

**Kingdom
of Meridies
Seneschal's
Handbook**

Table of Contents

Introduction from the Kingdom Seneschale	<i>I</i>
Job Descriptions for the Seneschal's Office	1
The Structure of the SCA	2
Duties for all Branch Seneschals	4
Specifics for Seneschals of a Shire, Canton, College or Stronghold	7
Specifics Baronial Seneschals	8
Paperwork	11
Reports	12
Sample Report	14
Files	15
Contracts	17
Waivers	19
Communication	22
Telephone Calls	23
Letters and Other “Snail Mail” Communication	25
Electronic Communication	27
Conflict Arbitration and Resolution	29
Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution	30
Arbitrating a Dispute	33
Public Relations and Recruiting	35
Guidelines for Dealing with the Media	36
Recruiting Newcomers	38
Retaining New Members—A List of “Do’s”	40
Retaining New Members—A List of “Don’ts”	42
Group Activities	44
Group Meetings	45
Events	48
Demos	52
Group Officers	54
Officer Guidelines	55
Job Descriptions of Group Officers	56
Officer Selection and Transition	59
Selecting a Suitable Replacement	60
Roles in Transition	61
Stages of Being an Officer	63
Burnout: A Commentary	65

Job Descriptions for the Seneschal's Office

Purpose: The purpose of this section is to describe the various offices within the SCA, primarily as they relate to seneschals, and outline the duties and responsibilities for the seneschal serving at the local level.

In this section: The following topics are discussed in this section.

Topic	See Page
The Structure of the SCA	2
Duties for all Branch Seneschals	4
Specifics for Seneschals in a Shire, Canton, College or Stronghold	7
Specifics for Baronial Seneschals	8

The Structure of the SCA

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>The structure of the SCA is sometimes difficult to understand completely. This is because the organization operates on several levels. On one level, we're a modern nonprofit corporation. On another level, we're a club, run by the officers and the membership. On still another level, we're a feudal monarchy. Figuring out which level of organization is applicable in a given situation is one of the challenges of getting things done, and not something at which a beginner can expect to be adept.</p>	<p>How this relates to you: As a seneschal you are always working as an officer of a local club, much like any other civic organization. You are the legal representative of your local group to the general public.</p>
<p>Board of Directors</p>	<p>At the top of the heap, the SCA is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors. This Board is self-perpetuating, meaning that it chooses its own members. Anyone in the organization can nominate someone for a seat on the Board of Directors. Candidates can also self-nominate, which is quite common. The Board seeks input from the membership on the qualifications of candidates, but there is no direct election or input. For the Board to act it must act as a whole; an individual Board member has no particular authority. Board decisions are made by a majority vote—the only place in the SCA where decisions are made this way.</p>	<p>How this relates to you: From time to time, the Board will request comments from the membership on a particular topic or course of action. If you have an opinion at all about the subject, write to the Board and tell them what you think. Encourage your local members to do the same; the Board is happy to get feedback from anyone in the organization.</p>
<p>Society Officers</p>	<p>There are also Society-level officers to correspond to the kingdom-level officers. There is a Society Seneschal, a Society Marshal, and so forth. A couple of these are paid, part-time positions, but most are volunteer positions.</p>	<p>How this relates to you: Generally, you will not have much interaction with Society Officers; however, it is important to know who they are should you have to work your way up a particular chain of command.</p>
<p>Society Seneschal</p>	<p>The Society Seneschal has the authority to make policy decisions and to interpret the SCA's governing documents, although his/her rulings are subject to approval by the Board of Directors, and must be reported to the Board at their next meeting. The other officers may make decisions and rulings in their particular areas of authority. Again, these decisions are subject to the Board's approval.</p>	<p>How this relates to you: Most of your interaction with the Society Seneschal will be through the Kingdom Seneschal. You should not contact the Society Seneschal about problems within your group or kingdom unless you have exhausted all courses of action within the Kingdom.</p>

The Structure of the SCA

<p>Kingdom Seneschal</p>	<p>The Kingdom Seneschal is the legal representative for the Kingdom of Meridies in the eyes of the modern world. The Kingdom Seneschal interprets Kingdom Law, and makes policy decisions about the day-to-day workings of the Kingdom. These decisions are subject to approval by the Crown and the Society Seneschal. Other kingdom officers have similar authority within their particular areas of expertise. There are several deputies who serve under the Kingdom Seneschal, one of which will be your reporting deputy.</p>	<p>How this relates to you: The same is true of those charged with running the Kingdom as it is for the Board of Directors. If the Kingdom Seneschal, or your Reporting deputy, asks you for input, please try to give it. Don't worry if you think your idea might not be the preferred one. Sometimes, they're looking for why an idea might not work. The Kingdom Seneschal or your regional reporting deputy is your "go-to" person when you need one.</p>
<p>The Crown</p>	<p>The Crown (the King and Queen) are absolutely in charge of the medieval aspects of the SCA. They have the sole power to give awards and to change Kingdom Law (although Kingdom Law cannot be changed in such a way as to conflict with the Society's governing documents, or real-world law). The Crown also appoints Kingdom Great Officers, in conjunction with the appropriate Society Officer. A great many other things are subject to the Crown's approval. For example, both the Crown and the appropriate Kingdom Officer sign the warrant rosters for local officers, and the Crown must be consulted if a warrant is to be revoked.</p>	<p>How this relates to you: As an officer of your group, you have a duty to submit award recommendations to the Crown. When there are people in your group doing things for which you believe they deserve recognition, you should submit an award recommendation. The Crown can't know all Their subjects and They really want to hear from you.</p>

Branch Seneschal

Introduction A local seneschal has many duties, some general duties like those that come with most offices and some very specific duties that come solely with the seneschal's office. These are outlined below and are certainly not all inclusive. Check with your kingdom seneschal or reporting deputy if you have any question about how to go about completing these duties. The seneschal will also frequently find him/herself the person who handles all of those tasks and responsibilities that don't neatly fit into the job descriptions of any of the other officers or deputies. While this does not necessarily mean that you have to handle them yourself, you will have to make sure that someone does take care of them.

General Duties The local branch seneschal within the SCA is directly responsible for: Acting as the legal representative for the branch. Running or arranging for the running of group activities in a manner that meets the needs of the populace and the SCA. This includes assuring that the branch complies with real-world law, Corpora, and Meridian Kingdom Law, either by reference to the SCA documents or consultation with the Kingdom Seneschal. Submitting the required office reports on a timely basis. Monitoring receipt of copies of the reports that are to be sent by the other local officers to their kingdom superiors in order to be aware of whether the responsibilities of their offices are being fulfilled. Participating in financial decisions as a member of the branch's Financial Committee. Overseeing conflict and dispute resolution when the issue can be resolved at the local level. Fulfilling the duties of any vacant offices, including submitting their reports as required.

Legal Representative You, as the warranted seneschal, are the only person authorized by SCA, Inc. to act as legal representative for the branch, or in other words, to obligate the Society at the local level. This includes the following responsibilities.

Contracts: Only the seneschal can sign site contracts or any other contract at the local level.

SCA Sanction: Only the ranking seneschal at an event can decide whether to pull SCA sanction from an event if things get out of hand. Notification of such an action must be made as soon as possible to the ranking seneschal's superior. (This is covered in Corpora and requires extreme circumstances.)

Non-SCA Paperwork: This includes doing any paperwork required to maintain any standing your branch has outside the SCA (for example, paperwork required to reserve a meeting room or to maintain student group status at the local college). You don't necessarily have to do this yourself, but it's your job to see that it gets done, and on time.

Financial Committee Member You are also responsible for participating in financial decisions as a member of the branch financial committee. The Society requires that all financial decisions involve more than one person. To accomplish this, each group is should have a Financial Committee that consists of the seneschal and the Exchequer at a minimum. Baronies are required to have a Financial Committee. As a member of the Financial Committee, you are responsible for making sure that all expenditures of group funds are in accordance with the law and with SCA guidelines and follow any policies or procedures your group may have for deciding how to spend money. If you have questions about this, you should contact the Kingdom Seneschal or Kingdom Exchequer for more information.

Branch Seneschal

Correspondence and Reporting

You are responsible for submitting office paperwork on a timely basis. This is pretty straightforward. You have monthly reports to submit and deadlines by which they must be turned in to the reporting deputy. The Kingdom Seneschal needs the information from your reports to turn in Kingdom reports to the Crown and the Society Seneschal. If you cannot meet the deadline, let the reporting deputy know as early as possible, and provide a date on which the report will be sent. Then get it in by that date. NOTE: This is a non-negotiable part of the office. Failure to turn in reports is grounds for the revocation of your warrant and installation of a new seneschal.

Conflict Arbitration and Resolution

As seneschal, and therefore the person seen as the leader of the group, you will occasionally find conflicts are being referred to you, or must be addressed by you for resolution. This is probably one of the most difficult parts of the job. There is a section on this topic elsewhere in this handbook, but a few key points to remember are as follows. • If it looks as if it could be more than a minor skirmish, let the Kingdom Seneschal know about it in advance. • Decide whether this is an appropriate conflict for you to address. • Remain as neutral as possible. • Insist the official Grievance Procedure for the SCA be followed (this appears in the Organizational Handbook). • Document the situation at the time it occurs.

Public Relations

The seneschal is the primary spokesperson for the SCA in a local group. You may share this responsibility with a responsible, informed member (a chatelaine often takes on this job).

Group Activities

You are responsible for making sure that group activities are run to try to serve the needs of the populace and the SCA. As seneschal, you are also ultimately responsible for making sure that all group SCA activities are in compliance with applicable laws, the requirements of Corpora, and Meridies Kingdom laws and policies. If you are not familiar with the SCA documents when you take office, you should read them as soon as possible and discuss any questions that you might have with the Kingdom Seneschal or the reporting deputy. As the seneschal, you are usually the one who runs business and/or populace meetings, although these meetings may be run by someone whom you delegate or authorize to do so. This may differ in Baronies, however, when the local custom may be to have the Baronage preside over meetings.

Events

This responsibility includes scheduling and overseeing events. When your branch decides to hold an event, you must:

- Contact the Kingdom Calendar Deputy to confirm the event. The autocrat can make the initial call, but only you can confirm the date to get it officially put on the calendar, and
- Look over event flyers before they are sent to the Kingdom Chronicler for publication in *Popular Chivalry*.

The event steward/autocrat is responsible for a particular event. Autocrats of local events are not typically warranted; however, they must be paid members of the SCA because they are considered temporary officers. (A deputy to the

Branch Seneschal

autocrat need not be a member, but the head autocrat must be.) There's more information in the section on events.

