

## **Special Interest Groups**

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## IATUL Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

### 1. Rationale/Purpose for IATUL SIGs

Professional special interest groups help support the delivery of IATUL strategic priorities. They provide opportunities for members of organisations to contribute to this work. They also provide a forum to enable those with similar professional specialties and interests to exchange ideas, keep themselves current on professional developments in their field and cooperate on related activities and goals.

The responsibilities, procedures and Terms of Reference for IATUL SIGs are outlined in this document. Key activities undertaken by SIGs to support the strategic priorities of IATUL can include the following:

- Furthering understanding of the subject area through reviews, analysis, surveys, interviews etc.
- Developing services and tools that IATUL members can use to extend their professional development and their libraries staff development programmes
- Develop infrastructure to support the goals of the SIG members
- Reporting on developments and trends across the IATUL membership
- Developing programmes for information exchange/networking groups.

IATUL Special Interest Groups serve a dual role, both as discussion fora and as working groups. They provide an opportunity for IATUL members to have focused dialog around an issue or functional area of interest to them. At the same time, the SIGs play an important role in advancing IATUL strategic objectives. SIG Workplans play a critical role in documenting SIG activities and initiatives reflecting these dual roles.

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

#### Role of the IATUL Board

The IATUL Board and Office provides:

- A web space for each SIG
- Access to the IATUL file sharing system where SIG documents are stored and shared amongst SIG members
- A Board member appointed to liaise and work with the SIG Chair, providing advice/guidance and support for the activities of the SIG, including support for membership management (ie. Calling for expressions of interest to join the group, via the IATUL Board)
- Opportunities for presentation of SIG activities in the annual conference programme
- Allocation of funds for specific SIG activities. An application and business case for funding must be made to the Board (see below)
- Space in the IATUL newsletter to communicate with members
- Opportunities to meet with other SIG Chairs and share experience and plans

### **Role of the SIG Chair**

Nominees for the role of Chair are proposed by the SIG members, and formally appointed by the IATUL Board. The role of the SIG Chair is an important one and pivotal to the success of the SIG. The Chair:

- Coordinates and oversees the completion of the Terms of Reference and annual work plan, finalising these with the Board
- Builds the membership of the SIG so that it is representative of the IATUL membership
- Has ongoing responsibility for managing the agenda and any work plans of the SIG
- The Chair is responsible for managing the agenda and setting meetings
- Provide updates to the IATUL Board including an annual report and IATUL newsletter reports

It is expected that the role of Chair is taken on for a term of two years with up to two renewal terms. Sharing the role as Co-Chairs is also an option.

### **Role of SIG Members**

All employees from IATUL member libraries are welcome to join a SIG. All members contribute to the success of the SIG. Specifically members are expected to:

- Commit, prepare and participate in the group, its meetings and activities
- Contribute to the development of long and short-term goals, often detailed in an annual work plan which is presented to the IATUL Board, via the Chair, for review
- Support open discussion and willingness to share knowledge and experience with other members and IATUL libraries
- Take responsibility for roles as allocated such as Membership Manager, Communications Officer or liaison with associated Community of Practice (one member of the SIG to do this)

Each member is expected to fulfil their responsibilities to the SIG. It is expected that members themselves are working in a leadership or subject-expert role and that they join for a term of two years with up to two renewal terms.

### **Community of Practice**

All SIGs have the opportunity to establish a Community of Practice, to support and share their work. This would be at the SIG's instigation and publicised through an open call by the SIG board liaison and/or chair, using formal IATUL communications such as the newsletter or social media, to all members of the IATUL community with an interest in the work of a specific SIG. Once established by the SIG, this community would be guided and mentored by a nominated SIG member and allocated specific tasks that would contribute to the SIG's work, e.g. a review of national and international frameworks for information literacy.

### 3. Procedures for Establishing a SIG

Each SIG focuses on a particular subject area and is established with the approval and endorsement of the IATUL Board. SIG members develop a terms of reference (see below) and collaborate on establishing and supporting topic specific working groups and annual work plans to progress activities and support long and short-term goals of the SIG.

The initiative to establish a SIG may come from the Board, or the staff of an IATUL member library. A proposal to establish a Special Interest Group will be made to the Board and should include a draft Terms of Reference and an outline of the plans for SIG activity. A proposal will be strengthened if it can be demonstrated that there are a number of staff from member libraries interested in participating and contributing to the SIG activities. It will need to be approved by the IATUL Board prior to the SIG convening.

It is essential that any new SIG aligns with IATUL strategic priorities. Consideration should also be given to understand:

- What is “special” about this special interest?
- Is a new SIG going to be sustainable? Is the topic a developing/evolving one or one of prime importance to academic Library Directors?
- Is there a lack of information/services/support for this topic that a SIG can address?
- Is there “grass roots” interest in this area of librarianship?
- Is the topic/subject area specific to academic librarianship? Are there existing library SIG (e.g. IFLA Sections and SIGs) that are active in this area?

Once the Board had agreed to the SIG, a communique goes to all members (usually sent from the President) calling for expressions of interest in joining the SIG. If a Chair has not been nominated, confirmed members will be able to put forward a candidate to fulfil that role.

It may be necessary to decline expressions of interest for participation, as a SIG with a large membership may not be able focus on the committed outcomes.

### 4. SIG Work Plans

Each Special Interest Group provides an opportunity to connect, network, share experiences and best practices with colleagues around the globe. At the same time, the SIGs play an important role in advancing IATUL strategic objectives. SIG work plans play a critical role in documenting SIG activities and initiatives reflecting these dual roles. An inaugural work plan (updated/revised annually) will be developed and presented to the Board for endorsement. The work plan identifies activities SIG members will carry out during the year allowing effective planning.

