

HANDBOOK FOR INTEREST GROUPS OF
THE AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Prepared by

ATLA Member Programs Department

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Introduction

This handbook outlines the responsibilities and objectives for individuals and staff involved in ATLA interest groups.

Purpose of ATLA Interest Groups

The purpose of ATLA interest groups is to provide ATLA Individual, Student, and Lifetime members who share a professional interest(s) and wish to further that interest communally an opportunity to network and collaborate. Interest groups support achieving the organizational ends of ATLA as adopted by the Board of Directors, October 2016.

ATLA exists so that:

All those involved in the practice, study and teaching of and scholarly communication in theology and religion worldwide are connected to others in the field and have the tools, skills, and primary sources needed to advance their work.

1. Professionals engaged in librarianship and scholarly communication are advocating and collaborating in order to advance scholarship in theological and religious disciplines.
 - a. Librarians and scholarly communication professionals are developing and strengthening connections that lead to innovative solutions for shared challenges.
 - b. Librarians and scholarly communication professionals are developing increased capacities to work in diverse and changing environments.
2. Students, scholars, and information professionals have the tools they need for robust scholarly communication in the fields of theology and religion.
3. Students, scholars, and religious leaders skillfully use information resources to create knowledge, grow in wisdom, and share the results of their research.

Interest Groups

Purpose and Scope

ATLA interest groups provide networking opportunities for members within their interests and subject fields with the goal of growing professionally in their respective careers. Participation in interest groups offers members the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation, discuss relevant topics, and participate in problem solving. It also offers members the opportunity to engage in leadership roles. Additionally, interest groups provide avenues for programs to be presented at conference or via webinar, collaborative projects, and/or contributing to ATLA publications.

Core Responsibilities

Interest groups provide opportunities for members to network and collaborate in areas of shared professional interest. Membership in Interest Groups is open to all Individual, Student, and Lifetime members.

Each interest group shall attract its own members, develop its own agenda, and establish a suitable organizational structure including designating a group leader. The group must conduct at least one business meeting per year (only Individual, Student, and Lifetime members may participate) and organize one program to take place at Annual Conference or via webinar (all members may attend). Annually, the leader of the group is responsible for providing a report to ATLA Member Programs that provides key information about the group and its activities.

Optionally, the group may engage in other activities such as collaborative projects and contributing to ATLA publications.

In summary, interest groups are responsible for the following:

- Create and submit organizational structure for review and approval
- Conduct a business meeting during Annual Conference or virtually (only Individual, Student, or Lifetime members may participate)
- Maintain website content
- Coordinate one program for Annual Conference program or webinar (all members may attend)
- Submit written report annually to ATLA Member Programs which includes:
 - Business Meeting minutes
 - Summary of program(s)
 - Summary of activities throughout the year
 - Leadership roster
 - Membership roster
- (Optional) Develop and support collaborative member projects
- (Optional) Contribute content to publications (ATLA Press or Association publications)

Interest Group Structure

To make it clear to interested members how each group functions, provide for continuity of leadership, and spread out the responsibilities of the interest group among several willing volunteers, each interest group is responsible for developing an organizational structure for the group which should include a charge, bylaws, and leadership structure.

Charge

The interest group charge or mission should provide the foundation and purpose for the group and its members. The charge should clearly communicate the common interest of what the group will explore and should answer these basic questions:

- What are our interests and what do we do?
- How do we do it?
- Whom do we do it for?
- What value are we bringing?

Bylaws

Bylaws is a simple document that helps establish a suitable organizational structure that generally defines things like the group's official name, purpose, how to join, leaders titles and responsibilities, how leaders are to be assigned, how meetings should be conducted, and how often meetings will be held.

Leadership Structure

The group must define and document its leadership structure. At least one chairperson must be designated by the group and members in leadership roles should rotate periodically. Leaders of interest groups must be Individual members of the association.

Activities

Interest groups play a crucial role in the professional development of Individual members within ATLA. To that end, interest groups offer opportunities for discussion and sharing of information, developing programs to be presented at conference or via webinar, creating collaborative projects, and contributing to ATLA publications.

Discussions and Shared Information

Interest groups foster discussion through in-person as well as virtual interactions. They engage in dialogue via discussion list and share information through the ATLA website and a shared community site.

Programming

Interest groups are required to coordinate at least one program annually that can benefit the membership at large. This program may either be presented at the Annual Conference or via webinar. Creative new and original programming is welcomed.

Conference programming should be submitted for consideration by the Conference Committee through the normal proposal process and is subject to the committee's review and acceptance. Webinar programming proposals may be submitted to the Member Programs Department (MemberRep@atla.com) at any time.

Funding for speaker honoraria is available and requests should be included within the proposal and adhere to the honoraria guidelines utilized by the Conference and Professional Development Committees.

