



AIC Communications Guide

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I. SUMMARY

The Guide shares a best practices checklist and communications definitions for written communications from the AIC Board, committees, specialty groups, and networks. AIC leadership writes and distributes many kinds of written communications: board position statements on contemporary issues that intersect with AIC's mission, carefully researched position papers, volunteer leadership dispatches, *AIC News* articles, blog posts, and more. Only the AIC Board issues public-facing statements or stances on behalf of the AIC organization. Some communications, like position statements and papers, should have board approval since they determine broader strategic alignment. Other communications, like updates and event announcements, have more targeted focus and relate to the business of each group. We will use the checklist and definitions as essential tools for ensuring our organization sends out clear, specific messages that reach their intended audiences and uses the most effective communication channels.

II. GOAL

To clarify communications best practices and guidance for AIC volunteer leaders, specifically written communications that represent the official business and purview of board, committees, specialty groups, and networks.

Topics not covered in this guide include verbal communications; communications that represent personal opinions of individual members; communications that represent FAIC Board, programs, or operations; business meetings; and publishing platforms like post-prints, journals, wiki, or similar to disseminate scholarly or technical research.

III. COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

Please review and check off these steps for successful communications.

- Purpose:** Define the key goals of your message with succinct clear phrasing to make it timely, informed, and within scope.
 - a. Is the topic within the basic scope of your mandate per Charge, Rules of Order, or Bylaws?
 - b. Would the messaging be improved by gathering other viewpoints?
 - c. Is the message of a sensitive nature?
 - d. Are there groups whose opinion should be solicited and whose pre-approval would be respectful?
 - e. Have you done due diligence to review your group's past communications on the topic as well as AIC policies, guidelines, or previous statements related to the topic?

- Alignment:** Communications should align with the [AIC mission](#), [AIC Code of Ethics](#), and [AIC Member Community Rules, Etiquette and Privacy Guidelines](#).
 - a. Be sure that communications do not cause harm to members by using language that is in opposition to our values of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging.
 - b. Communications should not impugn the reputation of the organization.

- Partners:** Messages represent your group and have included all relevant leadership partners in creating and reviewing the topic.
 - a. Do all leaders within this group understand and agree upon the message being communicated?
 - b. Have you consulted your board and staff liaison to get feedback on the viability and strategy of your message? They are there to provide you with support, advice, and advocacy.

- Audience:** Define your intended audience.

- Channels:** Consider using a variety of platforms to amplify your message. Determine best channel(s) of communication based on your goal(s) and intended audience(s).

IV. DEFINITIONS

WHO: AIC Leadership

AIC leadership are engaged and passionate AIC members who hold elected, appointed, or volunteer positions. The following groups should utilize these AIC Communications Guides. More information about bylaws and the structure of each group can be found here

<https://www.culturalheritage.org/membership/groups-and-networks>.

- **AIC Board:** The AIC Board are elected members who oversee and guide the organization. Members of the board liaise with all areas of the organization and can assist committees, groups, networks, and other AIC entities together with the AIC staff when discussing and fine-tuning ideas for broad communications and dispatches.

- **Volunteer leadership** is organized into the following structure. For more information see the AIC organizational chart <https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-us/association/leadership>
 - **Committees:** Committees are groups of volunteers appointed by the AIC Board to provide focused, expert guidance on a specific topic. Committees leverage the knowledge of a larger group of people to help the board make the best decisions possible for the AIC membership. Committees may have volunteer sub-committees or working groups. Committees serve at the discretion of the board and are encouraged to reach out to their board and staff liaisons for guidance and support.
 - **Specialty Groups:** These are groups of AIC members organized around specific types of cultural heritage or practitioners. Specialty Groups have membership dues and elected officers. Many Specialty Groups have appointed or volunteer subcommittees to focus guidance on specific topics. Specialty Groups are encouraged to reach out to their board and staff liaisons for guidance and support.
 - **Networks:** These are groups of AIC members organized around thematic interests within cultural heritage. Networks may have membership dues and, if so, elected officers. Some networks have appointed or volunteer officers, sub-committees, working groups, affinity groups, or caucuses that also have focused guidance on specific topics. Networks are encouraged to reach out to their board and staff liaisons for guidance and support.

WHO: Audiences

- Internal audiences are intra-group (other members within the group, committee, or network) or intra-organization (other AIC members). Communications aimed at an internal audience could form the basis for external communications by the board.
- Communications aimed at external audiences should come from or be approved by the AIC Board. Suggestions for topics from volunteer leadership or individuals are welcome; reach out to board and staff liaisons for guidance and support.

WHAT: Types of Communications

The following hierarchy of potential communication formats are the primary pathways for posting, publishing, or disseminating information from your group to the wider membership and beyond. Consider how topics can evolve and gain depth by utilizing different pathways and reaching wider audiences. Not included are email or interpersonal communications for official business in, among, or between groups, the AIC Board, or F/AIC staff liaisons.

- AIC Board Position Statement
 - AIC Board statements are carefully crafted public notices and position announcements that are meant to represent the organization. These may be shared on AIC Community forum(s) and emails for an internal AIC audience, and/or social media posts and press releases for a public audience. Board statements are not undertaken lightly since they are a permanent record of the thoughts and ideals of the AIC organization and must uphold the highest standards of the Code of Ethics.

