

Donating Your Collection to the Society for Commercial Archeology



Thank You!

The Society for Commercial Archeology (SCA) welcomes donations to its digital archives and we are happy you are considering donating your materials. This document provides guidelines and some of our recommendations to facilitate the donation process.

About the Archive

As a service to its members, the SCA has established a Digital Archive. It is accessible from the SCA web site and acts as a searchable online resource. It is important to note that the SCA does not maintain a *physical* archive. If you're searching for a place to donate your physical materials (e.g., objects, souvenirs, photographic prints, postcards, maps, and other ephemera), please see the section at the end of this document.

Donation Criteria

The SCA has these recommendations and requirements for donated materials.

- Your materials should align with the focus of the SCA.** We are seeking items related to roadside culture in North America. If you have questions about whether your collection aligns with our focus, please contact us.

- Your materials should be original.** While there is an exception to this requirement (details below), your materials should be:
 - Original photographs or drawings,
 - Original manuscripts,
 - Original sound recordings, or
 - Original video recordings.

For legal reasons, the SCA does not accept copies of works created and owned by others. Examples of things we do not accept include photographic copies (e.g., pictures of book

pages), books and non-original manuscripts, magazines, journals, and commercial sound and video recordings (e.g., broadcast TV shows and commercial music recordings).

There are some exceptions to the originality requirement. The SCA will accept:

- Items in the public domain,
- Items dated before 1 January 1923,
- Items that have Creative Commons, GNU General Public Licenses (GNU GPL), or GDFL licenses that do not restrict further dissemination (items that have these types of licenses and attribution must be clearly identified),
- Items that document businesses that have ceased operations (you should provide evidence that the business has ceased operations), and
- Items by others accompanied by a signed attestation from the original creator (or his/her estate) releasing the items as well as documented provenance.

In addition, the SCA *will* accept digital images of postcards and maps. Postcard images should contain both front and back scans (postcard scans of only the front may not be accepted). Below is an example of an ideal postcard scan.



Your materials should be digital. As the SCA does not maintain a physical archive, it only accepts digital materials. The chart below outlines some of the acceptable digital file formats.

Materials	Examples	File Format(s)	Notes
Images	Original photographs, postcards, maps, trip logs	TIF, JPG (or JPEG), PNG, GIF	Postcards must include front and back scans in the same file.

Materials	Examples	File Format(s)	Notes
Text Documents	Manuscripts, articles, journals	DOC, DOCX, PDF, TXT	
Sound Recordings	Conference proceedings, interviews, original compositions, dictation	WAV, AIFF, MP3, FLAC, OGG	
Video Recordings	Conference proceedings, interviews, home movies, dashcam recordings,	MP4, M4P	
Other	Trip log files, slide decks	WAZE files, GPS logs, PPT, PPTX	Check the us to see if the SCA will accept these files.

Image Files

We would like your digital images to be of the highest quality possible. Here are some guidelines to help you.

Format and Compression

TIF Files

Uncompressed TIF files are preferred.

GIF Files

This file format is limited to 256 colors. GIF files should be single image and non-animated.

PNG Files

This file format has two varieties: an 8-bit (256 color) and a 24-bit (16+ million colors). Files in the PNG-24 format are preferred.

JPG Files

We may accept JPG¹ files that are saved with the highest quality setting available. Likewise, PNG files saved Images containing compression artifacts may not be accepted. Compression artifacts often appear as blotchy squares and checkerboards in an image. Below are examples of compressed image files.

¹ Sometimes named using the JPEG file extension.



This image shows uncompressed quality on the right and compression on the left. Source: Aza Toth/Wikipedia.



This image shows the checkerboarding that appears in highly compressed image files. Source: Vistawhite/CC Wikipedia.

If you're unsure about compression artifacts, use your graphics program to verify the image quality. Also, you can zoom in to see if squares, blotches or checkerboards appear.

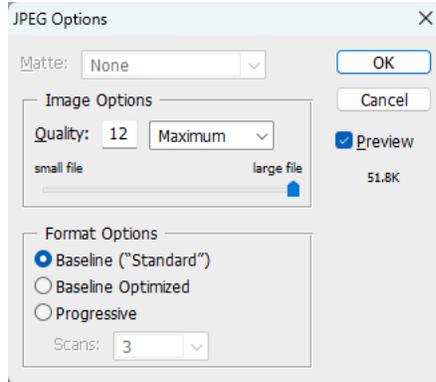
Photoshop

If you're using Photoshop to create your JPG files, there are some presets and scales to assist you with obtaining the highest quality image files. Photoshop uses:

- A numeric quality scale with 0 being the lowest quality and 12 being the highest; use 12, and
- Quality presets for Low, Medium, High, Very High and Maximum quality; use Maximum.