Collaborative Projects

Members of interest groups are encouraged to work with each other on collaborative projects for the benefit of interest group members and the entire membership. These projects may range from best practice or standard documentation creation to technology-based solution creation.

Funding is available to support collaborative projects and requests may be made to the Member Programs Department via email (MemberRep@atla.com) at any time.

Contributing to ATLA Publications

Contributions to ATLA Publications from interest groups are encouraged. Interest groups may submit proposals or articles to association-related publications such as the *Newsletter* at any time via email (MemberRep@atla.com) and are welcome to work with the Editorial Board of any ATLA Press imprint to submit contributions for publication (MemberRep@atla.com) and are welcome to work with the Editorial Board of any ATLA Press imprint to submit contributions for publication.

Recognition and Continuation

Interest groups center around a professional interest within theological librarianship and the LIS field in general. Groups that further the professional interests of the members of the Association may be formed by members at any time.

Establishing an Interest Group

If a group of members is interested in creating or renewing an interest group, they should email MemberRep@atla.com indicating their interest and provide a draft charge, bylaws, leadership structure, and anticipated roster (list of interested members).

Maintaining Recognition of an Established Interest Group

Interest groups are recognized by the ATLA Executive Director for one to three years. Interest groups must meet the core responsibilities every year. Interest groups that do not meet these expectations, or are out of compliance with their own bylaws during a given year, will be contacted to discuss the future of the group.

The ATLA Executive Director's recognition of an interest group lapses if the group continues to be out of compliance with the outlined core responsibilities, or its own bylaws, for three years in a row. An interest group that is no longer recognized by the ATLA Executive Director will be removed from the list of ATLA interest groups and cease to receive funding, technology, and program support from ATLA.

Disbanding an Interest Group

An interest group may choose to disband upon a simple majority vote of those present at the interest group's business meeting. Notification of the disbandment should be sent to ATLA via email to MemberRep@atla.com.

Executive Director of ATLA

The Executive Director of ATLA is responsible for recognizing interest groups for one to three years.

Member Programs Department

The Member Programs Department works closely with interest group leaders to ensure interest groups are able to meet the core responsibilities and also are encouraged to approach ATLA staff with new ideas.

Specific support provided by the Member Programs Department to interest groups ranges from technology to facilitation and includes:

- Discussion list
- Community site for document storage and sharing (members only)
- Webpage for sharing information (public)
- Virtual meeting technology and support
- Assigned time for conference program (if accepted by Conference Committee)
- Assigned time for business meeting at conference (if requested)
- Funding for conference or webinar speaker honoraria (per the honoraria guidelines utilized by the Conference and Professional Development Committees)
- Funding and support for collaborative projects (technology, etc.)

The Director of Member Programs reviews and approves all funding requests.

The Member Programs Department will also market the availability of interest groups to prospective, new, and current Individual, Lifetime, and Student members by including of interest groups in ATLA Individual, Student, and Lifetime membership benefits and listing current interest groups on the application for new Individual and Student members. If a new

member indicates their interest in a particular group, ATLA Member Programs will inform current interest group leadership for follow-up.

Early each fall, a virtual meeting for all leaders of interest groups will be facilitated by the Member Programs Department to discuss the role and importance of interest groups within the Association structure, review the core responsibilities of interest groups, discuss the timeline of activities, and establish clear lines of communication.

Schedule for Planning Interest Group Activities

Throughout the Year (July – June)

Throughout the year interest groups are encouraged to hold meetings, work with Member Programs staff to organize webinars for the benefit of the entire membership, and communicate/collaborate with other members of the interest group.

July - August

- Prepare and submit to ATLA Member Programs (MemberRep@atla.com) a written annual report by **August 31st** that includes:
 - Business Meeting minutes
 - Summary of program(s)
 - Summary of activities throughout the year
 - Leadership roster
 - Membership roster
- For already established interest groups, previous leaders should communicate with incoming leaders regarding any group history and
- ATLA Member Programs will provide access to interest group areas (as needed)

October – January

- Interest group leaders attend the virtual meeting organized by the Member Programs Department to discuss the role and importance of interest groups within the Association structure, review the core responsibilities of interest groups, discuss the timeline of activities, and establish clear lines of communication
- Submit proposal for ATLA Annual Conference program via the normal proposal process for consideration by the Conference Committee

January – May

- Organize and facilitate Annual Conference programming with Member Programs staff (if applicable)
- For interest groups that plan on holding a meeting at the ATLA Annual Conference, select a time for your meeting and notify Member Programs via email (MemberRep@atla.com) by **March 1st**

June

- Present/facilitate ATLA Annual Conference program (if applicable)
- Hold Business Meeting (if applicable)
- Determine leadership for upcoming year
- Prepare and gather information for the annual report on the interest groups activities to submit to Member Programs