



Framework for Merger

Presented to the memberships of
The Special Libraries Association
and
The Association for Information Science
& Technology

June 5, 2025

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FRAMEWORK FOR THE MERGER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR INFORMATION SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (ASIS&T) AND THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION (SLA)

Please note that this is a framework, not a final agreement. This document will give you an idea of what you can expect but is subject to change. We will be soliciting member feedback on this framework that will be considered by the working group as they draft the Merger Agreement.

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Executive Summary

This document outlines the strategic, operational, and financial benefits of merging the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T) and the Special Libraries Association (SLA). Both organizations serve information professionals in an increasingly overlapping digital and data-driven landscape. A merger unifies the organizational voices, consolidates resources, and expands opportunities for innovation, advocacy, and member engagement. The merged entity would both enhance the membership experience of both associations' current members and attract the next generation of information professionals who are navigating the evolving knowledge ecosystem.

Background

ASIS&T and SLA have each played a pivotal role in supporting professionals in the fields of information science, librarianship, knowledge management, and data services. However, in recent years, both organizations have faced:

- Declining or plateauing membership numbers
- Increased competition for attention, time, and funding from members
- The need for greater organizational sustainability, agility and strategic reach
- Global expansion necessitating greater diversity of service offerings

Recently, the SLA Board recommended dissolution (ideally merger and dissolution), citing insufficient financial resources to continue to operate as a stand-alone organization. The Board of SLA approached the Board of ASIS&T to express its interest in a possible merger, and ASIS&T was highly receptive to the possibility of partnering with SLA to craft an intentional future for both organizations together. Such a merger would preserve as much of the SLA brand and programming as possible to continue to serve SLA's engaged and committed member community. Merging with ASIS&T provides a proactive approach to ensure long-term relevance and sustainability of SLA's core purpose while greatly enhancing the membership experience for existing ASIS&T members.

Rationale for Merger

A merger between ASIS&T and SLA is not a new topic. Such a merger was discussed as long ago as in the 1970s. Significant synergies between the two organizations exist that can be capitalized upon as follows:

1. Vision/Mission Synergy

The ASIS&T Vision and Mission are:

Vision: to be the preeminent global voice of information science and technology research and its implications for practice.

Mission: to advance research and practice in information science and technology.

The SLA Vision and Mission are:

Vision: to be the global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners.

Mission: to promote and strengthen its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.

Both ASIS&T and SLA aim to advance the field of information science and support researchers and professionals studying and managing information in all its forms. Merging the two organizations would create a more inclusive and representative organization that encompasses:

- Library and information science
- Knowledge and data management
- Emerging technologies
- Specialized subject expertise
- Research and practice in library and information science

2. Stronger Member Value

Combining membership bases would increase networking, learning, and leadership opportunities for both the ASIS&T and SLA memberships. The ASIS&T membership, which is largely, though not entirely, made up of faculty and academic researchers, has long lamented that there are not more practitioners in the ASIS&T membership who can address the practical applications of information science and the research they produce. There is a strong masters and PhD student presence within ASIS&T as well. A merger with SLA would give member students more opportunities to learn what a career route into practice could offer them. Likewise, exposing the student members of SLA to academic career offerings expands their scope of opportunity as well. The SLA membership would benefit from access to the latest research into information topics relevant to their work. Additionally, engagement with members coming from SLA would help ASIS&T researchers identify compelling information problems, sites of application for their research, and gaps in the instruction students receive. The opportunities for

applied research development and best practice modeling that will be realized by combining academics and practitioners in one association are limitless.

SLA members would also benefit from ASIS&T's updated and organized governing documents and policies, consistent staffing, and stable financial standing. SLA members would gain value through a more robust international community, exposure to new colleagues and ideas, and expanded career resources and events.

3. Increased Advocacy and Influence

The merged entity would possess a stronger collective voice to advocate for the profession, influence policy, and shape the future of library and information practice globally. A merged organization can craft more comprehensive and credible advocacy messages, backed by both research and real-world application. A single, larger association would have greater visibility in the policy landscape, which is crucial for influencing policy and public perception. Further, a larger organization has more leverage in forming strategic partnerships with other professional associations, educational institutions, government agencies, and the private sector.

4. Preservation of SLA Brand, Member Value, and Assets

The current financial situation requires that SLA take immediate and extreme steps to stave off bankruptcy. These include dissolution or dissolution and merger. While SLA has very limited financial resources at this time, there remains a relatively sizable Scholarship Fund which can be preserved if SLA is relieved of its current financial obligations with relative speed. A merger with ASIS&T would allow for the preservation of the Scholarship Fund (potentially less any existing financial obligations) with a designation that it be used for the same purposes for which it was originally given, which, according to available information, is:

1. to provide tuition-based scholarships for library and information science studies programs; and
2. to provide conference scholarships.