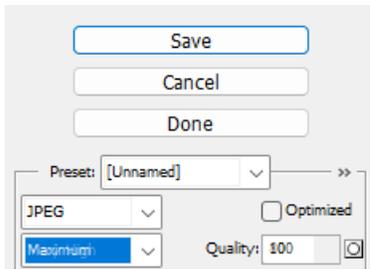
These settings appear in both the *Save* and the *Save for Web* options.

If you're Saving as a JPG (or Save As...),

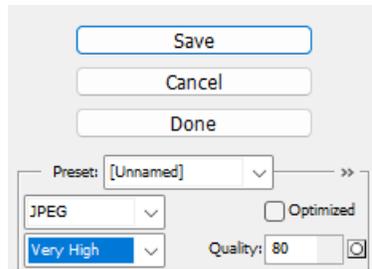


Photoshop's JPG Save options.² Note that Baseline is selected.

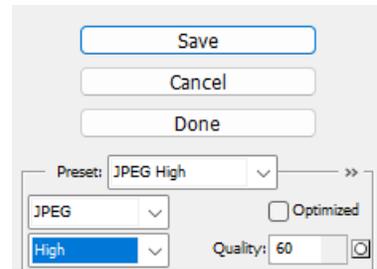
If you're Saving for Web, *do not* optimize your file.



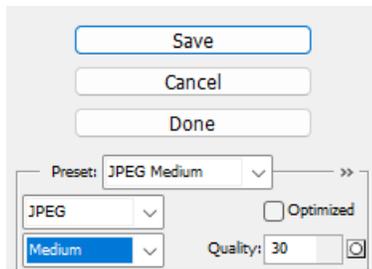
Maximum JPG setting.



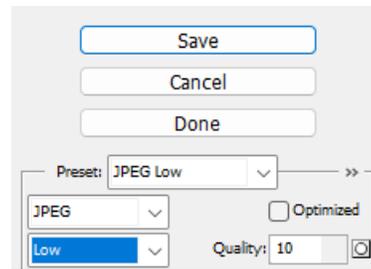
Very High JPG setting.



High JPG setting.



Medium JPG setting.



Low JPG setting.

² These screen grabs were obtained from Photoshop CS3 (Windows). They may not resemble your version of Photoshop. A quick Google search shows that the same presets and scale are still being used.

Note that in the Save for Web settings, Optimize is not selected.

Be sure to see the box below regarding Artificial Intelligence graphics tools.

Very Important Notes about JPG Files:

If your image is of low quality, you can't save it as a higher quality image. Those compression artifacts will always remain. JPG images will retain the lowest quality it has ever used. Crime TV shows and movies often give the impression that image details can be extracted from fuzzy or compressed images, but that is Hollywood and not the real world.

Every time you open and save a JPG file, quality is lost. For example, if you save a high-quality image, you might lose 5% of its quality. If you open it again and resave it, the image is now at 91% of its original quality. Opening and resaving a third time, the image will only have 86% of its original quality. A fourth time will leave the image with only 81% of its original quality.

Recommendation

Here is the range of image format and compression acceptability:

Format and Compression	Acceptability
TIF (lossless)	Ideal
JPG (Maximum Quality)	Very acceptable
JPG (Very High Quality)	Probably acceptable
JPG (High Quality)	May be acceptable
JPG (Medium Quality)	Might be Acceptable
JPG (Low Quality)	Will probably not be acceptable
PNG (24-bit)	Ideal
PNG (8-bit)	May be acceptable
GIF (single image, non-animated)	May be acceptable
GIF (animated)	Will probably not be acceptable

Color Depth

Color Depth should be at least 24-bits for color and 16-bit for grayscale. High-end graphics tools can tell you the color depth.

Note that the image depth will always retain the lowest depth it has ever had. If you start with an 8-bit image, you cannot change it to a 24-bit image – it will retain its 8-bit depth.

