

6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SILENT HERALDRY FOR THOSE HOLDING COURT

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Courts are a very important part of SCA culture, and as you may know, the Herald is the voice of the Crown or any Sitting Noble holding Court. There are those among the populace who cannot hear Their Voice, and need another to speak in a language they can understand, that being sign language, or as it is called in the SCA, Silent Heraldry.

Items of note:

1. A Silent Herald is useful to all members of the Populace, not only those who are deaf. Sign language can be “read” by anyone who can see the Silent Herald, including those who are hard of hearing, or those who have a difficult time hearing what is going on in Court because of a room with poor acoustics or a quieter Vocal Herald (as we all know can happen). (Note: There have been times when the author had to fill in her hearing friends what was going on in Court because no one could hear the Vocal Herald, and she could see the Silent Herald.
2. Silent Heralds are required be able to clearly hear the Sitting Noble with no visual assistance and must use their full facial expression to assist the populace members understand what is occurring in court. A Sitting Noble cannot expect a hard of hearing (HoH) member of the populace to sign for other HoH or deaf members of the populace, but the herald may choose to do so if it is within their ability.
3. Sign Language is a visual language, and includes the full body. Meanings of words can change based upon the facial expressions and body language used with a sign. For example, a furrowed brow can indicate a question, not necessarily confusion or anger.
4. The Silent Herald needs to be visible to the entire Populace. The best location for the Silent Herald is close to the Sitting Noble, so that the Populace may see both the Sitting Noble and the Silent Herald at the same time (next to a Champion works well). If that is not possible, any highly visible location at the front of the room will suffice.
5. Like Vocal Heralds, Silent Heralds are volunteers. While some Silent Heralds are professional sign language interpreters in the modern world; others have a non-fluent knowledge of sign. But, the Sitting Noble should expect the same level of confidentiality from a Silent Herald as a Vocal Herald.
6. If you have any questions about Silent Heraldry, please do not hesitate to ask your Kingdom’s Silent Herald or Principal Herald. If you are looking at starting Silent Heraldry within Your Kingdom, contact the Society level Silent Heraldry Liaison at silenthald@heraldry.sca.org

A Silent Herald is not a detraction from Court, but an enhancement as it allows more members of the populace to understand and fully interact with a notable part of the SCA experience. A Silent Herald will answer to the Sitting Noble, as does Their Vocal Herald, and must also balance the needs of the members of the Populace, so all may share the wonderful experience that is the SCA.