



## **AccessAbility SIG Membership Procedures**

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### **Background**

The AccessAbility SIG (A-SIG) owes its very existence to an intensive worldwide membership campaign in 2001-2 that enabled it first to be established as a SIG (the Special Needs SIG) when the original Special Needs Committee (SNC) was terminated by the Board and then to expand its membership to raise a sufficient budget under per capita funding to pursue its objectives and ensure its survival. In less than a year, the 18-member SNC grew into an international disabilities advocacy organization of more than 200 members specializing in accessibility and supporting the twin cause of helping people overcome their disabilities and ensuring that technical communication products are accessible to users with disabilities.

Since then, the A-SIG has experienced slow but steady growth—numbering 319 as of March 2006. This growth has been achieved through the initiatives described below, and new members are welcomed into the organization under the procedure described herein.

### **Document Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to describe the A-SIG's methods of ensuring a healthy, growing organization; to codify the procedure for welcoming new members; and to describe the online "New Member Orientation Package."

### **Related Documents**

- A-SIG Five-Year Strategic Plan
- A-SIG Rechartering document (includes mission statement, goals and objectives, strategies, and activities)
- A-SIG Job Descriptions for Officers and Key Positions

## **Membership Growth Initiatives**

Techniques used by the A-SIG to encourage new members to join include, but are not limited to, the following

- Maintain a strong, visible presence and an aggressive outreach at the Annual Conference, including a conference accessibility guide, accessibility-related sessions, a networking lunch, a special edition of the newsletter that roadmaps accessibility-related activities and sessions, and informal networking.
- Publish an A-SIG brochure that can be distributed physically (e.g., at the conference) or electronically (via e-mail or accessed via the A-SIG Web site).
- Maintain an open LISTSERV and Web site, encouraging participation by A-SIG and non-A-SIG members and STC and non-STC members alike and inviting STC colleagues interested in accessibility to join the A-SIG and other professional colleagues interested in accessibility to join both STC and the A-SIG.
- Reach out to other STC communities, both virtual and geographic. The A-SIG Five-Year Strategic Plan calls for a coordinated effort to contact all of the other STC communities over a five-year period. See Item 4a.3 (goal), 4b.3a (strategy), 4c.3a.1, 4c.3a.2, 4c.3a.3, and 4c.3a.4 (activities).
- Personally network with professional colleagues and at places of employment
- Sell A-SIG lapel pins, both as an internal fund-raiser and to serve as a visible identifier of A-SIG members at STC events

## **New-Member Welcoming Procedure**

Welcoming and orienting new members are the responsibility of the membership manager. (See the “A-SIG Job Descriptions for Officers and Key Positions” document.) The procedure is as follows

- Each month, the membership manager receives a spreadsheet (.xls) file of the latest A-SIG roster from the STC office that identifies all new and existing members.
- Within 10 days of receiving the roster, the membership manager contacts all new members via e-mail
- The e-mail letter welcomes new members to the organization, briefly summarizes the SIG’s mission, urges them to join the LISTSERV, and encourages them to send a reply detailing their own areas of interest and expertise.
- The e-mail letter also delivers the online “New Member Orientation Package” described below.

## Online New Member Orientation Package

The online “New Member Orientation Package” is sent each month to new members. It includes the following:

- Hot links to key A-SIG documents, including (1) the SIG Rechartering document, which includes its mission statement, goals and objectives, strategies to achieve those objectives, and activities to implement those strategies; (2) the SIG Five-Year Strategic Plan; and (3) the “A-SIG Job Descriptions for Officers and Key Positions” document.
- Hot links to the A-SIG’s internal communication media, including (1) the Web site; (2) the newsletter archives; and (3) the LISTSERV subscription address.
- Hot links to the A-SIG’s extensive online archives, including (1) accessibility-related conference presentations, *Proceedings* papers, and handouts for the past several conferences; and (2) the latest conference accessibility guide.
- Four small e-files attached to the welcome letter, including items such as (1) the A-SIG Rechartering document; (2) the A-SIG Five-Year Strategic Plan; (3) an article describing the A-SIG’s history, mission, goals and objectives, and accomplishments; and (4) an article pertaining to accessibility written by an A-SIG member.

## Measuring Success

The success of the ongoing A-SIG membership program is measured as follows:

- The most obvious short-term metric is the number of members, which is monitored monthly.
- The first goal is to achieve a steady growth rate of at least 5 to 10 percent per year, measured by comparing the SIG’s total membership at the beginning and the end of the year (July 1 and June 30).
- An equally important second goal is to encourage a significant percentage of new members to become *actively* involved in the SIG’s activities. The short-term measure of achieving this goal is the involvement of new members in LISTSERV discussions and by volunteering to contribute to SIG activities. New members should be encouraged to become involved as soon as possible after joining to maximize the chances of getting them into volunteer leadership positions.
- The long-term measure of a healthy membership program is the ability to be able to rotate strong, active leaders through the A-SIG offices and key positions. This serves the double purpose of (1) infusing new energy and fresh ideas and (2) preventing burnout in long-term A-SIG members by sharing the workload. Ultimately, this is the key to the SIG’s ability to continue to flourish as an organization and to succeed in the pursuit of its important mission.