Recommendation

Here is the range of color depth acceptability:

Image Depth	Acceptability
Grayscale ³ 16-bit	Ideal
Grayscale 8-bit	Very Acceptable
Color 32-bit	Ideal
Color 24-bit	Acceptable
Color 8-bit	May be acceptable

Color Balance

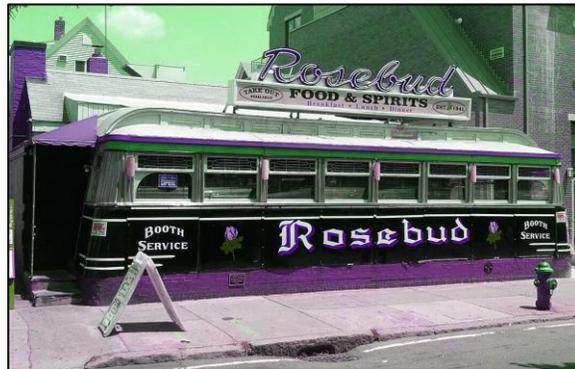
The dyes used in many prints and slides can fade over time. Moreover, some film types (e.g., using tungsten film in daylight) and incorrect processing lab chemistry may create images that look odd. Photoshop and other high-end graphics tools have many automatic correction tools that do a pretty good job at restoring the correct color quality.



Over saturated.



Under saturated.



Incorrect color balance.

Recommendation

Here is the range of color balance acceptability:

³ Black and white, or monochrome.

Saturation and Hue	Acceptability
Balanced color saturation and hue	Ideal
Over saturated	Will probably not be acceptable
Under saturated	Will probably not be acceptable
Incorrect color balance	Will probably not be acceptable

Focus

Images should be well-focused. Avoid submitting images that are blurry or have a soft focus. Photoshop and other high-end graphics tools have many automatic correction tools can add some clarity to blurry or soft-focus images.



Blurry image.

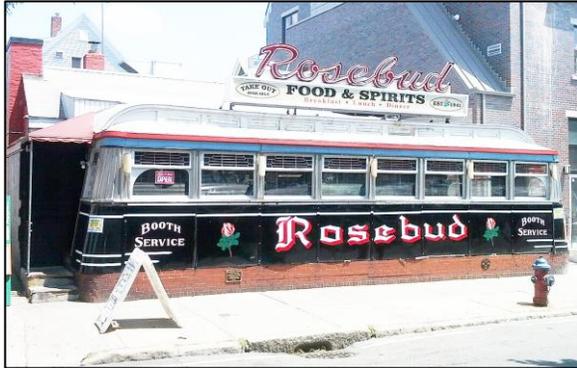
Recommendation

Here are the range of focus and blurry criteria and image acceptability:

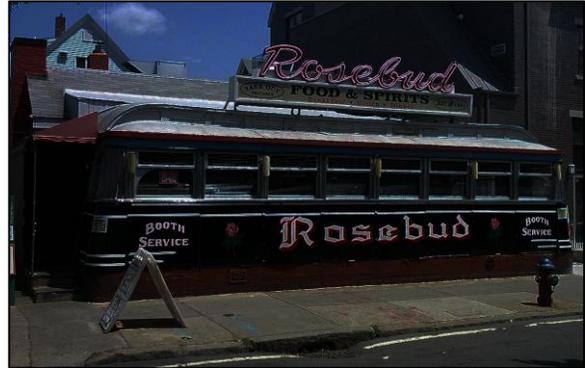
Sharpness	Acceptability
Image is sharp	Ideal
Some motion or blur	May not be acceptable
High motion or blur	Will probably not be acceptable
Slightly out of focus	May not be acceptable
Out of focus	Will probably not be acceptable

Contracts and Brightness

Poor camera exposures and poor printing and processing can result in under- and over-exposed images. Photoshop and other high-end graphics tools have many automatic correction tools that do a pretty good job.



Overexposed image.



Underexposed image.