Kingdom Level Events are addressed elsewhere in the handbook.

Your Deputies

As seneschal you will probably have some deputies to assist you as seneschal. It is your responsibility to make sure they can do, and are doing, their jobs without getting in their way or trying to do their jobs for them. You might have a deputy to maintain the group's telephone list or manage the group's e-list. According to Meridian Kingdom Law you should have a replacement deputy in place within a year of taking office.

Group Officers

It is your responsibility to receive copies of the other officers' reports to make sure they are being filed on time and to monitor their offices to make sure their areas of responsibility are being handled. If you do not get copies of the report, talk with the officer to find out if there's a reason you didn't receive a copy. You should make note in your report of any problems in this area. If this is an ongoing problem it may be necessary to contact the officer's Kingdom Superior. Always let the Kingdom Seneschal know before you do so.

It is also your responsibility to make sure that the requirements of each office are being met. Should there be a problem, or the office is vacant, it could mean you will have to file the reports for that office while the situation is being resolved.

There is more information about the duties of local officers elsewhere in this handbook.

Seneschal of a Shire, Canton, College or Stronghold

Introduction In these groups, the seneschal is the administrative director. As such, the seneschal generally makes most of the administrative decisions of the group and signs all contracts.

Membership: Shires and Cantons Shires and cantons are required to have a minimum of five sustaining members of the SCA in order to maintain the group. It is wise for the seneschal of groups with low membership to ensure that membership levels are maintained. If the group drops below five sustaining members for more than a few months, the Kingdom Seneschal may recommend that the Board of Directors remove the group's official status.

Membership: Colleges and Strongholds Colleges are located at or near actual institutions of higher learning and Strongholds are usually located at or near military bases. Both tend to have transient populations; therefore, a group with college or stronghold status may temporarily drop below the required five sustaining members. In colleges, the seneschal usually acts as the liaison with the real-world college or university in addition to the administrative duties within the group itself.

Cantons Cantons are semi-independent subsidiary branches of a Barony. Cantons must meet all the normal requirements for a shire, except if there are fighters in the canton and nobody is available to be a knight marshal, the fighters may be carried on the Baronial fighter roster instead of the canton's.

Cantons and Reports Canton officers must provide their Baronial counterpart with a copy of their reports. This is covered in Corpora's definition of a canton as a group reporting through a Barony. In Meridies, we ask that cantons submit reports directly to their kingdom superior (or a deputy, according to how the kingdom officer administers that office). But, if you are a canton seneschal, you must also give a copy of your report to the Baronial seneschal. You should also be providing a copy of the report to the Baronage unless they have specifically told you not to.

Canton and Baronial Activities It is not unusual for the Barony to require canton seneschals to attend the Baronial officers' meetings. Also, if your canton wants to schedule an event, you must clear it with the Baronial seneschal or the Baronage first. If you are a canton seneschal, you should be keeping both the Baronial seneschal and your Baronage informed about activities in the canton.

Seneschal of a Barony

Introduction The seneschal of a Barony has a somewhat different role than the seneschal of any other type of group. Being a Baronial seneschal is in many ways like being the kingdom seneschal, only on a smaller scale. Rather than being the sole leader and single most visible representative of the group, as is generally the case in shires, the Baronial seneschal shares that role with a Baron and/or Baroness (Baronage), and often works more “behind the scenes” than does the seneschal of a smaller group.

Shared Role of Baronage and Seneschal The kingdom is ruled over by a king and queen, and the kingdom seneschal’s job is to see to the smooth administration of the kingdom and its branches. In much the same way, your Baronage is the Crown’s representative in the Barony. Your job is to ensure that the Barony runs smoothly, and that any cantons also are running smoothly. Just as the Kingdom Seneschal advises the Crown on matters pertaining to the legal end of the SCA, it is part of your job to advise your Baron and/or Baroness on such matters.

Exactly how the responsibilities are divided between the seneschal and the Baronage varies from group to group, but it is vitally important that you develop a good working relationship with your Baron and Baroness. Meet with them at the commencement of your term of office to discuss who will do what and also to discuss personal goals. There are many things that are negotiable between you and the Baronage, or that may be done by tradition one way in one Barony and another way in another Barony.

Baronage as Administrator of the Crown's Lands The Baron and Baroness are responsible to the Crown for the administration of the lands within the Barony. Typically they are heavily involved in planning the overall goals and direction of the group. They take on much of the morale officer and royal counselor roles that are left to the seneschal in smaller branches. And the Baron and Baroness have one important privilege: they may hold Baronial courts and create Baronial awards with which to recognize the achievements of their populace. Only the Baron and Baroness may hold courts and, with permission of the Crown, bestow armigerous awards.

Baronage "Approval" Authority The Baronage has the right to be consulted on any matters they deem important to the growth and well being of the Barony and may exercise direct appeals to the Crown if they disagree with an action. This includes the appointment of Baronial officers and how money is spent within and on behalf of the Barony. They may not directly appoint or remove Baronial officers nor make unilateral decisions about how the Barony's money is spent (nobody should be doing this!) but it would behoove a Baronial seneschal to be mindful of their wishes and work to avoid any administrative conflicts.

Meetings Whether Barony meetings are run by the Baronage, the seneschal, or both jointly is usually a matter of custom. If the Baron and Baroness prefer to run the meetings they may do so; however, they may prefer to leave that up to you.

Seneschal of a Barony

Events Only group seneschals can reserve dates on the Kingdom Calendar. Event bids should have the approval of both the Baron and Baroness (because they are the group's rulers), and the Baronial seneschal (because you are ultimately responsible for overseeing the autocrat, signing contracts, and making sure the event meets SCA guidelines). Be sure you are well versed with the section on events in this handbook as it should answer most any question that might come up.

Financial Committee You will also serve, per Society financial policy, as a member of the Barony's financial committee, and you should be a signatory on the checking account. The Exchequer is also required to serve on the committee. The Baronage is not required to do so, but may if they wish, and they probably will. Other officers or members of the group may serve on the financial committee, depending on the wishes of the Barony. All members of the financial committee will participate in making decisions about budgeting and expenditures. **NOTE:** Financial decisions should never be effectively in the hands of any one person or couple, be that the Baronage, the Exchequer, or you!

Contracts You are still the legal representative of the SCA in the Barony's area, and you must sign any contracts the group enters into, i.e., for meeting or event sites. It is Society policy that only a warranted seneschal may sign a contract of any sort. This is Society policy and isn't negotiable—only warranted seneschals sign contracts.

Problems in the Group Both you and the Baronage should work together to solve problems the group may have. This includes, but is not limited to, officer problems, issues concerning minors, site rules and restrictions, and interpersonal conflicts. Frequently in a large group, people with a complaint will have a "favorite" person to go to—a certain officer or the Baron or Baroness—but it is important that you communicate with each other about problems and potential problems. Don't let someone in the group "play you off" against each other. It's best to present a united front. This is easiest to do if you keep your Baron and Baroness informed about anything you think might develop into a problem. If you keep them informed, they will be likely to return the favor and not let you be surprised, either.

Seneschal of a Barony

Problems with the Baronage

If you are having problems, try to approach them directly. Schedule a meeting with the Baronage, and talk about what's bothering you. Many, many problems are the result of unclear communication or uncertainty about the other person's expectations. If you really feel you're hitting a brick wall, contact the reporting deputy or the Kingdom Seneschal. Perhaps one of them can mediate for you. Do keep in mind, that your Baronage will usually have the deciding vote, since they represent the Crown within the Barony. A good way to look at it is the Baronage is the voice of custom and tradition while the Seneschal is the voice of the law. The Baronage may cast a vote where custom and tradition are considered but never in trump of statute or administrative guidelines.

Cantons

You will be involved in overseeing any cantons the Barony has, in a general way. The canton seneschal is required to give you a copy of his/her reports to Kingdom, and the canton must contact you to get approval before scheduling an event on the kingdom calendar. Some Baronies require that the canton seneschals attend Baronial officer meetings, and this is probably a good idea. Keep informed about what's going on in each canton, and let the canton seneschal know that you're available to provide assistance as needed. It's not a bad idea to attend an occasional canton meeting, either. But unless you detect signs of real trouble that the canton seneschal seems unable to handle, let them do things for themselves.

Your Deputies

You will appoint and oversee such deputies as you deem necessary to assist you in performing the duties of your office. Being the seneschal of a large group is quite demanding, and besides the benefit of having help with the duties of your office, you'll make members of your group feel more involved by letting them help out. Although, your deputies will have their own areas of responsibilities, if they fail to perform those duties it will ultimately be your responsibility. Make your deputies accountable by staying in touch and working closely with them. Also remember your deputies may have to work directly with the Baronage and don't appoint anyone to whom they might object as a deputy or future officer

Cooperation with the Baronage

This cannot be stressed enough—it is imperative that you and the Baronage cooperate with each other. Follow their lead in establishing your relative roles, but remember that you do have a lot to offer to lessen the weight of their coronets. There are many areas of overlapping responsibilities...and a well-established Barony will probably have developed customary ways of dealing with most of these. If you take care to communicate, inform, and learn their wishes, you will probably find that you can work very well with your Baron and Baroness.

Paperwork

Purpose: This section contains procedures and guidelines on completing the paperwork associated with the seneschal’s office, including reports, files, contracts, and waivers.

Introduction: The seneschal’s job has many facets. While the job of seneschal requires many so called “soft skills”—communication, compassion, etc.—the “hard” skills such as reporting and filling out forms are a bit more straightforward. Pretty much anyone can learn to complete a quarterly report and to keep a file box.

In this section: The following topics are covered in this section

Topic	See Page
Reports	12
Sample Report	14
Files	15
Contracts	17
Waivers	19

Reports

Monthly Reports

Reports from local seneschals are due to the Kingdom Seneschal's Reporting Deputy on a monthly basis. They are due by 10th of each month for the previous month. For example, the report for March would be due to the Reporting Deputy no later than April 10th. The form can be downloaded from the Kingdom website and stored on your computer for electronic completion. The reporting deputy will accept your reports via email.

Report Forms

A blank report form is included in this Handbook. You may also use an on-line version of the form or create your own. If you create your own, please follow the basic format given on the standard form. All the information on the report form is needed for the Kingdom Seneschal to understand what is going on in your group. Please complete everything on the report form. If something does not apply to your group, put "none" or "n/a." Don't just leave it blank.

