improvement, where applicable. This can be done by polling members individually or as a group, or as a meeting discussion item.

Likewise, the SIG Chair will periodically check with the SIG Leader for feedback about how the group is doing or for other relevant information. The SIG Leader is encouraged to contact the SIG Chair at any time with any developments, questions, or concerns.

Finances

In line with the idea that SIGs generally operate independently of IACC operations and are self-managed, SIG members are also responsible to share the costs that are required to operate the SIG. The cost of operating a SIG, in most cases, is not large, but may include items such as food and beverages for meetings, space rental, or special costs associated with an outing or workshop. For regular ongoing costs, some groups have a small nominal fee that is paid per meeting by its members.

IACC Equipment Use

IACC-owned equipment may be made available for use by one or more of the SIGs. Use of Club-owned equipment must not negatively affect Club operations and will be at the discretion of the appropriate member of the Board. Requests for use of equipment should first be directed to the SIG Chair.

Disbandment of a SIG

Occasionally a SIG will run its course and SIG members may decide to disband the group. This can happen as a result of members changing or expanding their focus in the photography they pursue, or for other reasons. In cases where the SIG ceases to be active, it is important that the SIG Leader advise the SIG Chair as soon as possible so that this information can be properly communicated to the Board and membership of the Club. The SIG Chair will also facilitate other items, such as updating the Club's website to remove the SIG, and return of Club-owned equipment, if applicable.