The work plan should not be too detailed or prescriptive, as plans may need to be changed. For each initiative the members wish to carry out the plan should provide:

- Rationale/objectives and the expected outcomes or benefits that will be provided
- Commitments required to carry out the activities associated with the initiative.

- Any funding required (see request for funding below for the additional information that is required)
- Action plan or task list with an associated timeline and action owners
- Detail on how the outcomes and benefits from the initiative will be evaluated

## 5. Request for Funding

Prior to requesting funding of activity the SIG members and their Board representative should discuss these requirements in detail, including what other options there might be. Alternative funding sources may also be available.

As part of the work plan, the SIG will need to prepare a business case to request funding, describing deliverables, as well as how and when the work occurs. Included in the case should be:

- What the funds will be used for
- What outcomes will be achieved and what benefits will be realised
- If an external agency/organisation is to provide services or products:
  - Who is the preferred supplier and the rationale for their appointment
  - What goods/services will be provided
  - The cost of these goods and services
- A full budget with supporting documentation (quotations, itineraries etc.) will be supplied.

The Board or a sub-committee of the Board will determine if the request can be met. Prior to the payment of any funds the SIG Chair and Board Liaison must certify that the expense has occurred as described in the funding request, and that goods/services have been provided as required.

It should be noted that IATUL funds are limited and it may not be possible for the Board to approve the expenditure of IATUL funds on SIG activities.

## 6. Annual Reporting

An annual report is made to the Board, which is provided in time for the Board meeting that is held prior to the annual IATUL Conference. The report will provide an overview of the SIGs membership and report on the activities for the year.

Highlights and progress against each of the activities agreed in the work plan will be reported on. The Board report should also include how the SIG's annual work plan is progressing and any issues that the Board should be aware of. A synopsis or overview of the content prepared for the Conference can also be included.

The annual report may also highlight areas of clarification or questions put to the Board so that there is an agreed direction and priorities for the SIG.

At the end of year Board meeting a new work plan for the following year is provided to the Board so that the SIGs activities can be endorsed by the Board.

## 7. Procedures for dissolving a SIG

There may be a requirement to dissolve a SIG. Circumstances may include:

- Obsolescence of the topic
- No longer relevant to the strategic direction of IATUL
- Consistently low membership or lack of interest from IATUL members

The proposal to dissolve a SIG should come from the SIG Chair/s to the IATUL Board via the Board Liaison. Formal agreement to dissolve the SIG is a voting matter at an IATUL members at a General Assembly, with agreement documented in the Assembly minutes.

The work of the SIG will be preserved on the IATUL website.

## IATUL Special Interest Groups

## 8. Terms of Reference Template

### 1. PURPOSE

- This IATUL SIG will be known as XXXXXXX
- The SIG supports the delivery of IATUL strategic priorities and enables ongoing international collaboration and sharing of experiences, knowledge and resources among IATUL members (and other university libraries throughout the world) in relation to:
  - *[insert general/broad activities/topics as they relate to the SIG]*
- The SIG establishes and supports working groups and actions to progress specific activities identified through the SIGs annual work plan.

### 2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHAIR

- Coordinates and oversees the completion of the Terms of Reference and activity plan, finalising these with the Board
- Builds the membership of the SIG so that it is representative of the IATUL membership
- Has ongoing responsibility for managing the agenda and work plans of the SIG
- The Chair is responsible for managing the agenda and setting meetings
- Provide updates to the IATUL Board including an annual report

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

- Commitment, preparation and participation in the group, its meetings and activities
- All members will contribute to the development of a work plan with long and short-term goals which is presented to the IATUL Board, via the Chair, for endorsement
- Members of the SIG support open discussion and willingness to share knowledge and experience with other members and IATUL libraries.
- Some SIGs may allocate roles to members to help with the operation of the group (such as Communications Officer, Membership Manager, Community of Practice Lead or Secretary).
- Each member is expected to fulfil their responsibilities to the SIG.

#### 4. MEMBERSHIP

- IATUL Board Member XXXXXXXX will provide support and advice to the SIG and provide representation to the Board
- SIG members will be staff from IATUL libraries. Ex officio SIG members from non IATUL members may be appointed with the agreement of the IATUL Board
- Members consist of individuals that have responsibility and / or an interest in *[insert general/broad activities as they relate to each SIG]* services in IATUL member libraries.
- Potential new members are to contact the Chair or SIG membership manager for consideration.
- SIGs are expected to have diverse geographical membership from member institutions with between 10-20 members (including the community of practice if established).

#### 5. MEETING FREQUENCY

- Online meetings will be held every 6 weeks - 2 months. To allow for time zone differences meeting times will be rotated / varied to enable all members to attend at least every second meeting

#### 6. COMMUNICATION

- Meetings will be held virtually
- Meetings notes and action points are recorded
- Email will be used between meetings, with a group email distribution list being set up and managed by the Chair
- Documents will be stored in a shared work space where all members can access and edit them.

#### 7. REPORTING TO THE BOARD AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- The SIG Chair will provide a report to the Board meeting prior to the annual IATUL Conference
- Provision is made at each annual Conference for SIG members to present on SIG activities/initiatives and other matters the SIG wishes to raise with the IATUL membership
- An updated annual work plan is presented to the Board at the end of year Board meeting.

#### 8. REVIEW OF THE SIG

- Each SIG is expected to do an annual self-review that is reported back via the Board liaison member which summarises achievements, challenges and looks forward to the coming year