Tracking Group Membership

You can track memberships in several ways. One way is to ask, about once a month, who has a sustaining membership, count heads, and do the same for family memberships. Then take an average. Another way is to send a sign-up sheet around the room at a well-attended meeting, asking people to sign under "Sustaining," "Associate/Family," or "Non-member". You can request a copy of your group's membership list for your zip codes from the Kingdom Seneschal or the Corporate Office (there is a charge.). Address listings are not available except under special circumstances and only the Kingdom Seneschal can request them.

Doomsday Reports

The Doomsday report is a summary of the previous year. Hit the high points and the low points your group experienced. You might also want to include a brief note on future plans or what direction you see the group heading. This is your chance to express all those joys and frustrations you may have felt during the past year as seneschal of your group. This is a subjective document. It is a lot less of facts and figures than a way to assess the personality and talent of your group. Ultimately, try to look at this as one report that is FUN to write and be creative.

Sending Reports

Send your regular monthly reports to the reporting deputy; their receiving address is provided in the Regnum of *Popular Chivalry*. It is also acceptable to send your reports via email. If you are the Seneschal of a Canton, you will also need to send a copy of your reports to the Baronial Seneschal.

Doomsday reports should be sent both to the Kingdom Seneschal and the reporting deputy.

Reports

Late Reports

It is imperative to understand just how important it is to send your reports in on time! If your report is late, it has a domino effect. The reporting deputy may have their report to the Kingdom Seneschal delayed and the Kingdom Seneschal will have a difficult time sending an accurate report to the Society Seneschal. All in all, it can get quite messy! Sometimes there are unavoidable delays. Personal and work life have a way of “knowing” when you have a report to do and often seem to center crises around that time. Please, let someone know if you will be sending in your report late. Contact the reporting deputy or the Kingdom Seneschal. Chances are you will find a very sympathetic listener. They just want to be sure you haven’t forgotten.

Failure to Submit Reports

Failure to submit reports in a timely manner will jeopardize your warrant as seneschal and may cause suspension of your group. The Kingdom Seneschal has the right to suspend your warrant as a group seneschal if reports are very late or have been missed for two consecutive reporting periods. If your group is suspended, you cannot hold events, meetings, practices, etc until the suspension is lifted. Activities may only be undertaken that are necessary to remove the group suspension.

Reports From Other Officers

You should receive copies of reports from the other officers in your group as they are due to their Kingdom superiors. As seneschal, it's a good idea to know the reporting schedules of the other offices; not only for this purpose, but in case you should have to submit a report for a temporarily vacant office. If someone fails to provide you with a copy of their report, remind the officer but go ahead and send in your report even if you don't have reports from all the other officers.

Sample Monthly Report

Seneschal Monthly Report

Print or Type all information. Please do not use calligraphy. This form may be reproduced on computer.

Reporting for Period Ending July 2007

Branch: Shire of Camelot

Seneschal: Merlin the Magician

MKA: Joe Smith

Address: 123 Sunshine Lane, Anytown, AL 35123

Phone: 256-555-1234

Email: merlin@yahoo.com

Deputy: Kid Gallahad

MKA: John Jones

Address: 987 Meadow Drive, Othertown, AL 35987

Phone: 256-555-9876

Email: gallahad@msn.com

Branch Activities

Name/Type	Date	# Attending
Regular Shire Meeting	7/5/2007	15
Fighter Practice	7/8/2007	6
Fighter Practice	7/15/2007	9
Regular Shire Meeting	7/19/2007	22
Fighter Practice	7/22/2007	4
Event	7/27-7/29/2007	124

Future Branch Activities: The shire will be participating in a demo held at the local college in September. Details are still being worked out. We also hope to bid on one of the Spring 2008 kingdom level events.

Successes and/or Concerns of the Branch: Our event last weekend was a huge success and we will be conducting the "post-mortem" at our next meeting. We had several members recognized by the Crown and I am delighted to report we raised \$269 in the Kingdom Fundraiser.

Files

Introduction Maintaining files may not be your idea of fun, but some things just have to be done! When you start your tenure as seneschal you may or may not receive the group's files in working condition. This section contains guidelines on how to organize and maintain your files.

File Contents How you organize your files is up to you, but make sure if something happens to you someone else will be able to figure out your system! Your files should contain reference materials and content files.

Reference Materials All seneschals should have copies of the following reference materials in their most recent printing.

- Organizational Handbook of the Society for Creative Anachronism (includes Corpora)
- Kingdom Law
- Seneschal's Handbook
- Other Officers Handbooks
- Local Branch Financial Policy
- Local group policies)

Content File Files should be created for the following items. Always save electronic files to external disc in case of computer disasters.

- meeting notes
- correspondence with officers including their quarterly reports
- correspondence TO people outside the group
- correspondence FROM people outside the group
- seneschal's reports
- local phone and address list
- event reports and site contracts
- new member/demo/pr information
- group inventory (maintained by the exchequer or reeve)

Optional Files If you're really into filing you may want to have some of the following: • Projects—both in progress and completed • Items of interest (newspaper articles, book lists, etc) • Back issues of local and kingdom newsletters • Local order of precedence

File Retention As a general rule, event and officers reports should be kept a minimum of seven years. If space permits or you have a group historian, keep pretty much everything. If the seneschal's files came to you disorganized or incomplete don't be overwhelmed with the thought of getting them in order. It's an excellent opportunity for you to better familiarize yourself with the history of the group and can be an excellent group project.

Files

A Final Word

In a nutshell, complete your reports on time, keep files organized, archive as necessary, don't forget an external disc backup and you can't go too wrong!

Contracts

Written Contracts If your group is anticipating being involved in any activities for which you have a written contract (for example, the local Chamber of Commerce is holding a renaissance festival and offers to pay your group a set amount of money if you will provide X number of fighting demonstrations), you need to contact the Kingdom Seneschal at once.

Authorization to Sign The Kingdom Seneschal of Meridies is the only person authorized to sign any contract which commits the SCA or the Kingdom to perform in any way. This includes contracts for SCA participation in paid demos, Renaissance festivals, or other activities where the SCA is paid a fee for participating. The local seneschal is the only officer authorized to commit the local group to any kind of contractual obligation. These contracts are most often for site rental for meetings or events, and other event-related contracts such as equipment rental.

Named Parties It is important that the contract clearly state that it is between the other organization and your local branch. You cannot sign a contract that simply commits the “Society for Creative Anachronism” to do anything. You do not have that authority. The Kingdom Seneschal may delegate the authority to sign such a contract to you, as the local branch seneschal. This is not a blanket authority, but only exists for a single contract. You must contact the Kingdom Seneschal well in advance of the time the signature will be needed.

Delegation of Authority The local seneschal is the only person with the authority to sign contracts and is therefore responsible for all contracts signed.

Legal Consequences **Contracts are legal documents.** The consequences to both individuals and the SCA if the terms of the contract are not met are real. If you sign a contract saying that your group will pay a certain amount per event attendee to the site owner, abide by certain rules, and vacate the site by a certain time, you are obligated to do that. If you sign a contract saying that you will provide certain services in exchange for certain considerations, then you are obligated to provide them. Take this responsibility seriously, and make sure your autocrats do, as well.

Waivers

Introduction

Waivers are a fact of SCA life. As seneschal, you are ultimately responsible for seeing that your group follows SCA waiver policies, and for educating group members on what these policies are. The policies have changed many times over the years, so it is no wonder people may get confused.

Text

The standard text for an adult waiver is the same as that which appears on the SCA membership forms. No alteration of this text is allowed, because it invalidates the waiver. People completing waivers are not permitted to change or cross out anything. There is also a standard SCA waiver for minors, and it likewise cannot be altered.

Membership and Waivers (Blue Cards)

When a person buys an SCA membership, he or she has the opportunity to complete the waiver on the membership form. If this is done, the Registry will send the member a blue membership card. The blue card signifies that the person has completed a waiver and the waiver is on file with the Registry's office in California. The waiver on the membership form must be completed absolutely correctly, and dated, or a blue card will not be issued. If someone doesn't fill out the waiver, or doesn't fill it out completely, that person receives a white membership card. He or she still is a national member, but doesn't have a waiver on file and should be treated as a non-member for purposes of signing paperwork at an event or fighter practice. Most people want a blue card, and most of those who receive white cards did not intend for that to happen. It is possible to get a replacement card for free, by completing a new membership form, including the waiver, and checking the "replacement card" box on the form.

Events and Waivers

If your group holds an event, you need to have certain pieces of paperwork available at the gate, including: • Consent to Participate and Release of Liability ("Roster Waiver") • Event Roster • Minor's Consent to Participate and Hold Harmless Agreement • Medical Authorization for Minors

Roster Waiver

The "Consent to Participate and Release of Liability" is a roster containing the full waiver text at the top. This is for adult non-members (or people with a white card) to sign. This form and other forms used at troll are available on the kingdom's website. Please make sure that the roster waiver is clearly labeled as a waiver! When we use a clipboard, as is commonly the case, it is sometimes hard to see the title. It's important that people signing the roster waiver know (either because it is clearly labeled as such, or because the workers at the gate tell them so) that they are signing a waiver.

Waivers

Site Roster

The “site roster” does not contain waiver text and is a simple sign-in sheet. Everybody’s name should appear on this form! SCA members who have blue cards (whether adults or children) should sign in on this form. All attendees need to be listed, even small children.

Forms for Minors

The “Minor’s Consent to Participate and Hold Harmless Agreement” and “Medical Authorization for Minors” are to be completed by the parent of a minor (under 18) who does not have a blue card. The minor’s consent may not be done roster style; it must be completed as an individual form, although it may be on the same paper as the medical authorization form. Again, these are available on the kingdom's website.

Local Events and Waivers

If you are holding a local event which will have SCA fighting, you still must enforce the above procedures. It doesn’t matter whether you are charging a site fee or not, or whether the event is held on public property or in someone’s backyard. If it is sponsored by the group, publicized locally as a group function, and has fighting, waivers must be collected.

Fighter Practice and Waivers

According to Meridies marshallate procedures, the knight marshal is responsible for seeing that nobody participates in a fighter practice without having a waiver on file. Members issued a blue membership card do not have to sign a waiver; however, you should discuss this with your knight marshal and make sure that he/she is aware of, and conforming to, this requirement. If you detect a problem here, please contact either the Kingdom Seneschal or the Earl Marshal.

Exceptions to Waiver Policy

The following types of events are exempted from needing waivers: • Business meetings, guild or interest group meetings where no fighting occurs • Dance practices • Demos (fighters and marshals at demos must have waivers on file, however.) • Archery practice. Because archery is not considered a combat-related activity, the SCA does not require waivers to shoot archery. However, the Kingdom of Meridies requires those shooting archery (except at demos) to have waivers on file with the archer marshal.