- Committees, Specialty Groups, Networks, or other AIC entities that wish to suggest a statement topic for the AIC Board should work with and contact their respective board liaison.
- Individual members that wish to suggest a statement topic for the AIC Board should contact a board or staff member.
- All draft statements will be reviewed by the board and staff liaisons.
- AIC Position Paper
 - Written by informed members, possibly via a task force appointed by the board, based on request for a position paper by members or board. Consult the “Position Paper Guidelines”: <https://www.culturalheritage.org/docs/default-source/resources/guidelines/position-paper-guidelines.pdf>
- Dispatch
 - A dispatch from volunteer leadership on the AIC Community platform shares an internal opinion statement on a topic related to their mission.
 - Dispatches should further the goals and objectives of the Committee, Specialty Group, Network, or other AIC entity.
- Lead article
 - Cover articles go into depth on a specific subject and follow the editorial schedule for the *AIC News*.

Tip: Use the platform of a lead article to share your group’s perspective and expertise with a wider AIC audience.
- Article
 - Topic-based article in *AIC News* on specific subjects of interest to members.
- Updates
 - Regular updates or bulletins regarding volunteer leadership business in the AIC News sections for “Association News” under “Committees Updates” or the “Specialty Group & Network Columns”.

Tip: Cross-post to the AIC Member Community to raise awareness among both internal groups and broader membership about programming, collaborations, and activities from your group.
- Email (“e-blast”)
 - An email written by an AIC entity with that specific group’s constituency as the intended audience but distributed directly in real time to members by AIC staff, often called an “e-blast” or “blast”.

- Blog post
 - Write a blog post within your group’s specific Community to highlight voices and ideas.
 - Authors can also choose to make blog posts accessible to audiences outside that community forum (i.e. to all AIC members, anyone with a culturalheritage.org login, or the open web).
Tip: Use the advanced features to add keyword tags for search engine optimization, select audiences, and more.

- Social media posts
 - Coordinated by the AIC Staff, primarily the Outreach Coordinator, individuals and groups or networks can suggest ideas and topics for social media posts on AIC’s Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram accounts.

Tip: Members are encouraged to cross-post, retweet, and support AIC’s official social media channels.

- Announcements
 - Information about an event or topic that is time-dependent and limited in scope.

Tip: For internal audiences, use the AIC Community platform(s). For broader reach, use the Global Conservation Forum for topics relevant to conservation and preservation professionals.

WHERE: Channels for Communications

- *AIC News* is a newsletter published online six times a year to provide members with up-to-date news on national and international conservation issues, new materials and research, organizational matters, specialty group and network activities, conferences, publications, and employment opportunities.
<https://www.culturalheritage.org/publications/aic-news/editorial-policy>
- *Community Forums* reach all AIC members as well as specialty groups, networks, and committees as determined by membership and volunteer leadership roles. Each community has a discussion board, blog, library, and events page. Community settings can be customized to include receipt of communications in real time, daily digest, or weekly digest. <https://community.culturalheritage.org/home>
 - Note that the *Global Conservation Forum* is a moderated community forum for discussion on topics relevant to conservation and preservation professionals with an international audience. Forum participants are not all AIC members.
- *AIC e-mails* (“e-blast”) are distributed directly to members by AIC staff and provide focused attention on a specific topic in real time.
- The *AIC website* hosts individual pages for [Committees](#) and [Groups/Networks](#).
- Social media: AIC’s [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#) accounts

V. EXAMPLE

When using a column or post to ask AIC to do something, it is most effective to bring this idea to your board and staff liaisons for initial discussion. They can tell you if other groups are working on an aligned project that would benefit from collaboration and provide feedback on viability and/or strategy.

Here is an example:

A message posted by a group on the AIC Member community includes a sentence like “We call on AIC to paint the town red.” This post reaches all members and could suggest that the group has approached AIC leadership about this and that the leadership is ignoring the issue, does not want to paint the town red, or that they feel red is bad. None of these may be the case.

It is important to remember that many board statements and position papers arise from the ideas and efforts of members and that a united voice is stronger. If the group is interested in painting the town red, they should ask a staff/board liaison about painting the town and get feedback. The staff/board liaison might let them know that another committee is also interested in red and has been exploring painting the town and would welcome additional participants. The liaison might also share that the Board itself is working on this and would welcome thoughts and ideas from the group.

This gives the group the capacity to help form a plan, and they can post about their efforts to their community and share the information: “We asked AIC to paint the town red, and they are interested, and/or are excited to share support for a new mural featuring many reds.”

This synergy of effort has the capacity for more impactful changes to the organization and prevents duplication of time and energy by volunteer leaders.

This guide was created by the AIC Board, led by Sarah Reidell, Molly Gleeson, and Samantha Springer, with input from staff members Bonnie Naugle and Katelin Lee and with feedback provided by staff and group, network, and committees chairs in October 2022. Updates to this guide will continue to be made to support the work of AIC’s volunteers.