



Special Interest Group Reference Manual

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Table of Contents

OVERVIEW	3
STARTING A SIG	3
RESOURCES & SUPPORT	3
WEB SPACE.....	4
MAILING LIST	4
ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM.....	4
EMAIL REDIRECT ALIAS	5
NEWS DISSEMINATION.....	5
GDC PRESENCE.....	5
POLICIES & PROCEDURES	5
LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE.....	6
MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS	6
ANNUAL REPORT	6
FINANCING.....	6
MARKETING/PR POLICY	6
NON-RECRUITMENT POLICY	7
EVENT SUPPORT POLICY	7
SIG ACTIVITY EXAMPLES	8
APPENDIX	10
CONTACT INFO.....	10
USEFUL LINKS	10

About the IGDA

The International Game Developers Association is a non-profit membership organization that advocates globally on issues related to digital game creation. The IGDA's mission is to strengthen the international game development community and effect change to benefit that community.

Overview

An IGDA special interest group (SIG) is a community centered on a topic of interest relevant to game development. SIGs connect developers allowing them to learn from each other, promote their specialties, identify upcoming challenges and endeavor to advance the industry.

SIGs are volunteer-managed and driven. While the IGDA provides the basic resources and infrastructure to establish and maintain SIGs, each SIG is a relatively autonomous self-sustaining community.

Starting a SIG

Starting a new SIG is an informal process. Anyone interested in starting a SIG should email the IGDA's executive director, Jason Della Rocca (jason@igda.org), with initial thoughts. In this email, describe the following:

- SIG topic
- reason/need for SIG
- goals/mission
- sample projects/initiatives
- who would likely be involved
- at least 10 names of individuals interested in participating in the SIG

The executive director will help refine the initial proposal before taking it to the IGDA's Board of Directors for approval.

Before submitting a SIG proposal, please familiarize yourself with the resources provided by the IGDA, and SIG guidelines.

Resources & Support

The IGDA provides basic resources, tools and support to start and maintain SIGs. *Please note that SIGs must be volunteer-driven and it is the responsibility of SIG members to maintain and manage the SIG.*

Web Space

Each SIG is provided with its own “folder” on igda.org to host a mini-site. The folder has web-based FTP access for file uploads, etc. The SIG is responsible for initial set-up and maintenance of the web page.

The web page should contain basic information about the SIG (mission, goals, and contact info), along with links to relevant materials, articles, and interviews.

SIGs should keep web pages light and simple (no Flash or heavy graphics). The IGDA server supports PHP scripting.

Blog: The IGDA has a site-wide installation of Moveable Type. A SIG that prefers the ease-of-use of a blog interface can have the IGDA create a blog in the SIG folder. It is recommended that SIGs update/tweak the default blog visual template.

Wiki: The IGDA also has a site-wide installation of Mediawiki. This is a possible option for advanced web users... More details can be provided upon request.

Web Volunteers: If SIGs are unable to recruit a volunteer to handle website responsibilities, the IGDA Web Team is available to help design, build, and maintain SIG websites. Please contact the IGDA’s community manager, Rudy Geronimo (rudy@igda.org), to request a volunteer.

Mailing List

SIGs can request a dedicated mailing list for email based member discussions. The IGDA will setup the list, but the SIG is responsible for ongoing administration and moderation.

A mailing list is a powerful way to build a virtual community and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Online Discussion Forum

To complement the mailing list and web site, each SIG has a dedicated discussion sub-forum in the IGDA’s online forums (igda.org/Forums/). The SIG is responsible for providing a forum moderator.

Email Redirect Alias

To facilitate the group's communication with SIG leaders, each SIG has an email alias (e.g., signature@igda.org). This alias can redirect to any number of SIG leaders and/or coordinators.

News Dissemination

The IGDA can help disseminate SIG news to the larger IGDA membership via the monthly IGDA newsletter and from the IGDA homepage.

The monthly newsletter reaches 70k+ emails worldwide. Upon request, we will include a blurb and link to promote newsworthy action from a SIG (such as the release of a white paper). Similarly, we can post a news link to the SIG on the IGDA homepage.

GDC Presence

The IGDA hosts its own track during the annual Game Developers Conference (www.gdconf.com). The IGDA also has several meeting rooms and booth space. These resources can be leveraged by a SIG to conduct roundtable sessions, or private working meeting.

Each summer/fall, the IGDA will email SIG leaders/coordinators with the details and process for requesting space. The IGDA may not be able to satisfy every request, as space is limited.

Policies & Procedures

All SIGs must abide by basic rules and operating procedures determined by the IGDA. SIGs are afforded a great deal of autonomy, but need to keep these policies and procedures in mind.

Leadership Structure

Naturally, each SIG will support different levels of involvement and contribution from members. While each SIG is ultimately in control of itself, the formalizing a leadership structure is STRONGLY recommended.

