Introduction

Shared Research Operations (SRO) contributes to the education and research mission of Texas State University by providing:

- User equipment and lab protocol training
- Research laboratory management
- Equipment stewardship
- Standard operating procedures
- Student workers and GA/DA employment
- Shared equipment support
- an amazing, efficient, and diverse education and research environment

Our team of technical staff manage several specialized laboratories where we offer affordable and efficient access to standard and advanced instrumentation for users from any discipline or level of experience. These equipment, facilities, and technical resources are located across campus and are available to all Texas State faculty/staff/students as well as external users who have established a relationship with a Texas State University Principal Instigator (PI). These specialty laboratories, aka Research Service Centers (RSC), are organized by general equipment capability and are funded via cost recovery from the user base alongside significant subsidy from the Materials Application Research Center (MARC) program.

Motivation for users

To maintain high standards of service, we advocate copious, frequent, and candid information exchange between SRO staff and the users. Timely feedback from our users guides the SRO technical team with respect to providing the appropriate consumables, equipment, training, and marketing. We also particularly appreciate the opportunity to showcase user results (papers/conferences/technical briefs) that highlight the benefits of working in SRO laboratories.

SRO policy and procedures are subject to change at any time. Suggestions and comments are always welcome. We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to working with you!

Outline

I. General Rules
II. Safety
III. Access
IV. Equipment
V. FOM
VI. Rules violations
I. General Rules

It is the responsibility of all SRO users and staff to act in a professional, courteous, and safe manner while in SRO facilities. Users violating the safety, protocol, or operational regulations of SRO facilities are negatively impacting the work of other users and therefore will be subject to the respective violation penalty as determined by the guidelines developed by the SRO advisory committee.

1. Intentional or negligent misuse of the equipment and/or facility, deviation from SRO policy, or willful disrespect of SRO staff, will result in disciplinary action (as determined by guidelines developed by the SRO advisory committee, see section VI) including but not limited to loss of access and financial liability.

2. Users must leave all work areas as clean or cleaner than they found them.

3. Users are responsible for managing their own data.

4. Users may not install software on any SRO computer.

5. Users may not utilize any SRO technical resource (PC, internet connection, printer) for anything that is not related to research or coursework.

6. The SRO is not responsible for samples left on/inside equipment or in the lab. If you choose to leave a sample in the lab space you must label it with: your name/PI, date, and contents. Abandoned unmarked samples will be promptly discarded.

7. Users may not access any area/storage cabinets/supplies marked “staff only”.

8. Please acknowledge the SRO in all publications and grant applications where equipment use, services, and/or expertise provided by our staff contributed to the final work product.

II. Safety

All users of SRO laboratories must receive safety training and adhere to lab protocol. Safety training topics may include hazard communication, hazardous waste management, emergency response, lab specific hazard awareness, and equipment specific hazard awareness. Most SRO facilities contain a significant number of physical and health hazards (e.g. chemical, mechanical, electrical, radiation, etc.) common to university or industry research environments. The following general safety regulations apply to all SRO facilities:

1. No food, drink, tobacco products, or gum are allowed in SRO facilities.

2. No animals are permitted in SRO facilities.

3. Clothing that fully covers the legs and shoes that fully cover the foot are required in SRO facilities. The SRO strongly encourages tying back long hair and avoiding wearing shirts that expose excess skin area to hazards such as cryogens and chemicals.

4. Any hazardous process or sample must be approved by the SRO lab manager prior to bringing the substance or process into the facility (e.g. BSL2 agents, nanoparticles, unstable compounds).

5. All users must read the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical before utilizing.
6. Any hazardous chemical requiring an SDS brought into or out of an SRO facility must be approved by the SRO lab manager prior to bringing the substance into or out of the facility.

7. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including but not limited to nitrile gloves and eyewear with side shields are required when working with ANY hazardous chemical.
   a. This includes use of standard solvents (e.g. Isopropanol, Methanol, Acetone) dispensed from wash bottles.

8. Users may not utilize any equipment, furniture, or fixtures as a substitute for a proper ladder/stepstool.

9. Users must immediately contact SRO staff to report any safety issues (e.g. chemical spills, broken glass, injury, etc.). Contact information may be found at the safety signage area near the lab entrance.

10. In the event of a building wide emergency, users must ensure their own personal safety by following emergency protocol as detailed on the door safety signage.
    a. In the event you must vacate the building (e.g. fire alarm), take no more than 60 seconds to idle all running equipment/processes that could prove hazardous to first responders or if left unattended then promptly exit the building via the appropriate egress route and go to the designated assembly point.

III. Access

Access to SRO facilities is controlled by Access Services who manage access rights via RFID card (your Bobcat ID). Please note that requests for access can take up to 1 week to process after all documentation has been submitted. The SRO maintains strict access controls primarily to ensure anyone with 24/7 access to one of our facilities has completed the required safety training.