Waivers

Minors and Waivers

A parent can complete a waiver for a minor child as part of the membership application, and receive a blue card for the child. In that case, the child does not need a waiver for an event. However, if the child attends an event without a parent or legal guardian present, the parent must complete a “Medical Authorization for Minors” form, designating someone who is with the child to authorize medical treatment if necessary. (It is recommended, but not required, that a parent complete one of these forms for a child even if the parent is with the child.) A child who does not have a blue card must present a minor’s waiver at each event. This form must be signed by the parent. Obviously, if a child is going to attend an event without a parent, some advance planning must be done. Make sure your members are aware of this, and provide forms as needed.

Waivers and Other Kingdoms

Please be aware, especially if you live near a border with another kingdom, that the above policies are specific to Meridies. They are virtually identical to the SCA kingdoms national requirements. However, any kingdom has the right to be stricter in its waiver requirements than the SCA minimums, and many exercise that right. If you travel to another kingdom, it is possible that:

- you may be required to complete a waiver regardless of your membership status
- you may not be allowed to fight if you don’t have a blue membership card, and
- a minor may not be allowed to attend the event without a parent or legal guardian.

These are just examples of requirements in some kingdoms that are more stringent than Meridies’ requirements. If you or members of your group plan to travel to an out-of-kingdom event, you may save yourselves some headaches if you contact the seneschal of the sponsoring group, or the event autocrat, ahead of time and make sure you will be able to meet their waiver requirements.

Storage of Waivers

After an event, waivers are supposed to be sent to the Member Services Office (the waivers Registry) for storage. It is not necessary to keep copies of them. However, they should be labeled with the name, date, and location of the event before being sent to Milpitas.

Communication

Purpose This section contains guidelines for using various types of communication.

Introduction Communication is 90% of the seneschal's job. A lot of this will be face-to-face communication, but it isn't always possible or even desirable, to talk to someone in person. You will use the phone a great deal in your office, along with Email and Internet user groups.

In this section: This section contains the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Telephone Calls	23
Letters and Other "Snail Mail" Communication	25
Electronic Communication	27

Phone Calls

Introduction	Telephone calls are not “official” communications. If something major is being decided via phone, you need to follow it up with a letter or e-mail to confirm what was discussed. However, telephone calls are a necessary and frequent part of the job. Here are some guidelines for using the telephone for SCA business.
Call before 9:00 pm	Call at a reasonable hour. A good general guideline is never to call somebody after 9:00 p.m., or before 10 a.m., unless you know for a fact they are willing to take calls at that time. Be mindful of the time zones within Meridies and check the Regnum in <i>Popular Chivalry</i> for any other time restrictions for phone calls the person you're calling might have.
Use Modern Names	Unless you are positive that you are calling a strictly SCA household, always ask for people by their modern names, not their SCA names. And identify yourself by your modern name, too, if leaving a message with a non-SCA person. When calling non-SCA entities such as demo clients or prospective sites, always use modern names.
Be Pleasant and Business-like	Once you have your party on the phone, be pleasant, but get down to business quickly. Ask your question; give your information, or whatever it is you called to do. After the business part of the call is over, you can always chat if the other person is willing. You don't need to be brusque or abrupt, but get the business accomplished quickly, and if you are inclined to chat, be sensitive to whether the other person is also so inclined.
Ask About Call Convenience	If you expect the call might take longer than two or three minutes—for example, if you've got a problem you need to discuss—ask the person if this is a good time to talk. If they say no, ask when would be a better time for you to call.
Leave Clear Messages	Leave clear, complete messages on answering machines. And if you don't have an answering machine yourself, you should strongly consider getting one. They aren't expensive and will make you infinitely easier to reach.
Take notes	Take notes if you're calling for information. You don't want to hang up and find yourself half an hour later trying to remember what you were told.

Phone Calls

Receiving Calls

Receiving calls is a fact of life for a group seneschal. Be prepared to get a certain number of phone calls from people in your group wanting to vent about something. In this sort of call, your role is mainly to listen and, if you can, be sympathetic. Frequently, people don't really expect the local seneschal to do anything about their complaint or beef, but they do want someone to listen to their side of things. However, you are not on call constantly. Feel free to enforce your own reasonable limits on phone call lengths and times. Let your group members know what hours and days are okay to call you.

Written Communication

Introduction

In your capacity as seneschal, you'll be writing letters occasionally, and sending monthly reports. Using e-mail has become the accepted mode of communication, but undoubtedly there will still be times when you need to find an envelope and a stamp and send a hard copy of something. When using e-mail, you need to be conscious of whether or not you need to generate a hard copy for your files.

Writing Style: Business Letters

Any formal correspondence with non-SCA people or entities should follow standard business letter format. This means your address and the date appear at the top, followed by your correspondent's address, a greeting along the lines of "Dear Mr. Smith:" the body of your letter, and a closing such as "Sincerely." Always use modern names in letters to non-SCA members, site owners, the media, etc.

If the correspondence is done by email, it is not necessary to include the date and your correspondent's address. You may wish to include all of your contact information in your signature.

Writing Style: SCA Letters

If your correspondent is in the SCA, the standard style can change a bit. "Writing forsoothly" is fun for many people, and adds a bit of pleasure to the business of writing, but you should not let fancy phrases get in the way of your communication. Usually, it's best to use an SCA-style greeting, stay fairly concise and plain in the body of your letter, and close with a more "period-sounding" closing.

- Greeting—SCA correspondence frequently uses a fairly flowery beginning, such as "Unto Their Royal Majesties of Meridies come greetings from..." or such.
 - Closing—Standard closings include things such as, "In service to Crown and Kingdom," "B/y my hand this XXVth day of November, A.S. XXXIII," or "Written in my keep in the Shire of Ne'erdowell."
-

Include Modern Date

Always have the modern date somewhere in your letter. "A.S." dates are fun, but troublesome to translate. If you use an A.S. date, put the modern year after it in parentheses, or use the phrase, "being 2XXX in the common reckoning."

Include Modern Name

Always include your modern name and contact information somewhere in the letter so your correspondent can answer you.

Addressing Envelopes

Envelopes are no place to be forsooth. The purpose of an envelope is to ensure your letter gets where it's going. Don't use SCA names or titles when addressing envelopes! If you can't resist using a name or title, or want to call the recipient's attention to the fact that this is SCA business, add "Attn: TRM" or "Attn: Kingdom Seneschal" or something like that in an out-of-the-way place, such as the lower left-hand corner or the back of the envelope.

Written Communication

SCA Committees

SCA committees and groups now conduct much of their business via e-mail or e-group. If you are not a member of your branch's e-group, now is a good time to join. Branch seneschals are strongly encouraged to join the Meridian Seneschals e-group on Yahoo. This e-group is used to distribute very important information such as request for KLE bids, policy decisions, as well as provide a place for discussion.

Writing in Anger

Never send a letter written in anger. If emotions are running high, and you write a letter, put it aside for at least 24 hours before mailing it. Then reread it and make sure it says what you want it to say, in the tone you want it to take. The written word is much harder to take back than the spoken word! It's also a good idea to have someone you trust read your letter for accuracy and tone.

Problem Resolution

Problems should always be documented as well as possible. Any e-mail exchanges that deal with problem resolution should be printed out and kept, at least for awhile. One frequent problem that arises in conflict resolution attempts is that memories often differ on who said what in a phone conversation or face-to-face meeting. E-mail is not always a good medium for conflict resolution, due to its impersonal nature, but if e-mail is exchanged, at least a written record is readily available.

Conflict Arbitration and Resolution

Purpose This section contains guidelines and procedures for that should prove helpful in dealing with and resolving conflicts.

The Seneschal's Role In general, the seneschal ends up being a jack of all trades: administrator, director, counselor, and cheerleader. The seneschal often acts as a mediator when conflicts arise within the group. Aside from the paperwork aspect of the job, the most important role is probably the role of cheerleader. The seneschal needs to inspire the populace of the group to grow and change. As seneschal, you will expect much and much will be expected of you. Learn from both your successes and your failures what works best for you and your group.

In this section The following topics are covered in this section:

Topic	See Page
Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution	30
Arbitrating a Dispute	33

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution

Introduction

The SCA is an organization filled with intelligent, creative people, many of whom are deeply involved in their hobby and care passionately about it. For a number of them, it is also their major social milieu. Of course what happens in the organization matters to those who are deeply involved in it, and the very sense of community that the SCA tends to engender also causes people to wrap themselves up in the doings of their shire, Barony, or kingdom to an extent that can make it difficult for them to be objective or rational when things don't happen as they'd like.

There is no way to write an instructional manual that will give specific advice on how to resolve all the problems a branch can encounter. The purpose of this section is to give some general guidelines which, if followed, should prove helpful in dealing with conflict and difficulties.

Role of the Local Seneschal

Local seneschals are frequently called upon to act as arbiters in interpersonal conflicts, or to resolve problems that arise when members of the group have different ideas about how things should work. The source of the conflict or disagreement may well be outside your jurisdiction, but any behaviors which affect the group dynamics are within your jurisdiction. While you should not actively seek out this role, it will almost certainly find you from time to time.

Goal is to Fix the Problem

And it's worth remembering that the goal is always to fix the problem. As seneschal, your aim is to keep your group running smoothly, with the people in the group more or less enjoying their pursuits in the Current Middle Ages. While you won't always keep everyone happy (and some complaints, quite honestly, have little or no merit), if you can manage to keep things on a fairly even keel and keep the group occupied with productive activities, your tenure will be a rousing success.

Types of Conflict

Types of conflict include: Interpersonal relationship problems, disagreements about group activities—events, expenditures, etc. and conflicts originating outside the SCA. It's important to know what type of conflict you're dealing with since that can be a factor in determining your course of action.

When to Step In

You should step in when the conflict is affecting the group's ability to function, or the ability of others to enjoy the SCA. Allowing a problem to continue unchecked and/or unresolved can cause irreparable harm to personal relationships; which can in turn, have adverse effect on a group's dynamics. It's better to step in and work towards a resolution; or at the very least, an understanding than to risk permanent damage to the morale of your group.

What to Address

You should first address the effect the conflict is having on the group. If the conflict is of SCA origin, then perhaps you should address the

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution

source.