Recommendation

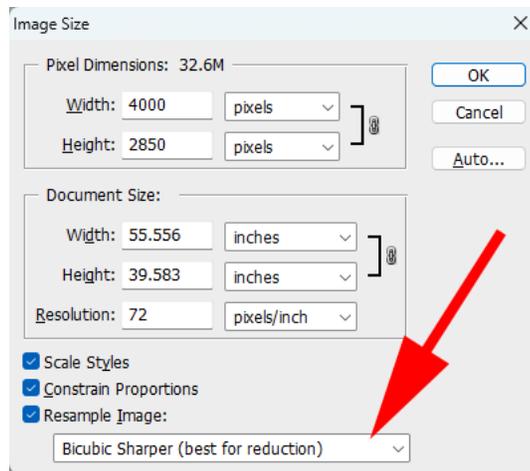
Here is the range of brightness and contrast acceptability:

Brightness and Contrast	Acceptability
Good brightness and contrast	Ideal
High contrast	May not be acceptable
Low contrast	May not be acceptable
Overexposed	May not be acceptable
Underexposed	May not be acceptable

Resolution

Image quality should be at least 1,800 pixels on the image’s longest dimension (300 dots per inch/dpi for a 6” wide image). While we do not have a maximum acceptable resolution, images greater than 3,600 pixels become impractical to manage and store. Images that are larger than that will not be accepted. Do not use a general-purpose graphics tool to enlarge a small image – this will likely introduce unwanted image artifacts.

If you’re using a high-end graphics tool (such as Photoshop) to reduce the size of an image, be sure to use the resampling option for reductions:



Recommendation

Here is the range of image size acceptability:

Image Size (Largest Dimension)	Acceptability
Greater than 3,600 pixels	May not be acceptable
Between 2,400 and 3,600 pixels	May be acceptable
Between 1,800 and 2,400 pixels	Ideal
Between 1,200 and 1,800 pixels	May be acceptable
Between 800 and 1,200 pixels	May not be acceptable
Below 800 pixels	Will probably not be acceptable

A Note about Artificial Intelligence Tools

There are emerging Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools that clean up low-quality, low-resolution images. They may even allow you to correct out-of-focus images and they may even remove compression artifacts. You are encouraged to investigate AI tools but there is no guarantee the images will be accepted.

Composition

Image horizon should be within two degrees of the image’s side. Crooked images may not be accepted. Use a high-end graphics tool (such as Photoshop) to rotate crooked images; you can also use these tools to remove unwanted image elements and for filling in missing areas.⁴



Poorly composed image.

Recommendation

Here are composition acceptability criteria:

Composition Consideration	Acceptability
Even horizon, no obstructions	Ideal
Crooked image	May not be acceptable
Cut off image	May not be acceptable
Fingers in front of lens	May not be acceptable

⁴ If altering an image, do not alter it to the point of it being unrealistic. You might want to remove a person making a silly expression, but if you doctor a picture of a diner so that it appears larger than it is (or alter the actual architectural details), the image would be fraudulent and therefore unacceptable.

Contamination: Fingerprints, Dust, Scratches, and Red Eye

Images should be free from fingerprints, dust, and scratches. Use a high-end graphics tool (such as Photoshop) to clean up images that contain fingerprints, dust, scratches or pupil red eye. If you alter the image, please do so prudently and use the guidelines in the section above.

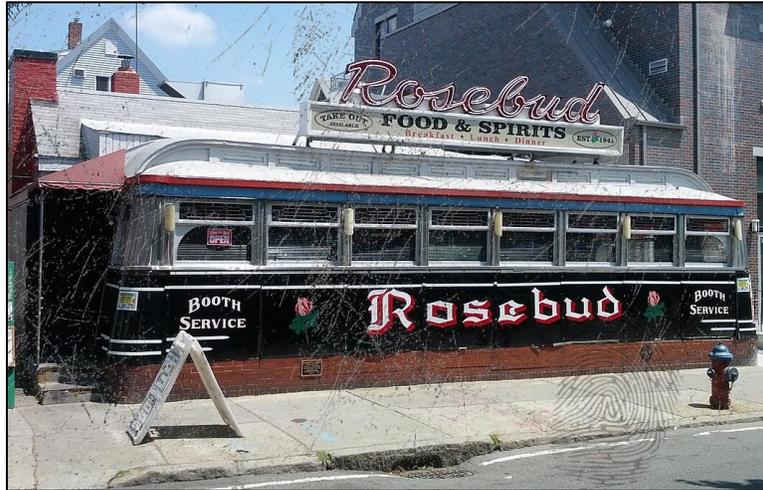


Image with dust, scratches and fingerprints.