ASIS&T commits to retaining whatever funds are brought to it as donor-designated funds once all financial obligations of SLA are covered (assuming any portion of the funds can be unrestricted to pay existing obligations). Some of the Permanent Restricted Fund might need to be used to satisfy existing obligations, pending advice from legal counsel. It should also be noted that the use of these funds for their originally intended purpose is a requirement of voluntary dissolution of a New York incorporated not-for-profit organization.

Merger Considerations

Membership

The membership structure of ASIS&T and SLA are topically quite similar, which will allow ASIS&T to accommodate SLA's members into its membership structure quite seamlessly. SLA members would become members of ASIS&T upon execution of the merger in the following alignment:

SLA Member Category	Dues	ASIS&T Member Category	Dues
Full Membership - North America	\$220	Professional Membership	\$160
Full Membership - Outside North America	\$220	Professional Membership Developed Country Members	\$160
Full - Outside NA (Salary < \$18,000)	\$50	Professional Membership Tier 1 or 2 Country Members	\$25-\$50
Transitional/Unemployed Membership	\$100	Early Career / Hardship?	\$80
Retired Membership	\$100	Retired	\$75
Student Membership	\$50	Student Varies by Country	\$5 - \$47.50
Life Member (45 years)	0	Lifetime (30 years)	\$0
Organization (Academic/Education Partner)	\$5,000	Institutional Affiliate	\$700
Organization (Executive Membership)	\$3,500	Institutional Affiliate	\$700
Organization (Premier Partner)	\$6,000	Corporate Partner	\$1,000
Organization (Shared Membership)	\$750	Institutional Affiliate	\$700

All SLA members would become ASIS&T members at a dues rate lower than what they are currently paying as SLA members. Because SLA member dues renew on their anniversary date and ASIS&T member dues renew on July 1st, ASIS&T would only bill members coming from SLA the prorated balance upon their anniversary date through June 30, 2026, for their first year of membership and ASIS&T is optimistic that there will be interest in remaining with ASIS&T when their SLA dues expire. SLA members who have paid for multi-year memberships would have full ASIS&T membership through their prior SLA renewal date then have the option to renew ASIS&T membership at a prorated rate to align them with the July-June membership cycle.

Member Benefits

SLA members who become members of ASIS&T will have access to the complete range of ASIS&T benefits, which includes:

- Access to ASIS&T Community site

- Listing In and Access to Member Directory
- ASIS&T Award Eligibility
- Membership in the Regional Chapter of Choice
- Unlimited SIG Membership
- Member Match (mentorship) Program
- Subscription to JASIST
- Access to ASIS&T Career Site
- Annual Meeting Proceedings
- Free Webinars
- Meeting Discounts
- Continuing Education Discounts
- Publications Discounts
- Past Issues of ASIS&T Bulletin
- Inside ASIS&T Newsletter
- Vote on Governance Matters
- Governance Eligibility (Committees/Board)

All the benefits of membership listed on the SLA website can be transferred over to ASIS&T, thus ensuring all SLA members that transition to ASIS&T membership don't lose any benefits but gain all the benefits listed above and all ASIS&T members have access to the SLA benefits listed below:

- SLA's On-Demand Learning, free hangouts, and free round tables (see below for more information)
- SLA Annual Conference (see below for more information)
- Networking (see below for integration of SLA communities into ASIS&T)
- SLA's 2021 Salary Survey and the potential for future salary surveys.
- *Information Insights* (see below for more information)
- Career Center (this can be seamlessly merged with the ASIS&T career site as it is hosted on the same platform)
- IFLA Membership – ASIS&T is not currently a member of IFLA but will join to continue this benefit

Publications

SLA's two association-wide publications (*Information Insights* weekly newsletter and *Information Outlook* quarterly magazine) will both find a home at ASIS&T. *Information Insights* would be highly valuable to ASIS&T members with a modest expansion of the content scope, so ASIS&T would continue the relationship with Multiview that produces this newsletter. Over time, *Information Outlook* can be merged into [*Information Matters*](#) which is ASIS&T's digital magazine that publishes new content every week. Some of the *Information Outlook* content might be more appropriate in [*Inside ASIS&T*](#) which is ASIS&T's bimonthly newsletter.

Individual SLA community publications may continue to be published under the auspices of the new community/sig structure.