How to Address

Use the following guidelines to address conflict:

- Remain neutral. If you can't remain neutral, find someone who can (i.e., someone else in the group, the Kingdom seneschal or reporting deputy, or someone suggested by one of these people).
 - Communication/discussion with disputing parties—preferably with everyone in the same room.
 - Get it in writing if you can. You'd be surprised how "huge matters" can suddenly become "not such a big deal" when people are told they need to put it in writing.
 - If it is SCA based, include the cause.
 - If not SCA based, focus on the effect on the group.
 - Try to reach agreement, which will be compromise—nobody will get everything they want.
-

Communicate and Share Information

Many group problems can be resolved or headed off by clear communication. When you are leading the group in a particular course of action, make sure you are clear about what you are doing and why. Providing information—in a helpful rather than patronizing fashion—can stop many problems before they are well underway, and people are more willing to put up with a course of action they might not totally endorse if the reasons for the action are explained to them. Don't make the mistake of trying to control information to increase your own standing or power. That trick rarely works for long, and frequently backfires.

Group and Personal Business

You need to draw a clear distinction between what is group business and what is personal business. You don't need to be spreading gossip about Lady Soandso's pending divorce and you must stay neutral in disputes between other members of your group. Be very careful to distinguish between your personal agenda (everyone has one) and what is best for the group.

Discussion and Ground Rules

In meetings, allow plenty of time for discussion of topics, but establish some ground rules for discussion and stick with them. "No name-calling" should go without saying, but you'd be surprised, so say it anyway. Other ground rules should reflect the basic SCA requirement that those participating in Society functions behave like ladies and gentlemen. If people are getting too far off the "official" topic, you should drag them back with a gentle reminder.

Listen

Be an active listener when people come to you. Give them your undivided attention if at all possible, ask questions occasionally to clarify, and be sure you understand their position. If someone is seeking advice, you might ask them what they think their options are. If you can get them to talk through their options, then they own the solution they come up with. And many times, people merely want to vent. They aren't necessarily expecting you to solve their problem. They may just want to talk to someone.

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution

When You Don't Have the Answer

Never be afraid to say that you don't have an answer right then. "I'm not sure what to do about that. I'll have to think it over and get back to you" is far better than offering hasty, ill-considered advice. A side bonus is that, when you check back in with them, you may discover the problem has resolved itself in the meantime. The key is to do what you say and get back to them. Don't compound the problem by being ineffective.

Addressing Disagreement

Things to remember if there is disagreement on what the group should do:

- You will not always get unanimity from the group.
 - It is not your responsibility to keep everybody happy; in fact, most of the time it is impossible for everybody to have their own way.
 - You cannot make everybody agree, but you can do your best to make sure that the disagreement does not have a serious effect on the dynamics of the group.
 - Depending on the situation and the people involved, it may not be possible to resolve the situation at the local level.
-

When to Involve the Kingdom Seneschal

If the dispute is something that you think might come to the attention of the Kingdom Seneschal, or other people outside the group, notify the Kingdom Seneschal about the problem. Surprises of this sort are not good! If the Kingdom Seneschal does hear about a problem in your group, you can bet you'll be contacted. It's usually better if you contact the Kingdom Seneschal first (or the reporting deputy, if you prefer). This doesn't mean that they will step in automatically, or that you've failed. It merely means that you were sensible enough to recognize that a potential storm was brewing and gave your boss a "head's up" about it.

Arbitrating a Dispute

Introduction	Sometimes, a dispute may come down to just a few folks with opposing viewpoints. Getting those folks together in the same room to discuss the matter and work towards a resolution can be the best way to arbitrate their dispute. This section contains a general process to follow when handling conflicts with this method.
Meet With Both Parties	First, meet with both parties, if possible, in a neutral place. This might be your home or the home of an uninvolved member; it might be a meeting room or a restaurant. Avoid meeting at the home of anyone involved in the dispute. That way nobody has the “home court advantage.”
Set Ground Rules	Set some ground rules to begin with. No interrupting, no raised voices. One person gets to tell their side of the story, and then the other person tells their side. After both have spoken, each can address the other’s points in turn. After you have listened to both of them, you should strongly consider asking them each to write down their version of the problem.
Ask For Solutions	Also have them write down what they want to have happen as a result of the meeting. What would they consider a good solution? And what are they prepared to give up in order to get some of what they want? Explain that what you are working toward is a solution that everyone can live with. If the parties insist that they cannot give an inch, then tell them you’re sorry, but without some acceptance of the idea of compromise, you can’t help them.
Disputes: An Example	Here’s an example of how a dispute could occur: One person details his plans for the event he’s autocratting; somebody else notices that the autocrat has failed to include any arts and sciences activities and concludes that the autocrat, who has often joked about “artsy types” in the past, has something against A&S. In reality, the autocrat noticed that there was no indoor site for displays, or comfortable area for classes, and wasn’t sure people would be willing to do these activities outdoors in the middle of a field. But instead of addressing this at a planning meeting, the autocrat simply sidestepped the issue; while the offended party didn’t ask why there wasn’t any A&S but rather went and grumbled to the assemblage at the shire dance practice. Et voila, a full-blown “fighters vs. arts” controversy erupts by the time of the next populace meeting.
Failure to Communicate	The root of most SCA problems is failed communication. If you can manage to cut through the miscommunication in the above scenario, or other similar ones, and state in a non-confrontational way what has happened and what can be done, your chances of fixing the problem are much better.

Arbitrating a Dispute

Know When It's Done

One of the most important things to know during an arbitration is when you've done all you can do. If headway has been made, don't allow the parties to begin rehashing what they've already covered; this can get the matter heated up all over again. On the other hand, baby steps may be in order. If you can only progress so far before hitting a blank wall, it might be best to send the parties home with a "what is the least you will accept in this resolution" assignment and reconvene in a day or two. Having time to think about what the other party had to say could change minds and cooler heads may prevail the next time you meet.

Public Relations and Recruiting

Purpose This section provides guidelines on working with the media, including examples of press releases and letters, as well as guidelines and procedures for recruiting and retaining new members.

In this Section This section includes the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Guidelines for Dealing with the Media	36
Recruiting Newcomers	38

Guidelines for Dealing With the Media

Introduction

Exposure in the media (local television, radio, newspaper, weekly magazines) is extremely helpful to your group in recruiting new members. It also helps with public goodwill, which can be instrumental in gaining access to sites. This section contains guidelines for dealing with the media.

Society Seneschal's Media Relations and External Publicity Policy

It is the policy of the Office of Society Seneschal and Vice President of Operations that specific guidelines pertaining to interactions with modern media organizations and staff will be set forth in this document and subject to regular review in accordance with the needs of the Society and our ever changing modern environment. This policy crosses into both the 'game' side of the Society, and into modern era operations. The General Policy is to have a unified, professional approach to informing the Media of our purpose, activities, and when necessary, a position on relevant topics and events. To this end, the Society Seneschal and Vice President of Operations will appoint via formal warrant a deputy Society Seneschal and Assistant Vice President for Medial Relations..

Press Kits

Basic press kits will be created, maintained, and distributed to Kingdoms and the Corporate office by the Deputy Society Seneschal for Media Relations and be made available for download online. It is always acceptable to obtain and distribute these to the media and any interested body.

Interview Guidelines

Be sure to contact the KMR for the official list of words and topics to avoid prior to doing an interview. When being interviewed, do not use SCA jargon. For example, instead of "mundane," say "the general public"; for "garb," use "costume." If the interview is for the print media, ask to review the story before it goes to press.

Commercial Film Crews and Photography rules

There are very specific rules that film crews and commercial photographers must follow if they wish to record activities at SCA events. Branch Seneschals must inform the Media Officer if they are contacted by a film crew or photographer.

Reporting

Local individuals, branches, or other entities should report within 7 days a media interaction to their Kingdom representative and the seneschallate whenever one or more of the following is true.

- Outside Media Venue requests material for a story.
- Outside Media Venue arrives unannounced at an SCA event or activity.
- Outside Media Venue contacts the SCA regarding an ongoing news item.
- A story—positive or negative—regarding the SCA appears in an outside media publication.

Recruiting Newcomers

Purpose	This section contains guidelines on how to recruit new members to the SCA. Most groups have a Chatelaine to help with newcomers but if your group does not have one – this activity can fall to you.
Information	Before you begin looking for new members, take the time to read the Chatelaine's handbook. It contains a lot of helpful information.
Be Seen	Hold meetings and fighter practices in a public place, such as a park or community center. If people can't find you, they can't become members. Also, participate in local fairs, celebrations, malls, grand openings, theatrical events, student orientations at colleges, concerts, etc. Be sure that your group is welcome and invited to all of these events and that the event itself is one you are willing to be associated with.
Be Seen Being Spiffy	We get used to seeing duct tape, last year's garb with the holes in it, and rusty armor. But, is this the image we want to portray to the public? Remind your group that they are in public trying to impress people and request that they look as good as possible. Hang banners, make tabards, and invite the musicians to practice before and after meetings. Hide as much of the modern stuff as possible. Discourage items which might frighten away newcomers or give a negative impression of the SCA. Always, always remember to leave any site you use cleaner than you found it. Nothing will ruin public relations faster than leaving a mess.
Be Seen Being Helpful	Do demonstrations for libraries, scout groups, retirement communities, and other organizations that would enjoy what you have to show them. Volunteer for your local public television fundraiser and get them to give you some air time in exchange. Adopt a section of highway to clean up (and clean it up frequently and well). Make your group a respected and respectable part of the community.
Be Seen Everywhere	Put up posters and arts and sciences displays wherever you can get the space. Some good places to try are libraries, game stores, community art centers and student unions. Make sure that in all cases you include an explanation of what the SCA is and how to contact the local group. Ask your local library if you can place informational bookmarks in books that would be of interest to SCA members. Get on the internet. If your group does not have anyone able or willing to host a web page, make sure that your group's contact information is up to date on the Kingdom web page.

Group Activities

Purpose This section contains information, guidelines, and procedures on group meetings, events and demos.

In this Section This section includes the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Group Meetings	45
Events	48
Demos	52

Group Meetings

Introduction

Meetings can be as formal or informal as your group dictates. There is no right or wrong way to conduct a meeting if what you're doing is working for your group. This section is not intended to mandate how you run your local group meetings, it is just a tool for a new seneschal or the seneschal who might be needing a little help in that area.

Elements of a Good Meeting

There are a number of elements that go into a good meeting, but basically, a good meeting is one where the group doesn't leave feeling that their time was wasted. There are many things that can be done to make sure that the meetings that your group holds are good meetings, and most of them are under your control and direction. In this section, let's look at some of them.

Finding the Meeting

Make it easy for people to find the meetings.

