

Scribes Guild: Starting and Maintaining

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You say you want to start up a Scribe's Guild in your local branch? Bravo for you!! Your branch and the kingdom can benefit from the art produced and participants can benefit from the shared knowledge and fun a Scribe's Guild in the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) can provide.

This class will discuss: initiating a Guild, obtaining branch authorization, publicizing the Guild functions, coordinating Guild programs, activities and classes, available kingdom and local resources, painting charter awards, administration and funding. Running a Scribe's Guild requires a bit of organization and planning, but the creative rewards from learned scribal skills are worth it.

Please be advised that these suggestions, while valid in all SCA kingdoms, include ideas for the Kingdom of Ansteorra, specific to her standards. Your kingdom standards may vary; please check with your kingdom scribe.

Authorization

If you are starting a new Scribe's Guild, first check with the Seneschal and Baron and Baroness. Recognizing that the projects produced from a local Scribe's Guild will benefit the local branch, the branch officers should give the new Guild good support. Gaining their authorization will make sure you are not conflicting with another Guild or startup scribal group you may not be aware of, or that you are not usurping someone else's area of responsibility.

Publicity

Once you have the green light, round up all known scribes, amateurs and wanna-be scribes in the branch. Use the branch newsletter to advertise the first organizational meeting. Use the branch and regional e-mail list to reach a wider audience, and don't be surprised if that draws in scribes from a neighboring branch that may not have a Guild either. Make up a flyer and pass it out at populace meetings and fighter practice. Notify scribes personally and to get their support behind the Guild. Give a month's advance notice so all interested persons will have time to make plans to attend.

Guild Principal

As you are the motivation and organization behind initiating the Scribe's Guild, you will be the first Guild Principal, until at some future time you pass this task to another. Being the Guild Principal does not mean you are the best scribe in the branch/area or that you have to teach all the classes. The Guild Principal is to be responsible for scheduling and publicizing meetings, securing a meeting location, organizing the meeting program or activity, and being a contact person for others to obtain information or to commission projects of the Scribe's Guild.

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First Meeting

Begin with an introduction of the new Guild membership and explore their backgrounds in the scribal arts. Decide on a meeting time and location that is agreeable and convenient to the majority of the group. You can always change the day as the Guild grows and develops. My local Guild meets twice a month on Tuesdays; your Guild can meet more often or less.

Questionnaire

At your first meeting, have each person fill out a questionnaire and discuss the questions in the meeting. The questionnaire should include contact information. Find out a little about each scribe's experience and background in calligraphy, illumination and other art disciplines. What topics would they like to see covered at a Scribe's Guild? What artistic equipment do they currently own? What outside activities or community groups are they involved in that could provide a resource of materials or information for the new Guild? The questionnaire information can assist you in properly directing the Guild in balancing topics from basic to advanced depending on the responses of the members.

Guild Meetings

There are two basic program types to use for Guild meetings; the first is to work on Projects, and the second is Education.

Projects:

Projects can be created for the kingdom, branch or a specific event; varying from creating an original scroll for an award, painting kingdom charter award scrolls (award scrolls presented in court), addressing invitations for upcoming local events or create thank-you notes for a successfully completed event. Often, these tasks will be requested of the Guild by the kingdom Signet Scribe Officer, your branch officers or nobility, or an event autocrat. Hint: Try to get these officers to ask the Guild to do these projects early enough so you have enough time to do a good job.

In order to supply the kingdom with painted charter award scrolls or to paint through a large number of event announcements or invitations, the Scribe's Guild may consider having a special meeting once a month or as needed. The Scribe's Guild can host a 'Paint Party'! All can attend, be they scribe or not, and you can really paint up a lot of award scrolls and have fun doing so.

Try to balance the Scribe's Guild regular meetings and programs with a blend between a more focused study on calligraphy, illumination, art design and other scribally related arts; and the other half predominately as a charter award paint session. Painting charters is important to the kingdom, but can be monotonous as a regular program for the Scribe's Guild if done at every meeting and the membership will not advance their scribal skills.

Education:

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Education is an area wide open to your creativity, resourcefulness and preparation. Encourage the member of the Guild to teach classes on areas they have accomplished in their scribal experience. Share the knowledge that you have on specific topics.

