



# Smithsonian Institution

**Richard Kurin**  
**Acting Under Secretary for History and Culture**

## Memorandum

February 29, 2008

To: Directors of Museums, Research Centers, and Educational Programs

From: Richard Kurin

cc: Cristián Samper, Alison McNally, Ned Rifkin, Ira Rubinoff, Tom Ott, Evelyn Lieberman, Ginny Clark, Ann Speyer, Archives and Digital Asset Managers

Re: Call for Digital Images for Flickr Project

The Smithsonian will provide approximately 2,000 digital photographic images to Flickr, a popular photo-sharing website, as part of a pilot project. Our decision follows the successful experience of the Library of Congress in making items from two of its photographic collections available through Flickr's "Commons" (<http://www.flickr.com/commons>). Our Library of Congress colleagues have found that inclusion on Flickr has engaged broad audiences not otherwise accessing its collection, has given people an opportunity to comment upon the content of the collections, and has drawn new visitors to its own websites in massive numbers.

A proposed gift will help the Smithsonian post images related to American history and culture on Flickr. Smithsonian curatorial advisors have helped narrow the focus for this trial; we have decided to provide images to Flickr related to the broad theme of "American Celebration." These images will include both historical and contemporary photographs. The specifications for such are provided in the attachment.

By this memo, I am asking interested museums and archives to contribute in one or both of two ways: 1) suggest images or small collections of images already digitized (including born digital) and/or 2) nominate a very small, relevant collection of photographs that require digitization for this project.

If your unit is interested in participating, please contact Kathy Spiess, Director of the Central Digitization Office in OCIO, no later than March 10. She will need a short description of the images/collections to be provided (or digitized) and the number of images. Please refer to the attached requirements for participation. Funds from the gift will be used for digitizing a small number of images, processing images, and monitoring public comments and usage on Flickr as well as impact upon our own virtual visitorship.

Thank you for your consideration of this interesting project.

Attachment: Requirements for participation in Smithsonian Flickr Images Project

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# Smithsonian Flickr Images Project

## Requirements

### **Theme: “American Celebration”**

From birthdays to weddings, from graduations to harvests, from July Fourth festivities to ticker tape parades, Americans have long celebrated personal and family occasions, community events, holidays, and national milestones. These celebrations, of varied scope and quality, provide a snapshot of what is important to Americans. Viewed from a historical perspective, images from the past 150 years of what and how we celebrate illustrate changes in the nation and its people. In releasing some 2,000 digital images on Flickr, the Smithsonian offers the public a window into the American historical and cultural record and encourages people to use and indeed celebrate a national treasure.

**Content Specifications:** Proposed images should illustrate the following:

*Life cycle rituals and celebrations:* e.g., births and birthday parties, communion, baptisms, confirmations, coming of age, initiations, quinceañera, bar mitzvah, graduations, debutante balls, wedding showers, bachelor parties, weddings, baby showers, anniversaries, retirement parties, funerals

*Community celebrations and festivities:* e.g., harvest and product festivals/parades, ghost dance, Pow Wows, Juneteenth, Day of the Dead, city festivals and fiestas, arts festivals, First Night, Passover, Eid, Kwanzaa, Junkanoo, Mardi Gras, garden parties, block parties, Halloween, military celebrations, homecomings

*National Holidays and other designated days:* e.g., New Year, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Lincoln’s Birthday, Washington’s Birthday, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran’s Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day, May Day, Mother’s Day, Flag Day, Father’s Day, Columbus Day

*National and International Achievements* e.g., Presidential Inaugurals, celebrations of World Series, bowl games, March Madness, dedications of memorials and monuments, opening of the Panama Canal, celebrations of inventions, celebrations of Lindbergh’s flight, celebrations of Mercury astronauts, Moon landing, war victories, V-Day, U.S. World’s Fairs, recognition of U.S. Olympics/Olympians, Olympics festivities and spectacles

The images may be of photographs taken in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as those in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### **Technical Specifications :**

Still digital images in color or black and white

300 dpi at 8 x 10 inches

Metadata for managing the images and any desired metadata approved for public release.

If a museum or archive has images on the theme, but wants to provide them at a lower resolution, it should propose doing so. A few hundred of such images might be provided Flickr in addition to the 2,000 meeting the dpi specifications indicated above.

If a museum or archive wants to digitize a small, but important collection for this project, that should be proposed. The number of images to be digitized should be small, and the metadata readily available, so that the project could be accomplished in a week or two.

Some funds from the gift may be used for this purpose.

**Rights Specifications** : Museums and archives must propose for inclusion in this project images where the rights are “clear”—meaning that there are no restrictions on the use of the images to be posted on Flickr. The Smithsonian must either own all rights to the images, or have the right to use them for these purposes, or the images must be in the public domain. There should be no third party restrictions on the use of the images, no royalties to be paid, no permissions for this use needed from photographers, “models” or subjects in the images. The Smithsonian will globally code all images with the statement “No known copyright restriction” but will also encourage users to attribute the source of any image used.

**Quality Specifications** : Images need to show people, not just objects, buildings or landscapes. Images should be chosen for historical and cultural significance, composition and aesthetic quality, and clarity of image, with museums and archives weighing the importance of those factors. Images should not be overly repetitive (not numerous shots of the “same” activity).

**Participation Requirements** :

Images selected for this project, must be:

- Managed through either SIRIS or the Smithsonian’s Artesia-DAM (to simplify upload and management of images on Flickr). SPS managed images are currently being migrated to the Smithsonian’s Artesia-DAM and are therefore eligible for nomination.
- Viewable on the unit’s or Smithsonian’s website, including SIRIS, (in order to evaluate the number of new web visitors from Flickr to Smithsonian websites)
- Made available for inclusion to the Smithsonian Photography Initiative (SPI) website (which will help us evaluate web traffic of images on Flickr versus those on the SPI website) and possibly other SI sites in order to drive visitorship back to original, fuller unit-level collections

Images may also, but do not have to be:

- Available for purchase from a Smithsonian website (unit e-commerce or Corbis)—publication quality of 600 dpi is preferred although not required

**Process**

Directors or authorized representatives of museums and/or archives should send their proposals to Kathy Spiess in OCIO no later than March 10, 2008. Each proposal should be very brief, with a description of the number of images to be provided and how they fit the content, technical, quality and rights specifications. We will examine the proposed number and range of images to be provided—considering the historical, ethnic, and geographic mix, and the number of images needed by the Smithsonian overall. Museums and archives will then be asked to provide a particular number of digital images. These will then be reviewed by a small curatorial committee for meeting content and quality criteria.

Once accepted, OCIO will begin the process to upload and tag the images and metadata for delivery to Flickr. This process includes adding a link from the image’s webpage in Flickr to a specific Smithsonian museum/archive website and another link to an e-commerce site, if applicable. The target is to have the images posted to Flickr by early summer of 2008.

For units proposing new digitization for the project, a decision will be made shortly after March 10, and funds transferred or arrangements made to accomplish the task.