- Hold meetings on a regular schedule. Some groups meet once a week, some every two weeks, and some every month. It doesn't really matter how often the meetings are held, as long as the needs of the group are being met by the schedule. It is, however, important for people to know when the meetings will be held without having to ask someone each time.
 - If possible, hold meetings in the same place each time. For those groups that cover a large amount of territory and make a point of moving their meeting sites to accommodate as many people as possible, try to schedule the meetings in the same location in each area where the meetings are held. This will make it much easier for people to find the meetings if they have been out of touch for awhile.
-

Focus of the Meeting

Make sure that everyone knows in advance what the focus of the meeting will be. Some groups have meeting in the following formats:

- Business meetings once a month with the other meeting(s) that month focusing on something else, usually arts and sciences activities.
- A short business session at the beginning of each meeting, followed by some other activity.
- Everything at each meeting: business, A&S, fighter practice, dance practice, etc.

It doesn't really matter how your meetings are focused as long as the needs of the group are served and the group knows when each activity is scheduled. Also, do your best to see that the meetings are enjoyable and productive. Nobody likes to feel that they are wasting their time

Changes in the Meeting Place or Time

Have a pre-established method of communicating a change in the planned meeting time or place. This can run the gamut from a phone tree to an announcement on the group web page or e-group (if you have one) to a sign on the door. If you rely on a web page or e-mail do be aware of those members who aren't hooked up to the Internet.

Group Meetings

Agenda

Use the following guidelines to prepare an agenda in advance for the meeting.

- Organize the agenda so that all of your information is included.
 - Leave space for people who will arrive at the meeting with announcements they wish to make.
 - Before the meeting starts, ask anyone who wishes to make an announcement to sign up on the agenda (your local herald can help with this). There is absolutely nothing wrong with pre-screening these announcements to make sure that they are appropriate for the SCA meeting context.
 - Organize the agenda so it flows smoothly and all the business is covered. In some groups the person is called up to make the announcement, while in others the herald makes the announcement.
-

Discussion

When issues are brought up for discussion, lead the discussion so that everyone who wishes to participate in the discussion has an equal opportunity to do so. This will mean controlling the discussion so that no one dominates it to the exclusion of others. It will also mean closing the discussion when nothing new is being said. Beating the proverbial dead horse is usually a waste of time.

Some discussions need to be tabled after awhile, pending perhaps another discussion or to give someone time to obtain missing information. If this happens, make it very clear when the discussion will be resumed, and make sure that it is indeed resumed at the announced time.

Closing the Meeting

Close the meeting when it's finished. It's time to close the meeting when all the information has been conveyed, all the announcements have been made, all the discussions have been held, and there's nothing more to say. The meeting should close so there is enough time to clean up the site and be out by closing time, if your site has such a deadline.

Meeting Format: Guidelines

A good meeting does not just happen. It has structure and form and is not run by a committee. Do use a format, however. Doing so makes it much easier to ensure that all the necessary announcements are made and the planned discussions are held.

Meeting Format: Example

Although the content will depend on what is going on with the group, an example of a meeting format is as follows:

- Welcome the group.
- Introduce and welcome new members and guests.
- Announce upcoming events and pass around seneschals' flyers that you have received.
- Announce upcoming group activities, such as special interest group meetings, fighter practices, the next business meeting, etc.
- Officers' reports, beginning with your own.
- Discussions and plans for future group activities.

This is not a required meeting format, and you may find that another

Group Meetings

structure works better for you and your group.

Meeting Format: Other Ideas

Some groups like to include event reports from members who have attended an event since the last meeting, or include a “medieval moment”. This is when a member shares some interesting information or research they’ve found about the Middle Ages in five minutes or less

A Note About Announcements

What if someone wants to make an announcement that is questionably appropriate to the meeting? You may have to decide on the spot whether the announcement should be made. Some guidelines to use are:

- How does the announcement relate to group business or activities?
- Is the topic something that will interest and apply to the entire group?
- Is the topic likely to set off an emotional debate that does not directly pertain to the activities of the group?

You, as the seneschal, can decide that the announcement may not be made during the meeting, but afterward as non-SCA business. In that way, you can avoid having it become part of the group’s official business, and anyone who is not interested does not need to stay to avoid missing the rest of the meeting.

A Final Word About Meetings

Unfortunately, you can never guarantee that a meeting will be completely successful even though it is easy and predictable to find and you have planned an agenda that covers all of the necessary information. You are working with people, after all. These techniques may give you some ideas, however, that you can tailor to your group to make the meetings as successful as possible.

Events

Introduction

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Society is the event. An event is any official meeting of the Society including feasts, tournaments, and other activities representing recreation of the time period of 600-1600 A.D. This also includes demonstrations held to promote the Society.

Events are our main opportunity to showcase our skills and activities. But when it comes right down to it, events are a place to socialize and just have fun! Having fun, however, does take a little bit of planning. It would be impossible to list every possible thing that goes into planning and running an event. That is not the intent of this section of the Handbook. This section is intended to provide you with the basic rules of the game.

Requirements of Official SCA Business

The requirements for an event at which official SCA business may be conducted include the following:

- The event announcement must appear on the Kingdom Calendar in the *Popular Chivalry*, for at least the month of the event. A group is entitled to three months free flyer publication for their event in *Popular Chivalry*.
 - A warranted officer of the SCA must be present at all times. If it will not be possible for a warranted local officer to attend at all times, you need to arrange with a neighboring group for a warranted officer to be present.
-

Official Event

An official event is one at which official SCA business may be conducted, the giving of awards by the Crown, official meetings of officers, etc. This is what most of us think of when we hear the word “event.”

Covered Event

The Society Seneschal draws a distinction between “official” events and “covered” events. A “covered” event is any gathering that is covered by the SCA’s insurance. To be covered by the insurance, a meeting, fighter practice, local revel, etc. must:

- be open to any SCA person who wishes to attend,
- conform to SCA policies, and
- be publicized by whatever means the group customarily uses to publicize such things—i.e., announcements at meetings, details printed on the web page, appearing in the local newsletter, etc.

If it is not open to anyone who wishes to attend, or if it is not related to group business, it is not covered by the SCA’s insurance! This means that a birthday party, unless held in conjunction with a demo, tournament, potluck feast, or some such, is not a “covered” event; and an invitation-only fighter practice is not a “covered” event.

Events

Unofficial Events

Groups often hold local revels, potlucks, and mini-events that are primarily for the enjoyment of those living in the group. These don't need to (and should not) appear on the kingdom calendar. However, it is a very good idea to let the surrounding groups know when your group has a major demo or local revel scheduled! Invite them to attend, and try to attend their big demos if you can.

Event Ideas

The best resources for event ideas and helpful hints are probably members of your very own group. If someone in your group has run an event previously, ask them lots of questions. Quiz your members as to activities that they think would be fun. Those old event reports in your seneschal's files can also be very helpful.

Setting the Date

In the "olden days" it used to be possible to plan and hold an event with as little as 3–4 months of lead time. As a general rule this is just not possible to do anymore. If you can, try to begin planning your event about a year in advance. If you have a particularly great site that books up fast, you may want to reserve the site 18 months prior to the date of your event.

Contacting the Calendar Deputy

You need to contact the Kingdom Calendar Deputy at the time you begin planning your event. You may hold an event on the same weekend as another group as long as there is a distance of at least 200 miles between the two groups. Although your proposed autocrat can contact the calendar deputy to see if a date is available, only seneschals can officially secure a date on the Kingdom Calendar.

Finding a Site

Finding a site can be quite a challenge. Some areas have a lot of great places to choose from and others are very limited. It is helpful to have an idea of what you want to do at the event when you are trying to find a site. For example, an event featuring fighting as the main activity will have completely different needs than one featuring musical activities.

Meeting With the Site Contact

Once you find a site that is available and within your budget, you will need to meet with the site contact in person (a really good idea) to discuss your needs and find out all the rules and regulations of the site. If an event steward has already been chosen, that person can do all of this.

Signing the Contract

Ultimately, because it is your signature that will go on the site contract, you may want to make sure that you personally know all the pertinent information. Let's reiterate: the seneschal is the only person that is authorized by the Society to sign site contracts

Events

Publishing an Event Flyer

Guidelines for flyers to be published in *Popular Chivalry* are published in every issue. An event must be published in the *Popular Chivalry* in order to be considered “official.” The Kingdom Chronicler has the right to reject a flyer for legitimate reasons.

Regardless of who designs and creates the flyer, you should check the flyer before it is submitted to make sure it includes those items required by *Popular Chivalry*. The event staff should also look it over to make sure their contact information and anything relative to their area of responsibility are listed correctly.

Another thing to remember is that the flyer for the newsletter may be seen by any number of people. It should be in reasonably good taste and not portray the SCA in a questionable light.

Obtaining Insurance

Some sites will request proof of liability insurance. Usually the Certificate of Proof of Insurance will do. This certificate is available on the Seneschal e-group. Sometimes a site will request a certificate naming the site owner, specifically, as an insured party. The process to obtain an additionally insured certificate takes at least a month. Equestrian activities also require additional insurance. Detailed information and forms on obtaining additionally-insured and equestrian insurance are provided on the SCA kingdom website.

Holding the Event

All this preparation! As seneschal, it is strongly recommended for you to be present at the event. The autocrat is, however, your deputy for the duration of the event, so it’s okay if you’re not able to attend. Remember that as a temporary officer of the Society, the event steward must be a member of the SCA. There must also be at least one warranted officer present at the event.

The seneschal needs to provide the event steward with event rosters and waivers for use at troll. All of these forms can be found in the forms section of this Handbook.

Filing Waivers

As soon after the event as possible, but no longer than 30 days after, all waivers should be sent to the Kingdom Waiver Deputy. Make sure they are clearly labeled with the event, place, and date.

Completing an Event Report

After the event the event steward should complete a report. The report should include a synopsis of the day’s activities. Who was in charge of the activities, i.e., marshal in charge, event steward, etc.? The report could also include an expense report. You can use this when you complete your monthly report to the Kingdom Seneschal, which contains a section about events your group has held.

Demos

Introduction Demos are essentially mini-events. However, instead of focusing on providing entertainment for other members of the Society, the demo focuses on representing the SCA to the rest of the world. Demos generally fall into one of three categories, although some will overlap: public relations, educational, and recruiting.

IMPORTANT: Remember members of the general public may not participate in combat-related activities at a demo. If somebody is interested in SCA combat, tell them when fighter practices are held and invite them to attend the next one.

Public Relations The public relations demo often comes in the form of participation as an “act” in a parade, or some kind of civic function. It is best not to have activities that are too involved or take more than a 10-15 minute time commitment on the part of the observer. Activities such as painting a medieval bookmark, writing your name in calligraphy, or trying on a costume or armor work well.