A SIG should have a leadership council made up of 3-6 key contributors. The council should have a chair to effectively serve as the overall leader of the SIG. The role of the chair and leadership council is to provide a basic level of governance/control. To a large extent, it is up to the group to truly determine the level of governance required.

Membership Requirements

While we would like all SIG participants to be IGDA members, this is currently NOT a requirement. In general, the IGDA takes a very open and inclusive approach and encourages SIGs to do the same.

Developers will be inspired to join the IGDA based on the meaningfulness of the SIG's work.

Annual Report

Each SIG needs to report on its annual activities each January. This allows the board to keep abreast of SIG activities and will be used to produce the IGDA's Annual Report (which features a section for SIG updates).

There is no set format for the report, but SIGs should briefly mention any milestones, projects completed or underway, as well as any other initiatives.

Financing

The IGDA does not provide any funding to SIGs beyond the indirect cost of providing the above listed resources and support tools.

The board will consider special requests for financial assistance if a SIG project is especially worthwhile (from a funding point of view).

Marketing/PR Policy

SIGs can conduct a variety of marketing activities to promote their existence and work (refer back to the various IGDA resources listed above).

Where appropriate, we encourage SIGs to build relationships with media and journalists specific to their topic area, to garner coverage for the SIG's work. SIGs are NOT allowed to put out official IGDA press releases. SIGs *are* allowed to send updates, memos, or informal announcements to the media interested in their topic area.

SIG leaders are NOT allowed to endorse specific products, platforms, or companies while representing the IGDA. SIG leaders are NOT allowed to give interviews on behalf of the IGDA.

SIGs are strongly encouraged to use all of the built-in announcement functionality via the IGDA web site and newsletter (as noted above). Look to using these targeted marketing ideas to drive developer awareness and involvement in SIG activities.

Contact us if there is ever any confusion over a specific marketing or PR opportunity.

Non-Recruitment Policy

Avoid recruitment whenever possible. SIGs are urged NOT to post job listings on their website or via their other communication mechanisms (e.g., mailing list, online forum, etc).

IGDA SIGs succeed by providing a safe place for developers to share ideas on the given topic of interest. Studios will not support employees' participation if they perceive SIGs as potential job-poaching tools.

Just try not to have the SIG perceived as a virtual meat-market.

Event Support Policy

The IGDA limits endorsement of game development events to the select few with which we are closely involved (in terms of program development, exhibiting, etc.). The IGDA and its SIGs may NOT make reciprocal marketing agreements with unendorsed events.

If an unendorsed event wants to work with your SIG you can offer any of the following:

- Discounted registration for SIG/IGDA members at the event organizer's discretion. Membership status can be checked using our online member validation form: <http://www.igda.org/php-bin/validator.php>
- If the event organizer wants an SIG/IGDA rep to speak at the event, please contact the IGDA to coordinate.

Where possible, SIGs are encouraged to get involved with local IGDA chapters and their monthly meetings.

<http://www.igda.org/chapters/>
<http://www.igda.org/chapters/updates.php>

SIG Activity Examples

Here are some examples of SIG work to give a sense of the breath of activities that can be undertaken. A complete list of SIGs and their efforts is available online:

<http://www.igda.org/SIGs/>

White Paper

The Online Games SIG has produced extensive reports detailing the business and technology of online and web based games. Each year's white paper is downloaded several thousand times and freely provides a wealth of knowledge to the development community.

<http://www.igda.org/online/papers.php>

Mailing List

The Women in Game Development SIG has been hosting a mailing list for several years. With a few hundred subscribers, the "women_dev" list sees lively debate on a myriad of topics related to women in the industry and content for female gamers.

<http://www.igda.org/women/communicate.htm>

Conference Session

At the 2004 Game Developers Conference, the Human Resources SIG hosted a one-day tutorial on HR challenges and opportunities.

http://www.igda.org/hr/IGDA_HR-SIG_GDC04_TutorialNotes.pdf

Best Practices

The Game Accessibility SIG is working on development and design best practices for creating games playable by those with disabilities.

<http://www.igda.org/accessibility/>

Web Resource

The Women in Game Development SIG has a comprehensive resources section at their web site that lists organizations, events, research and other links to relevant references.

<http://www.igda.org/women/resources.htm>

Craft Guide

The Writers SIG wrote an introductory guide to game writing. The guide serves the important role of informing hopeful writers in the game industry and discusses the challenges and opportunities of writing for an interactive medium.

<http://www.igda.org/writing/whitepapers.html>

Standards

The Artificial Intelligence SIG has a sub-committee working on AI interface standards, with the hopes of creating an open API for AI development

<http://www.igda.org/ai/>

Appendix

Contact Info

Please contact us with any questions or concerns. Be sure to keep us posted!

IGDA Head Office
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USA 94102-3002

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Useful Links

For further contact info and IGDA details, please refer to our website:

<http://www.igda.org/contact.php>

<http://www.igda.org/SIGs/>

<http://www.igda.org/Forums/>

<http://www.igda.org/chapters/>