Recommendation

Here are contamination acceptability criteria:

Contamination Consideration	Acceptability
Free of all forms of contamination	Ideal
Slight fingerprinting	May be acceptable
Heavy fingerprinting	May not be acceptable
Low dust	May be acceptable
Heavy dust	May not be acceptable
Some scratches	May be acceptable
Heavy scratches	May not be acceptable
People in scene with red eye	May be acceptable
Close-up portrait of someone with red eye	May not be acceptable

Vignetting (Hot Spotting)

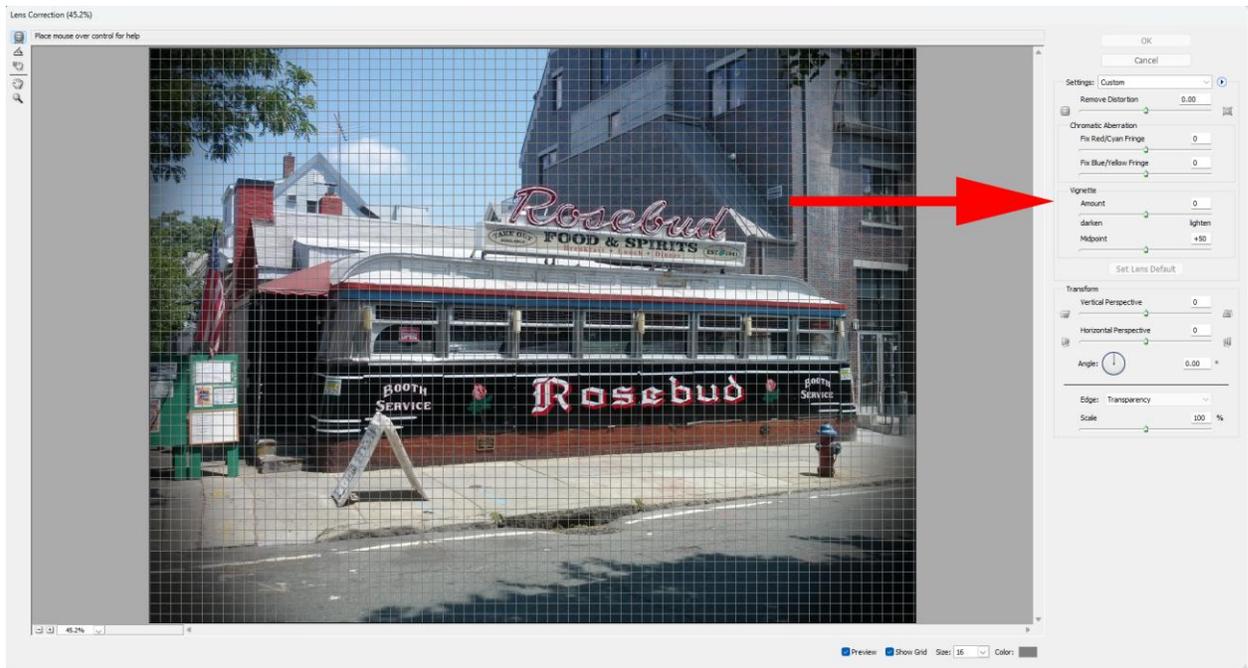
Vignetting is an image effect where the corners of an image are darkened (and/or the center of the image is overly bright). There are many reasons why images may contain vignetting including thick or stacked lens filters, lens attachments, poorly aligned lens hoods, and off-center light in multiple element lenses. Ideally, images should be free of vignetting.



Image with vignetting.

Many high-end graphics tools can remove some vignetting. Search for correcting lens distortion and/or vignette removal.

Removing vignetting can be very challenging. If you're not experienced with this level of image correction, it might be better to leave the image as-is.



Vignette correction/removal in Photoshop.

Recommendation

Here are vignetting acceptability criteria:

Vignette Consideration	Acceptability
No vignette	Ideal
Very slight vignette	Will probably not be acceptable
Slight vignette	May not be acceptable
Moderate vignette	May not be acceptable
Severe vignette	Will probably not be acceptable

Scanning

If the image is not an original camera photograph, the image should be obtained from a high-quality scanner. Images shot from copy stands or hand-held cameras may not be accepted.

Some high-end scanners come with excellent scanning techniques. One of the most popular is called Digital ICE (Image Correction and Enhancement). From Wikipedia:

The ICE technology works from within the scanner, so unlike the software-only solutions it does not alter any underlying details of the image.⁵

If you're shopping for a scanner, you might want to consider one that uses Digital ICE.

The Bottom Line for Images

If you are in doubt about image quality, ask yourself, *Would this image be suitable to be on the cover of a magazine?*

On the other hand, the *contents* of an image may override poor image quality. For example, you may have the only known photograph of an early 20th-century diner, but the image suffers from many poor-quality issues. If you believe your poor-quality image is of exceptional historic value, please let us know.



⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_ICE

Text Documents

File Formats

Text documents should be in DOC, DOCX, PDF, or TXT file formats. The SCA cannot accept files in other formats.

Sound Recordings

File Formats

Sound recordings should be in WAV, AIFF, MP3, FLAC, or OGG file formats. The SCA cannot accept files in other formats.

Other Files and Other Items

You may have digitized things not described above or in formats different than the ones described above. Check with us to see if the SCA will accept those files.

File Names

The digital files should have unambiguous names. We recommend this naming convention:

SUBJECT--City, State-Date (Year)-Your Initials.ext

For example:

ROSEBUD DINER--Somerville, MA-1985-JS.TIF

INDEPENDENT MOTEL INVENTORY--New Castle County, DE-1961-JS.PDF

ROBERT BARRON INTERVIEW--Library of Congress, Washington, DC -1989-JS.MP3

DIXIE HIGHWAY DASHCAM 1--Ocala to Miami, FL-2004-JS.MP4

The naming convention makes it very easy to locate a file without having to open it.

If your files are named differently, we may ask you to rename them.

File Directories

You may elect to place all of your files into a single directory. That is acceptable.

If you desire, you can sort your files into an unambiguous file directory structure using criteria such as content type (motels, diners, neon signs, etc.), location (country, state, town), or types of files (images, sound recordings, manuscripts, etc.).

If you decide to organize your files using a directory structure, the key thing is to be consistent in its use.

Your materials should be catalogued and inventoried. You should include an inventory of your materials. Donations without an inventory may not be accepted. The inventory should be a 1:1 match of the materials in your collection and be in a digital format. Inventories can be a spreadsheet, CSV files, flat file, Word/PDF file, or database.

An ideal inventory would include:

- The file name of the item,
- Source of the item (e.g., original work, or purchased postcard),
- The date of the item (date ranges are okay),
- Location of item (be as specific as possible),
- The item dimensions, duration or length (e.g., 2400 pixels x 1600 pixels, 32:45, etc.),
- Any corresponding transcription (e.g., a text transcript of a sound recording interview),
- Any copyright information, and
- All notes and other vital information about the item.

A simple inventory would nothing more than a description of each file. For example:

HARRY JENKINS INTERVIEW--South Bend, IN-2003-AS.mp3 – Interview with Harry Jenkins about the Indiana toll Road service plazas. 14 Dec 2003.

HARRY JENKINS INTERVIEW--South Bend, IN-2003-AS.doc – Transcript of the above interview.

BOB'S ALL-NITE DINER--Albany, NY-1991-AS.tif – Original photo, night exposure. Apr 1991.

BLUE VELVET MOTEL--Lumberton, NC-1961-AS.tif – American Postcard Co. Post 1961.

GROUP SEEKS TO EXPAND HI-WAY--Fort Worth, TX-1921-AS.pdf – Newspaper article from the *Fort Worth Daily News*. Includes group photo. 10 Oct 1921.

CHAIN OF ROCKS BRIDGE--IL-MO-1955-AS.tif – Curteich. Serial # 5C273. 1955.

NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE SERVICE PLAZAS--Hightstown, NJ-1960-AS.tif – Scan of commercial slide (Pacific Publications). 1960. I have been unable to find this image anywhere and it may be the only known copy.

Contacting the SCA

If your collection sounds like a good match to the SCA's digital archives, please contact us at info@sca-roadside.org. We will work with you to ensure a smooth transfer to the digital archives.

If your collection is deemed acceptable, we will ask you to sign a release that affirms that your material is original and roadside-related. The release will also affirm that your collection is in the public domain or are available via Creative Commons, GNU, or GDFL license. You will also be asked to indemnify the SCA of any legal claim regarding ownership and use of the images.

It may take anywhere from 3-6 months to transfer your collection to an online location. We will notify you as soon as the collection is online.

What if my collection is not digital?

Please contact us. We can assist you in finding a service that may be able to transfer your physical items to a digital format.

What if my collection doesn't meet your donation criteria? What if the SCA rejects my donation?

If your collection does not meet the mission of the SCA, we may be able to find someone who shares your passion about the things in your collection.

Another place to look is special interest groups on Facebook. There is a very good chance you will find someone who would like to receive your collection.

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