Educational Educational demos are pretty self-explanatory. Generally educational demos are done for schools (elementary through high school). The school and/or teacher usually will let you know what they would like to see at the demo. Design your program to be entertaining to the appropriate age group. Try not to be boring and lecturing; remember our job is to make learning history fun and alive!

Recruiting The recruiting demo is the toughest demo to do. Once again, provide some fun and brief activities that people can have some hands-on interaction with the Society. It is also a good plan to provide some scheduled shows. One idea that works well is to alternate between fighting and fashion shows. That gives people a good idea that we have very diverse activities in the SCA.

Make sure that you have plenty of written materials for people to take home with them. Flyers should include general information about the SCA, your group, and who to contact if interested. Make sure these flyers are updated as information changes. You won't draw anyone new into the Society if they don't know how to find you! Some groups have also printed business cards with the local contact information on them. These are inexpensive and easy to grab, and if someone in particular has been talking to a potential recruit, they can also jot their own phone number on the back of the card.

Event Steward Depending on the scope of the demo, you may or may not need to have an event steward. Larger demos like Renaissance Fairs definitely need a steward, but a one-hour school demo does not. Many groups find it helpful to have an officer whose sole job is to act as a liaison for planning demos, sometimes the group's Chatelaine handles coordinating their demos. If there will be no steward at the demo, at least one of the participants must be a member of the Society.

Demos

Demo Safety

No matter what type of demo you are having, remember that the idea is for both the SCA members and the guests to have a good time. If someone gets hurt, that will put a damper on things! Make sure that if there is fighting, you have an adequate number of constables. We all know what is dangerous, but a spectator may not. Common sense suggests that activities involving fire and toxic chemicals should also be avoided.

Group Officers

Purpose This section contains general guidelines on being an officer, descriptions of group officers and information pertinent to the successful selection and transition of group officers.

In this Section This section includes the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Officer Guidelines	55
Job Descriptions of Group Officers	56
Officer Selection and Transition	59
Selecting a Suitable Replacement	60
Roles in Transition	61
Stages of Being an Officer	63
Burnout: A Commentary	65

Officer Guidelines

Required Officers All groups except Baronies are required by Corpora to have a seneschal, a herald, a Exchequer, a marshal and a minister of arts and sciences. Other offices may be filled if the needs of the group so dictate. Baronies are required to have all the above-listed offices, plus a chronicler; it is strongly advised that Baronies also have a chatelaine. Those required officers have job descriptions elsewhere in this section.

Appointment of Local Officers Local officers are appointed by the Kingdom Great Officer and are warranted by the Crown, as is discussed elsewhere. The seneschal and current local officers usually have some input on the appointment of new officers.

Interaction With Other Officers In most groups, the seneschal acts as the administrative director of the group's activities. The seneschal will serve as a member of the Financial Committee, run meetings, and in general, oversee the other officers. This is not to say that the seneschal directs the activities of the officers—and micro-managing your fellow officers is a big no-no—but the seneschal should receive quarterly reports from the other officers and know what is going on within these offices.

Failure to Provide Reports If officers fail to provide reports to the seneschal, a gentle reminder is usually sufficient to produce the needed report. If, however, that fails, the seneschal should contact the appropriate Kingdom Great Officer. If the officer in question is not reporting to the Kingdom, the seneschal is responsible for completing the missing report to the best of his/her ability.

Job Descriptions for Group Officers

- Exchequer/Reeve** No matter what they're called in your group, the group Exchequer reports to the Kingdom Exchequer and is responsible for:
- Maintaining the group's financial records.
 - Maintaining the group's double-signature bank account.
 - Monitoring compliance with and enforcing financial policies set forth in Local Branch Financial Policy, Meridian Financial policy and the group's financial policies.
 - Filing accurate and timely reports with the appropriate regional Exchequer and the group seneschal.
 - Serving as a member of the group's Financial Committee.
-

- Knight Marshal** The knight marshal reports to the Earl Marshal and is responsible for:
- Ensuring the safety of all martial activities and equipment, including armor, weapons, and archery equipment.
 - Running fighter practices or arranging for the running of fighter practices under an authorized marshal and otherwise in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Earl Marshal.
 - Compiling and maintaining records of the authorized fighters and archers in the group.
 - Filing accurate and timely reports with the Earl Marshal or the regional deputy.
 - Filing authorization paperwork on a timely basis.
 - Collecting waivers at Fighter Practice
-

- Herald** The herald reports to the Beacon Herald and works with the Cypher Herald on submissions. The herald is responsible for:
- Furthering heraldic activities within the group by actively assisting group members with help, when requested, designing heraldic devices and names.
 - Filing timely and accurate reports to the Beacon Herald and the group seneschal.
 - Processing heraldic submission forms in a timely and accurate manner.
 - Processing all financial transactions that arise from name and device submissions in a timely fashion.
 - Keeping accurate records of office activities, including submission and financial matters in accordance with policies and procedures set in Meridian Financial Policy.
 - Performing any ceremonial duties as defined by the kingdom and local laws and customs.

Job Descriptions for Group Officers

Arts & Sciences Officer	<p>The minister of arts and sciences reports to the Kingdom Minister of Arts and Sciences and is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Furthering the practice of arts and sciences by assisting group members with finding resources for group or personal projects.• Creating environments where the practice of arts and sciences is encouraged.• Providing information to group members about arts and sciences activities throughout the kingdom• Filing accurate and timely reports on arts and sciences activities to the Kingdom Minister of Arts and Sciences and the group seneschal. <hr/>
Chronicler	<p>The chronicler reports to the Kingdom Chronicler and is responsible, directly or indirectly, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publishing the group's newsletter in accordance with SCA requirements.• Filing, accurate, and timely reports to the Kingdom Chronicler and group seneschal.• Maintaining or arranging for maintenance of electronic communications such as web pages, if applicable. <hr/>
Webminister	<p>The webminister reports to the Kingdom Webminister and is responsible, directly or indirectly, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publishing the group's website in accordance with SCA requirements.• Maintenance of web pages• Filing, accurate, and timely reports to the Kingdom Chronicler and group seneschal. <hr/>
Chatelaine	<p>The Chatelaine's primary responsibility is the care and feeding of newcomers. Sometimes the Chatelaine also coordinates the group's demos, and/or maintains the group's phone list. But the recruiting and welcoming functions are paramount. For more information on the chatelaine's duties, as well as on recruitment and retention of new members, see the section on those subjects. There is a Chatelaine's report form; if your group has a chatelaine, that person should be reporting to you and to the Kingdom Chatelaine.</p> <hr/>

Job Descriptions for Group Officers

Minister of Children

The Minister of Children is responsible for providing educational activities for children in the group, as well as for visiting children attending events the group hosts. The Ministry of Children can cover an age range from three to seventeen, depending on the needs of the group. It is of paramount importance to stress that the minister of children IS NOT a babysitter! Parents are not to “dump” their children on the MoC during meetings or events, and children who can’t handle themselves may be returned to their parents.

The Minister of Children is likewise not responsible for the behavior of the group’s children during meetings; that is first, last, and always the responsibility of their parents or other adult who brought them. There is a MoC report form; if your group has a minister of children, that person should be reporting quarterly to you and to the Kingdom Minister of Children.

NOTE: At the time of this writing, the Board of Directors is considering a mandatory background check for anyone in the SCA that serves in an official capacity involving children. It is strongly recommended you check with the Kingdom Seneschal or the Kingdom Minister of Children to see if this has become policy.

Other Officers

A group may have as many officers as they feel necessary. Essentially, all officers are volunteers and your group may be large enough and have enough active members to have a Chirurgeon, or first aid officer, someone in charge of the shire’s property, often called a Quartermaster or Gold Key. You may also have enough folks to have RUM Provost or a full-time Demo Officer. Whatever works for your group and the members of your group is what you should do.

Selecting a Suitable Replacement

Officer Transitions Officer transitions can be smooth or rough. In an ideal world, the outgoing officer starts planning ahead early, makes a considered choice with input from the rest of the group as to who among the many eager candidates would best serve the group's needs, obtains his/her superior officer's approval for the recommendation, and then works with that person for three to six months in order to train the new officer to assume the duties of office so the business of the group continues with nary a hitch.

Officer Selection The following is a list of some do's and don'ts for choosing an officer, and particularly for selecting a replacement for the office of seneschal.

- Experience—it is best if the person is not brand new to the Society and to the group. General SCA experience and a certain level of maturity will help someone to be effective in any office, particularly the seneschalate.
- “Musical officers”—If possible, it's generally best to get someone who hasn't held an office, or at least not one of the more time-consuming offices, just prior to taking the office. However, in small groups, “musical officers” is a way of life.
- Burnout—be careful that the new prospective officer won't enter office already burned out.
- Multiple officer households—as a general rule, the Kingdom Seneschal will not warrant someone who lives under the same roof or is closely related to the outgoing seneschal. This is because it's important that the group be served by a wide variety of people, with different viewpoints. Also, the office of seneschal is rarely an individual commitment, and if it lives in one house for too long, the inhabitants are apt to get heartily sick of it.

The Final Say The first important truth that you, and all the officers in your group, must understand is that the final say in any local officer selection (other than deputy officers) is the right of the relevant kingdom officer, in consultation with the Crown. The kingdom officer appoints the local officers. The Kingdom officer and the Crown warrants all officers. Although it appears that local officers appoint their successors (and in practice it does tend to work that way), the appropriate Kingdom Great Officer always has the final word.

Selecting a Suitable Replacement

Qualities of Good Officers

While it is most unwise to devote time in an open meeting to discussing the pros and cons of individual applicants for an officer position, it is valuable to spend some time discussing, in the abstract, what qualities would make a person a good seneschal, or chronicler, or whatever the relevant office is.

This can lead to nominations of a sort; somebody might say, “I think Lord Fifflesnazz would be a really good seneschal.” If this statement is enthusiastically seconded by other members of the group, and Lord Fifflesnazz doesn’t recoil in horror or run screaming from the room, you’ve got yourself a candidate. (You may have a candidate even if he did run screaming from the room, but that’s called a “hard sell.”)

Opinions on Specific Applicants

If you have more than one applicant for a position, you can also invite people to share with you, privately, their opinions about which one would be best for the group. Be careful here—a person’s “people skills” are certainly relevant, but you don’t want to be dragged into listening to insults. If people share their opinions verbally, listen and don’t openly argue with them, but don’t let anyone get into personal attacks.