Meetings

ASIS&T would continue to host the SLA Annual Conference (potentially with a rebranding) in the late spring/early summer of each year. ASIS&T has made it a strategic priority to develop an industry/practitioner-facing meeting in the next 24 months, and the SLA Annual Conference will fit this priority very well. Our understanding is that the Annual Dance Party is a tradition that SLA members will not want to lose, so ASIS&T would be sure to continue that event as part of the conference.

Additionally, the ASIS&T Annual Meeting will be greatly enhanced by the presence of individuals who can speak directly to the application of information science research in their own settings. The inclusion of members coming from SLA in the planning committee of the ASIS&T Annual Meeting will be key to achieving this added benefit. Through this involvement ASIS&T could develop workshops or tracks that speak directly to the interests of members coming from SLA.

SLA Website / Intellectual Assets

All the resources available on the SLA website (hosted by YM) can be moved to the ASIS&T website. Of particular interest are the resources available under “Learning Hub” on the SLA website. ASIS&T has plans to partner with [SkillType](#) in the coming months. The SkillType platform would allow us to share and make accessible the digital and video resources that make up SLA’s intellectual assets. Access could be provided to a wider audience than existing members, which could breathe new life into these assets and open opportunities for developing more assets and learning tools.

ASIS&T is particularly excited about the Oral Histories available on the SLA website as the ASIS&T Oral History project is a strategic priority for the coming three years. ASIS&T currently holds or has access to 72 recorded and transcribed oral histories that SIG-HFIS (History and Foundations of Information Science) and *Information Matters* will be collaborating to catalog and make available to members and the public. Incorporating those currently linked on the SLA website (11 in total), some of which duplicate the ASIS&T names, will serve to broaden the scope and value of the collection. Additionally, there is a list of a further twenty names of past presidents who have conducted oral history interviews, but those files are not linked but access to those would further enhance the repository.

Scholarships

As noted above, ASIS&T would preserve the remainder of the SLA Scholarship Fund and other restricted funds, keeping to the donor intention to the extent it is documented and expending those funds in accordance with existing SLA policy. It is ASIS&T’s understanding that complete documentation of the donor intent is not available, but those funds are believed to be donor restricted assets which means they cannot be unrestricted by the SLA Board to pay financial obligations. However, a legal opinion on this is pending. If the funds can be unrestricted to be used to pay financial obligations,

the remaining funds after paying out any outstanding obligations would be maintained by ASIS&T as a scholarship fund to benefit eligible members. The criteria for the awarding of the scholarship funds would be carried forward from current SLA policy/practice.

Communities

SLA, like ASIS&T, has a robust community network of both chapters and interest groups, now called Communities in SLA. It was clear in the recent meeting between the SLA Executive Board and ASIS&T Board of Directors that maintaining the community identities to the greatest extent possible is important to the SLA membership. SLA subject matter communities can be integrated into the ASIS&T Special Interest Group structure over time and in consultation with the members of the SLA communities and ASIS&T SIGs. Integration does not mean disappearance of SLA communities, and ASIS&T members would welcome the opportunity to expand the membership and scope of existing SIGs and have increased opportunities with new SIGs.

The ASIS&T online community (iConnect) is a robust platform where groups can communicate and share resources. Some of the current SLA communities could become online forums which would give them a place to communicate without the structure of and requirements of a SIG. If those groups ultimately want more opportunities for engagement, financial support, etc. they may formally become a SIG.

The existing ASIS&T [regional chapter structure](#) can easily accommodate the SLA geographic communities. Those communities that are focused more locally may become local chapters within the existing regional structure. They will be eligible for financial support through the regional chapter.

Information on how SIGs and Chapters are financed within ASIS&T can be found here: [Special Interest Groups](#) & [Chapters](#).

Awards

The SLA Awards would move into ASIS&T fairly seamlessly, retaining their name/brand and purpose to the greatest extent possible. SLA awards would be acknowledged at the ASIS&T annual meeting but awarded at the SLA conference. Likewise, ASIS&T awards could be acknowledged at the SLA conference and awarded at the ASIS&T Annual Meeting.

The pool of SLA Fellows would serve as an excellent resource to ASIS&T throughout the merger and transition process.

Archives

The fate of the SLA archives was voiced as a concern during the meeting between the SLA Executive Board and ASIS&T Board of Directors. There is currently a plan in place to destroy a quantity of boxes held at Iron Mountain and to move out 94 more boxes for

review and weeding. Whatever remains of essential archival material after this process is concluded can be added to the existing ASIS&T archive, which is housed at the University of Michigan, tagged as SLA archival materials. There should be no additional cost to ASIS&T to add these materials so long as the quantity is not overwhelming.

