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Smithsonian Open Access: Frequently Asked Questions

What does Smithsonian Open Access include?

Open access applies to digital assets that are created, stored or maintained by the Smithsonian. This might include text, still images, research datasets, 3D models and collections data.

What is not included in Smithsonian Open Access?

Some items are not part of the open access program, and their use is restricted, for reasons including:

- The Smithsonian has not yet created a digitized image or data for an object
- An object is under copyright
- An object is subject to contractual restrictions from a donor, lender or artist
- An object is culturally sensitive
- An object is not fully owned by the Smithsonian
- An asset is in a format not yet incorporated fully on Smithsonian digital collections platforms, such as video and sound recordings
- An asset is a Smithsonian name or trademark
- A digital asset created by or on behalf of the Smithsonian as a product is sold or licensed for a fee

Will the Smithsonian release more open access items in the future?

Yes. The Smithsonian is committed to releasing over 3 million items throughout 2020 alone. Beyond 2020, it will add more items on a continuing basis as they are digitized, researched and published online.

Can people use Smithsonian Open Access content for commercial use?

Yes, the public may use Smithsonian Open Access content for commercial purposes without attribution, permission or fees paid to the Smithsonian. While people do not need the Smithsonian's permission to use open access content, they are responsible for obtaining any third-party permissions that may be required for use. For example, a third party may claim rights to the content such as trademark, privacy or publicity rights. Individuals are responsible for their own lawful use of these materials and for not infringing on the rights of third parties.

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