- Community Resources: Check into your community resources. Find out if your local library had multi-media presentations available, such as slides, filmstrip series, VHS, CD or DVD that would make a good Guild program, and remember inter-library loans. Find out if there are any professional or community groups that would be willing to send speakers or teachers for classes on occasion. There are many community non-SCA Scribe's Guilds nationwide that exchange techniques and information, publish newsletters or journals and hold classes or workshops with guest artisans from around the world. Find out if a non-SCA Scribe's Guild is in your area and join it. Yes, some of the information can be more craft or modern oriented, but you will still learn techniques that can be applied to a period SCA format that can be shared with your SCA Scribe's Guild.

- Other SCA Scribe Guilds: Contact other SCA Scribe's Guilds in your general area. Setup a teacher exchange program to share knowledge and provide new opportunities. Other Guilds may be just as excited hearing from your branch and what you have to share.

- Book and Online Resources: There are many good scribally related books on the market these days, as well as online university classes and museum or library websites. Take one of those topics and create an experimental learning class. Use the book or online class as your teacher, share and review your work in the Guild, and see what you come up with. The possibilities are limitless. And don't rule out books geared toward children or youth, as these books often don't make assumptions on what beginning scribes should already know.

- Local Arts Community: Be aware of current happenings in the arts community. Plan field trips to art museums or public or university libraries rare book collections. One special field trip my Scribe's Guild took was to a unique printing museum that had historical examples of early writing, on into the history of the printing press, along with actual printing equipment on display. Keep an eye on special books and art sales and notify members of possible new materials and resources. Plan a field trip to an art store in another town that is not local to you, making arrangements with the store manager for hands-on opportunities to focus on scribal materials and supplies.

Funding

Consider asking your branch to assist financially with a yearly stipend to purchase Scribe's Guild supplies. This will assist members to not exhaust their personal resources or damage equipment of members. The Scribe's Guild box would contain a basic supply of equipment and materials such as paint, brushes, palettes, pens and ink. Have the branch fund paper and copying costs for special projects, perhaps rolling the expense into an event budget. Find out if the branch will fund the

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purchase of sample materials for occasional classes. My local Guild has purchase small amounts of papyrus, raw pigments, vellum and others supplies in order to study their potential and experiment with various techniques. Another option is to fund Guild activities through donations and fund raisers such as auctions or activities at events; perhaps making and selling scribally related arts such as indulgences or note cards.

Administration

The kingdom has a College of Scribes with various kingdom officers and regional officers, who are there to work with your local Guild and offer material support via copies of charter award scrolls to paint and educational information. How your local Guild Principal is selected may be via the Regional Scribe Officer, or it maybe a local appointment. Reporting should be sent up to the Regional Scribe Officer on the designated time, either monthly or quarterly. As the Scribe's Guild is also an arts Guild, a courtesy copy of your report sent to your local Minister of Arts and Sciences maybe a good idea. Check with your local kingdom for their requirements on administration.

Wordfame

This focus area is my favorite - the privilege and opportunity to send award recommendations to the Crown advising them of award potentials for members of your Scribe's Guild. As Guild Principal, you are in a position to know what members are doing and have accomplished for their branch and kingdom; share that information with the Crown and your local officers. Also, thank and recognize Guild members in e-mail postings and the branch newsletter. Work with your local web-administrator to display original scroll works online at the branch's website.

Awards are nice from time to time, but being remembered for contributions when they are made, is sometimes more important. I just love watching someone's face when they receive the recognition they deserve.

Summary

Your Scribe's Guild meetings can be a formal or informal as the Guild members wish; and this may depend on where your meetings are held. As well as being informative and a service to your branch and kingdom, the Guild can be a fun social gathering. A local Guild Principal once held meetings that concluded with tea and dessert, while a later Guild Principal had dinner for members driving to the meetings directly from work. While not required, it certainly is fun and builds on the relationships of Guild members.

Your Scribe's Guild will be a success if you remember to keep it open to all interested persons, making it accessible and available to many. Publicize the Guild and pursue various topics in meetings. Remember the Guild exists both for education in sharing scribal topics as well as providing a service of original scribal work to your branch and kingdom. Above all, have fun and happy scribing.