



Flickr Commons: Collection Development Policy

Presented by the Flickr Foundation
Version 2023.10.01.1

Thank you for your interest in joining the Flickr Commons. The program was launched on January 16th, 2008, when we released our [pilot project](#) in partnership with [The Library of Congress](#). The [Flickr Foundation](#) now maintains the Flickr Commons program.

We are pleased to share our Collection Development Policy, developed at the Flickr Foundation over 2022-2023 and in consultation with Commons members and Flickr company staff. It is intended to outline what the Flickr Commons program is for and how to participate. Note too that Flickr Commons members and accounts are part of the larger Flickr community, and therefore subject to the broader [Flickr Community Guidelines](#).

Program objectives

1. To increase public **access** to archival photography collections,
2. To provide **tools** and resources to help people enhance the photographs' descriptions and other metadata,
3. To return this **new information** to the contributing cultural member organizations, and
4. To protect and attend to the **long life** of this unique collection.

Participating in the spirit of the program

We ask that Flickr Commons members take to the program as a member of the Flickr community and not just use it as a place to dump loads of images.

1. **A focus on photography.** This program, and the Flickr platform at large, is about photography. The Flickr Commons is a home for archival photography. We wish to encourage this focus on photography, but we are OK with not requiring it.
 - a. "What is a photograph" is a complex question. We welcome discussion on this, and encourage you to prioritise sharing "born photographs" in your account.



- b. If you share images that did not begin their lives as photographs—for example, a photograph of a map—we ask that you use the “content-type” setting on your uploads to specify the types of images.¹
 - c. Suppose you want to share copyrighted or licensed digital images with the Flickr community. In that case, you are welcome to publish them outside Flickr Commons in the larger Flickr corpus, using one of the licenses offered on the platform. If you’re in doubt about how to do this, please ask.
 - d. Moving images are welcome in Flickr Commons since video is native to the platform.
- 2. **“No known copyright restrictions” (NKCR) priority.** Today, Flickr Commons is a program designed to help organizations share photography where specific copyrights may not be known, using an assertion labelled “no known copyright restrictions.”²
 - a. We plan to incorporate the most open Creative Commons licenses into the program in the future (CC0/PDM). Support for open licenses would be a recognition of and support for the growing contributions of digitized materials that cultural organizations make to the public domain.
 - b. We discourage using watermarks and overlays that mark photographs with your institutional name or brand.
 - c. If you do know the status of copyright of an image, you can share them in the larger Flickr context, with their appropriate license indicated.
 - d. You will need to create a rights statement on your website which indicates your uptake of the NKCR assertion.
- 3. **Upload with awareness.** We ask member institutions to be attentive to the ethics of sharing sensitive content or collections, and encourage familiarity on metadata guidance from the C.A.R.E. data-sharing principles.³
- 4. **Be active in the community.** Flickr Commons is an opportunity for you to build new audiences around your collections, and doing this will need your time and attention. We will help by providing stats on usage and recommend checking in to say hello every month or so at least. We are happy to provide guidance and help on getting started when needed.
- 5. **For organizations, not individuals.** While we can help arrange for more than one individual to manage your organizational Flickr Commons presence, the uploader must be a recognized cultural or educational organization. We strongly

¹ There is more information on the development of the content type usage and its origins on the Flickr Foundation blog: <https://www.flickr.org/a-millions-of-things-pile/>

² Learn [more about ‘no known copyright restrictions’](#) on Flickr Commons.

³ [CARE Principles — Global Indigenous Data Alliance](#)



recommend using a general organizational email address for your Flickr account login.

6. **Share access copies.** Keep your own preservation copy. Even though Flickr is very confident of its uptime, capacity, and overall performance, we recommend keeping offsite copies of the content you publish in Flickr Commons. We are actively working on moving content and metadata around the web via the Foundation's [Content Mobility](#) program, so please let us know if you'd like to be involved in that.

Some edge cases and our suggestions

1. **"Life in the Library" photography.** Suppose you're also looking for a place to share contemporary documentary photographs of working life at your organization. We recommend using a second Flickr account because Flickr Commons is reserved and intended for photographic collections.
2. **"It's not copyrighted, but we don't want commercial use."** We know this is a tricky one. Even though your images are most likely copyright-free, you don't want certain types of uses to happen because you're worried commercial exploitation could happen or your images turn up in an undesirable context. Unfortunately, the "no known copyright restrictions" is not a form of copyright or a license, so it's impossible also to state reuse restrictions. Again, if you want to assert a license or reuse stipulation for your photographs, we ask that you consider a second Flickr account.

Maintenance & Removal

This policy is designed partly to support sharing high-quality, usable, and cohesive archival photography collections in Flickr Commons, on Flickr. It is possible, however, that individual images or entire collections may need to be removed for collection weeding, storage issues, or copyright dispute. These decisions happen in consultation with the Flickr Commons membership and, if required, the Flickr Foundation Board.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with us: hello@flickr.org.