1. Users must have a Texas State Net ID, password, and RFID badge.

2. Users must sign documentation including: activity release, lab specific safety training, and equipment safety training forms.

3. Each user must swipe their RFID badge when entering SRO facilities.

4. Users must not use their RFID badge to admit others to SRO facilities unsupervised.
   a. Users are responsible for the safety and behavior of anyone they admit into a lab space.

5. Groups of 5 or more guests must contact the lab manager to request access for tours/outreach/demonstrations in SRO facilities.

6. Users must keep lab doors closed.

7. SRO facilities are accessible 24/7 excepting closures for maintenance or emergency.
   a. Please arrange any special needs during non-business hours (outside 8:00-17:00) with SRO staff in advance.
8. Unaccompanied minors are not allowed in SRO facilities outside business hours (8:00-17:00), weekends, holidays, or university closures.

IV. Equipment

The advanced scientific instrumentation in SRO facilities is utilized by researchers and students from a diverse background. The SRO staff strive to provide expert training, high equipment uptime, and state of the art equipment throughout our facilities. It is crucial that our user base follow equipment SOPs and protocol for the benefit of the entire SRO community. Doing so keeps the equipment healthy and provides egalitarian access for all.

1. Users must adhere to Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and policy when utilizing equipment.
   a. Failure to adhere to SOP/policy is considered intentional or negligent equipment misuse.

2. Users must be trained and certified by SRO staff before using any equipment.

3. Users who have not utilized equipment for 6 months must be recertified or retrained.

4. Users may not utilize equipment undergoing maintenance/repair.

5. Users must contact SRO staff to report any equipment issues (e.g. malfunction, loss of power/facilities, reservation errors, etc.) via FOM, phone, or email. Contact information may be found on the back of the green binder located at each equipment station.

6. Users must record requested information in the equipment log books including but not limited to User’s full name, Supervisor/PI’s full name, Project name, Date, Start time, End time.
   a. It is critical to the health of the SRO equipment that users record requested general process parameter data, machine abnormalities, process deviations, etc. If you observe any anomaly, please bring this to the attention of SRO staff.

7. Users must sign up for equipment use under the correct project for said usage.

8. Users and their supervisor are responsible for any damage to equipment as a result of intentional or negligent misuse that occurs during their reserved timeslot.

9. Users must not let others operate equipment during their reserved time slot without written permission from SRO staff (lab manager and responsible PI must approve).

10. All equipment consumable/reconfiguration requests (targets, precursors, gases, wet chemicals, etc.), whether scheduled or as needed, must be approved in advance by the SRO staff.

11. Carrying out processes that utilize concentrated corrosive chemicals alone is forbidden. It is a dangerous practice and can prove lethal-especially when working with certain chemicals. Users must work with at least one other person (i.e. “the buddy system”) when using corrosives in a concentration that could result in an absorption and/or inhalation exposure that exceeds 50% of the immediate danger to life and health (IDLH) or median lethal concentration (LC50) as specified in the Safety Data Sheet (SDS). This rule is absolute and non-negotiable.
V. FOM (currently, FOM is only used in the ARSC and NRSC facilities)

Facility Online Manager (FOM) is a web-based portal the SRO utilizes for equipment and user management. Its primary functions are to manage user access rights, project membership, and equipment availability.

1. Users must reserve equipment time using the calendar tool in Facility Online Manager (FOM).
2. Users may not schedule equipment time more than 2 weeks in advance.
3. Users may not use their credentials to reserve the equipment for another user.
4. Users must log-in to equipment in FOM before starting their session.
5. Users may log-in to begin a session up to 15 minutes before the scheduled start time provided any previous users are no longer using the equipment.
6. If a user fails to log-in to begin their session more than 15 minutes after the scheduled start time, the reservation is cancelled, and they will be charged for the original reservation time.
7. When finished using equipment, users must log-out of equipment in FOM.
8. If a user fails to log-out to end their session more than 60 minutes after the scheduled end time, FOM will automatically log-out the user. Users will be charged for the additional hour.
9. Users must cancel reservations in the FOM calendar to notify other users and SRO staff that the equipment is available.
10. If a user fails to cancel a reservation 1 minute before the scheduled start time, they will be charged for the reserved time.
11. If users need to utilize equipment for longer than the FOM time restrictions allow, please contact SRO staff to arrange a solution.

- Typical restrictions are no more than a 3 hour reservation per user during business hours (M-F 8:00-17:00).

VI. Rules Violations

Users who fail to follow the rules outlined above shall be given verbal and/or written warning on the first offense. A second violation within 3 months of the first will require a meeting with the user, their supervisor, and SRO staff. A third violation within 1 month of the second will result in a 2-week suspension from SRO facilities. SRO staff reserve the right to immediately suspend users who engage in hostility, intentional misuse of equipment/facilities, dangerous behavior, or other severe violations of SRO policy.