If someone tries to address something other than the person’s ability to do the job, remind them that the topic at hand is their ability to hold an office and benefit the group. If it seems there’s no help for it, suggest that the person write their opinion down and give it to you. Most people will hesitate to commit a personal attack to writing and give it to a third party.

When There's Local Opposition to a Candidate

One of the things that might cause a kingdom officer to reject a recommended candidate, or at least take a good, hard look at things, is if that kingdom officer becomes aware that a substantial number of people in the local group oppose the appointment. A “substantial number” is one of those quantities that can’t be clearly defined, but if more than one or two complaints are received, it’s usually enough for the kingdom officer to look into the situation, at least particularly if the people objecting are known to be solid members of the group.

Also, if people are unhappy with the local officers, they are likely to expend less effort on helping the group, possibly even dropping out altogether. So, while the local group has no “official” role in choosing officers, their opinions cannot be discounted. Without the local populace, there is nothing to be an officer of.

Roles in Transition

Role of the Outgoing Officer: Choose the Replacement

The outgoing officer is expected to recommend a replacement to the Kingdom Great Officer. In practice this recommendation will usually be accepted, since the local officer should know best the requirements of the job and who among the available people is best suited to do the job.

Only if there is some problem with the proposed new officer will the kingdom officer refuse to let that person assume the office. Examples of problems might include:

- • Opposition from a number of people within the group.
- • A poor prior performance in that particular office of which the kingdom officer is aware.
- • The person does not meet the requirements of the office (for example, a branch Exchequer cannot live in the same house as the branch seneschal).

When an Outgoing Officer May Not Want to Recommend

While the outgoing officer is generally expected to make a recommendation, in cases where there are political factions vying for an office and the officer feels it would be best not to make a recommendation, or if the officer is honestly unable to decide between two candidates, it is possible to use the deciding vote of the kingdom officer to sidestep the situation. This is done by notifying the kingdom officer that you don't feel you can make the choice, and forwarding information about the candidates to him/her for a final decision.

In cases where many people are apt to be unhappy no matter what is done, this takes the heat off the local level and enables people to be annoyed at someone who is conveniently removed. If you are in a situation where you feel this is the best choice, it is wise to discuss it with the kingdom officer beforehand.

Role of the Seneschal

The local seneschal is NOT the “boss” of any of the other officers, except for deputies of the seneschal such as the chatelaine or the minister of children. This being the case, the seneschal does not have any more say in who assumes another office than anyone else.

However, your opinion may be solicited by a kingdom officer, particularly in the case of a difficult transition, and some kingdom officers may require that the seneschal write a letter of recommendation or sign a request that the new officer be warranted. This is usually done to ensure that the new officer does indeed have the support of the group. If you're asked to do this, take the responsibility seriously; you are really being asked to speak for your group.

Roles in Transition

Role of the Other Officers

A wise officer who is faced with a choice of replacement candidates will consult with the other officers in the group. After all, they'll be working closely with the new officer, and their opinions can be quite valuable, as they are frequently among the more experienced people currently active in the group. Some groups hold closed officers' meetings to discuss difficult turnover situations; and some groups submit a joint recommendation to the kingdom superior officer. Some kingdom officers may solicit the opinion of the other officers, particularly if the outgoing officer did not recommend a replacement. However, the officers don't "choose" the new officer, any more than anyone else does at the local level.

Role of the Group's Populace

It is often stated that the SCA is not a democracy. This means that your group should not be holding "elections" to choose officers. Nothing in the organization is done by majority vote, and local office choices are no exception. However, this does not mean that the local populace has no right to participate in officer selection.

Instead of being a "one-man, one-vote" democracy like the clubs we belonged to in high school, the SCA at the local level tries to run by consensus. Consensus means that pretty much everyone can live with the decision that is reached, even if it may not be their personal favorite option.

Stages of Being an Officer

**Taking Office:
Contact the
Kingdom Officer**

When the local group, or outgoing officer, has a new officer to recommend, the kingdom officer needs to be contacted. This should be done by both the outgoing and incoming officers. The outgoing officer should write to the kingdom officer to resign the office and name the recommended replacement.

The new officer should also write the kingdom officer to state his or her willingness to assume the office, and give a brief overview of SCA and relevant real-world experience, particularly if the kingdom officer does not know the person. It's also a good idea to include a photocopy of your membership card at this time. All officers, at all levels, must be paid members of the SCA. This is required by Corpora and is not negotiable. In some cases a warrant will be issued by the Greater Kingdom Officer.

**Taking Office:
Receive Files**

New officers should also receive all the existing files for their office. Not receiving the files in a timely fashion is a frequent cause for complaint by new officers. As seneschal, try to make sure (in an unobtrusive way) that the files for an office are turned over to the new officer as soon as possible. In particular, copies of reports and correspondence pertaining to the office, as well as any pertinent handbooks provided by the kingdom officer or purchased with group funds, need to be turned over.

**Taking Office:
Training**

Ideally, the new officer has a few months to train under the outgoing officer before assuming the position. This allows the outgoing officer to show them how to complete a quarterly report and to teach them most of the duties of the office. Of course, we all know this doesn't always happen. Sometimes a new officer comes into the position rather abruptly and with no training. In that case, the new officer will need to use the kingdom officer and the other officers of the group for guidance.

**Staying in Office:
Warrants**

As a general rule, most officers are warranted for a two-year term. Most people are ready emotionally to be done with the office by that time. On occasion, warrants may be extended for a period of time if the officer appears reasonably "fresh," is still doing a good job, and the dynamics of the group do not warrant a change at that time.

**Removal From
Office**

Failure to file required reports in a timely manner can cause an officer to be removed from office, as can other failures in duty. These might include but are not necessarily limited to:

- Constantly failing to attend meetings and other group functions.
 - Not being available to the group to perform the duties of office (for example, nobody can connect with the Exchequer to get a check when needed, or the local herald does not provide submission forms when requested).
 - Getting heavily involved in factional politics and disputes. Offices are not to be used to play political power games within a group.
-

Stages of Being an Officer

Leaving Office

As noted above, a normal term of office is two years. But sometimes an officer will decide to step down from the position prior to completing the standard two-year term. This may be caused by a major life change, such as moving out of the group, illness, a change in family status, or a change in jobs that cuts into spare time. Or the person may simply decide that they no longer wish to hold the office. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

It is an officer's duty to arrange for the orderly transition of the office, insofar as possible. If something unexpected, such as a sudden move to other climes, comes up, do the best you can in the limited time you've got. You may need to contact the kingdom officer and arrange for a temporary replacement until someone can be found who wants to take office for a full term.

Burnout

Burnout A Commentary

Sometimes an officer will avoid giving up an office when it appears that it is time to do so to everyone except the officer in question. A burned-out officer often feels that no one is capable of doing the job except him or her. Usually the quality of the officer's work begins to deteriorate during this period. In addition, there is also a general lack of interest in starting projects or seeing them through.

The SCA is a hobby, and it's supposed to be fun. While holding an office does carry with it certain obligations, and not all of those obligations are going to be fun (few people, for example, look forward to the end of the quarter because they're thrilled to have an opportunity to write a quarterly report), in general the rewards should exceed the frustrations, and the parts of the job you enjoy should exceed the parts you don't. When this ceases to be the case it is time to leave office. In fact, it's better to leave while you're still enjoying the job. Usually if you're enjoying the job most of the time, you're being effective; and isn't it better to leave office while you're still effective, so the rest of the group is sorry to see you go, rather than relieved?

If you have pangs when you turn over the office, don't worry; that's natural. Particularly if you have put a great deal of yourself into the office and done it well, it's normal to identify closely with it and feel a little "lost" when you prepare to give it up. But give yourself a chance to try some other things you haven't done before, or haven't done in awhile, both in and out of the SCA. Soon life will be full again and you'll find other projects to occupy your new-found spare time. And, not to worry, opportunities to hold local offices come around quite regularly in most groups, and it's relatively rare for there to be a large pool of applicants. Eventually, your number will come up again in the office lottery if you want it to, particularly if you're remembered as a good and effective officer by those in your group. It's in your interest as well as the organization's to leave office while you're still relatively "fresh" instead of when you're reduced to crisp cinders.

It is sometimes possible to "step back" from the office briefly, and return with new enthusiasm. This is particularly true if it's relatively early in your term, and a bothersome but solvable problem came up that occupied a lot of time and energy for awhile. If something like this happens, you might consider a couple of possible solutions. If you can arrange it, take a weekend "off" from the SCA—either go on an out-of-town pleasure trip that has nothing to do with the SCA, or just stay home and devote yourself to non-SCA pursuits—preferably while letting your answering machine deal with the phone. If this isn't possible, perhaps you can carve out one night a week when you don't do SCA business—then stick to it, religiously. Or if there's a particular aspect of the job you're really tired of, see if you can delegate that to another person for a time.

The burnout victim may not be you. Sometimes, as seneschal, you're the one to realize that a local officer is crispy. Some signs of burnout are noted above; others include failing to do routine duties, such as returning phone calls or doing minor paperwork (especially if

Burnout – A Commentary

the person has been fairly efficient in the past); finding fault with every proposed replacement; coming up with excuses not to turn the office over at a certain time; and lessened attendance at group functions. Beware the person who says they want to stay in office until they finish Project X, particularly if Project X is a large undertaking with no definite timetable.

If you suspect you're facing an officer who's burned out, try to talk to the officer about the problem in a friendly, non-threatening manner. Do this in private, and try not to put the other person on the defensive— although this can be difficult. It's best to start out by expressing general concern about the person; then work up to what you think is the specific cause of any problems. If you don't think you're on good enough terms with the officer to do this yourself, try to enlist a friend of his or hers to do it, or else a trusted neutral party. If necessary, discuss the problem with the Kingdom Seneschal or the person's superior officer, and get their advice on how to proceed.

And, if somebody approaches you and suggests that you may be burning out, pay attention to their words. They may not be right—sometimes a stressful but decidedly temporary problem, in or out of the SCA, will cause a person to act burned out when they really aren't. Also, sometimes it's possible to take a brief "step back" from the office and return with a fresh perspective. But do consider whether the burn-out monster is attacking you, and whether it might be time to look for a replacement or speed up your plans to turn over the office, keeping in mind that it's best to leave 'em wanting more.

Finally, a bit of personal philosophy: Sometimes personal or work life makes it impossible to continue to perform your duty as an officer. When this happens, it seems very difficult to give up the job. Please remember that there is nothing wrong with giving up your office early. It's better to do that than to continue to hold the office and not be able to do it well. It is all right for your personal life to supersede your hobby.