Governance

Adding voting members to the ASIS&T Board would require a Bylaws change, so the outgoing SLA Board of Directors will appoint two individuals to serve as non-voting members of the ASIS&T Board of Directors for the year following finalization of the merger. These two non-voting members will have full participation in Board discussions and be in a position to ensure the ongoing inclusion of SLA interests in the decision-making of the ASIS&T Board until such time as an election of new Board members takes place in the summer of 2026. At that point, it is anticipated that members coming from SLA would participate in the selection of the Board slate and election of new Board members. Members coming from SLA would be eligible to be candidates on the Board slate. Additionally, all ASIS&T Board meetings are open to any member to attend and observe.

Strategic Planning

ASIS&T is half-way through a one-year strategic planning process that will culminate in a 3-year strategic plan to be adopted ahead of the 2025 Annual Meeting in November. Though an initial draft of the plan had been developed ahead of the start of potential merger discussions, ASIS&T recognizes that it will be critical for SLA representatives to engage in the strategic planning process as soon as possible to ensure that all goals and objectives encompass the expanded membership and their needs/interests. The ASIS&T Board is also considering possible changes to the Vision and Mission, and the Board will seek to ensure that the scope is broad enough to encompass an expanded membership should the merger take place. It may be necessary to revisit the Vision and Mission of the merged organization again once there is a better sense of how the two organizations fit together, but for the immediate future ASIS&T is keeping the merger in mind in any possible revision to the current Vision and Mission. Further, ASIS&T invites SLA to immediately appoint one to two individuals to join the Strategic Planning Task Force to participate in the further development and finalization of the 2025 Strategic Plan.

It is noted that SLA also recently completed a strategic planning process resulting in a thoughtful and thorough strategic plan. ASIS&T has sought to incorporate the good ideas in that plan into its own plan as appropriate.

Branding

Branding will likely be the greatest challenge in successfully executing a merger of ASIS&T and SLA. Both organizations have strong brands, and it was clear in the meeting between the SLA Executive Board and the ASIS&T Board of Directors that SLA

members value the brand/logo and wish to retain those to the extent possible. To develop a long-term plan for branding the merged organization, ASIS&T may hire a professional brand consultant who can help rebrand the merged organization. Such a rebrand could ultimately (in the distant future) include a new name, but at a minimum produce a logo and tagline that represent the combined organization. In the short term, ASIS&T would add the SLA logo and name in some way on the landing page of the ASIS&T website and elsewhere as applicable. This will require some thought from the marketing staff, so a specific example is not yet available. ASIS&T may also use the SLA name to distinguish funds, communities, and programs that are uniquely of SLA origin. For example, the Scholarship Fund could be called the SLA Scholarship Fund (or another appropriate name as agreed upon). Ultimately, the goal would be to brand the merged organization as a single cohesive unit rather than a merger of two distinct organizations, so over time both the ASIS&T and SLA names may fade away, but for the immediate future ASIS&T, as the surviving entity of the merger, would ensure that the SLA identity remains visible while representing it as an integral part of ASIS&T as opposed to a separate entity. Also, SLA as a distinct entity will cease to exist upon their receipt of the Dissolution Certificate from the Attorney General of New York.

Anticipated Challenges & Approach

While there are tremendous synergies between ASIS&T and SLA, any merger of two separate organizations with the long histories of each will come with some challenges. Below are four such potential challenges and recommended approaches for how they might be addressed.

1. Organizational Culture Clash

- **Issue:** ASIS&T and SLA have different cultures, histories, and missions. ASIS&T is more research and technology-focused, while SLA emphasizes specialized librarianship in fields like law, business, and government.
- **Approach to address:**
 - Host joint events and town hall discussions prior to full integration, including casual, networking-focused online events.
 - Create a merger working group with representatives from both associations.
 - Honor SLA traditions and communities to the greatest extent possible.
 - Pair ASIS&T members with members coming from SLA for membership mentoring / orientation / networking.
 - Provide orientation to members coming from SLA about their new member benefits.

2. Membership Concerns and Attrition

- **Issue:** SLA members might feel that their specific professional needs won't be represented in the merged organization.
- **Approach to address:**
 - Conduct listening sessions and surveys to understand members' expectations.
 - Guarantee representation of former SLA interests in governance.
 - Dual branding during a transition period to maintain identity and trust.
 - Inclusion of all SLA communities in some form within the new SIG/Chapter structure.
 - Creation of two new SIGs, Data Science & Archives/Preservation

3. Brand Identity and Mission Alignment

- **Issue:** Merging two distinct brands and missions can dilute focus and confuse stakeholders.
- **Approach to address:**
 - Develop a clear, unified mission that reflects the strengths of both associations.
 - Engage professional branding experts to reimagine the merged identity.
 - Keep communication transparent and frequent during rebranding.

4. Financial Considerations

- **Issue:** SLA is currently in a precarious financial position. Based on available information, it appears that the remaining assets of SLA, once all financial obligations are resolved, will be approximately \$1,000,000, all of which is currently donor-designated for scholarships.
- **Approach to address:**
 - Conduct due diligence to ensure there are no outstanding and currently unknown financial or legal obligations of SLA ahead of merger.
 - Develop a merger budget to identify what funds SLA might need to make available to execute the merger over and above existing committed expenses, ensuring that the remaining funds would be designated for scholarships under the existing SLA scholarship criteria, and assuming any of those funds can be made unrestricted.
 - Clearly and transparently communicate to the ASIS&T membership how the merger would financially impact ASIS&T. Due diligence conducted to

date suggests that revenue from new memberships and an additional meeting would exceed the cost of assuming all SLA programming and member benefits.

- Clearly and transparently communicate to the SLA membership how the merger would impact SLA, and what the consequences of not completing a merger would be.
- Facilitate the termination of the Association Headquarters contract to ensure needed coverage through payment of final obligations but as early as possible. Note: the AH contract terminates upon dissolution or merger of the organization. The timeline below assumes that the AH contract would terminate upon finalization of the dissolution/merger. The AH contract as written expires in June of 2026.

Next Steps & Timeline

As of the date of this framework, this is the likely timeline for merger events.

Timeframe	Action
April 28, 2025	Initial meeting of ASIS&T Board with SLA Representatives to discuss draft proposal
May 21, 2025	Draft, vote on, and sign a Letter of Intent regarding the merger
May 22, 2025	Form merger working group to refine proposal
June 4, 2025	Finalize merger framework for presentation to the SLA and ASIS&T membership(s)
June 5 - July 2, 2025	Comment period on merger framework
July 2-16, 2025	Finalization of merger and dissolution plan based on member feedback
July 16, 2025	SLA Board votes on merger and dissolution plan ASIS&T Board votes on merger plan
July 17, 2025	Vote on merger and dissolution plan opened for SLA members Vote on merger plan opened for ASIS&T members
August 18, 2025	Vote on merger (and dissolution) plan closed

Simultaneously with the above activities, ASIS&T will begin the process of including SLA members in communications and member opportunities.

Conclusion

A successful merger will require transparent communication, member involvement, strong leadership, and a shared vision for the future. The process will not be easy, but with the right planning and collaboration, many of these challenges can be navigated. By merging, ASIS&T and SLA have an opportunity to lead the future of the information profession with renewed vigor, shared vision, and collective strength. Together, we can

create a single, dynamic, and future-ready association to empower information professionals for decades to come. The ultimate key to the success of this merger will be open, transparent communication with the memberships and stakeholders of both organizations to ensure that their concerns are addressed and their interests represented in the process.

Uniting Knowledge:

How the ASIS&T/SLA Merger Empowers Information Professionals

Shared Vision & Mission

ASIS&T

Global voice of information science & technology research and practice

SLA

Global organization for innovative information professionals

Advancing research and practice in the information sciences

Better Together | Member Benefits

SLA Members gain:

- Access to ASIS&T webinars, events, publications, awards, etc.
- Access to new global chapters and SIGs
- Expanded career resources & mentorship programs

ASIS&T Members gain:

- Access to SLA On-Demand Learning resources
- Expanded SIGs
- Networking with practicing information professionals
- Expanded career resources for students

...and so much more!

+ Amplified Advocacy & Influence

Unified voice on current issues

Stronger partnerships with academia, government, and industry

Greater influence in the information sciences

+ Merged Communities & Networks



Integration of SLA communities into ASIS&T SIGs and Chapters, including new SIGs

Continued opportunities for leadership roles both regionally and globally

New networking events, webinars, conferences

+ Preserving SLA's Legacy

Retaining SLA's Scholarship Fund

Continuing the Annual Conference

Maintaining SLA Awards

Promoting SLA Intellectual Assets

+ Next Steps



Open and transparent communication through town halls

Finalization of a merger proposal for member input and vote

Dissolution of SLA and launch of new ASIS&T