

Armory

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A collaborative effort of the members of the SCA Heraldry Unofficial chat group

When are LoAR's published?

There is no set date for the LoAR to be released each month, the publication date varies on a number of factors, including mundane holidays and large SCA events. The letter is published as quickly as it can reasonably be produced and proofread. Don't wait for it to be posted, sign yourself up to receive them via email. Go to <http://lists.sca.org/listinfo> and select the LoAR format (html, pdf, etc) you prefer to receive. There is also an RSS feed. Point your RSS reader at <http://heraldry.sca.org/loar/loar.rss>

To quote some heralds: "...a submission is like having a baby, lots of work goes into the effort, there are a couple checkups along the process, but around the end of nine months you will have something we hope you will love for a very long time" and "...like babies, some letters arrive on time, some arrive late, and some come early."

Request an image from the archives

The SCA archivist is happy to send emblazons upon request (redacted.) Please copy/paste the registration information from the OandA, and send via email to the Laurel Archivist archivist@heraldry.sca.org for images.

About "my family coat of arms"

Coat of arms belong to individuals, not to families -- the idea of a "family coat of arms" is something that people have made up in order to sell things to others, it has no grounding in history (except, in Poland, where arms belonged to clans -- but that's not relevant here). You may want to look at [this FAQ](#) which answers some basic questions about the common fallacy of family arms. You may also find it useful to read [the first item in the British College of Arms' FAQ](#).

Why aren't the badges for the various martial subdivisions registered? (youth combat, archery, rapier, etc.)

Short answer: The College of Arms policy is that no subordinate office is allowed to register armory for itself. It can only be registered by a top-level officer. Since all subdivision marshals answer to the Kingdom marshal, and they answer to the Society Marshal, and he/she answers to the Society Earl Marshal, it is only the SEM that can register badges (and designate them for use). So far, no SEM has decided to do so, for a variety of reasons. One main consideration is that opening up badges for subdivisions in one kingdom opens the field for subdivisions in ALL kingdoms, and there will be a massive disappointing scramble for each kingdom to register a badge for their own Youth Marshallate (to give one example). There will be anger and hurt feelings when only one kingdom can actually do so... Therefore, none can currently do so. [You can read more in this thread](#).

Why are names and armory required to be unique for registration? And why must names have two parts? That's not at all historical!

Short answer: Nope, it's not entirely historical. There are cultures where it was common to just have one formal name, and there are period examples of more than one person having the same armory. Yup, it happened! But there are also examples of cultures where care was taken to make sure that each person had nicknames to go along with their formal name, so that they could be told apart. Two John the smiths, but referred to as John the blonde smith, and John the one-armed smith. There were still differences acknowledged, and that's the system we've adapted for the SCA - being able to tell apart people with incredibly similar names.

We are not a medieval society, much as we try to re-create aspects of one - we can't re-create them all. We don't chop off arms on the battlefield, we don't eat our horses when the food court closes, and we adapt our rules so that they serve the widest sample of our period. We also serve a modern audience that values uniqueness, and we have rules handed from the Board of Directors to the College of Heralds, therefore we offer the opportunity for everyone to register a name and armory that will be guaranteed to be unique to them. [You can read more here.](#)

If this is a topic you feel strongly about, you can send your comments to the Board (comments@sca.org) and to Laurel (the head of the College of Arms (laurel@heraldry.sca.org).

DRAWING/EDITING PROGRAMS

Each of these programs has positives and negatives, and a learning curve associated with getting used to the interfaces and how to do things in the program. There are tons of free tutorials on the web, on YouTube, etc.

It's important to note that electronic renderings are NOT REQUIRED. Many heralds still use pencil, pen, lightboard, stencils, and markers.

If you create electronic versions of the submissions forms, do not alter them in any way. Place your artwork inside the existing outlines. Altering the existing outlines is grounds for return. Consult with your kingdom submissions herald if you have questions or concerns about digital artwork and heraldic submissions.

The following applications use vector graphics, sometimes called "drawing" programs, which can be scaled arbitrarily without pixelation:

- [Inkscape](#), a free and open-source program for creating vector graphics. Many tutorials can be found around the internet as well. Inkscape can open and save PDF files, so it's excellent for dropping line art into submission forms. (Linux, Windows, Mac.)
- [Expression Design](#), another free vector editor. (Windows. Discontinued.)
- [Adobe Illustrator CC](#), a popular commercial drawing package. (Windows and Mac. Multiple pricing plans, including \$240/year.)
- [Corel Draw](#) (Windows. \$350.)
- [Microsoft Visio](#) is a technical diagramming tool that can also be used for armory. Can export images to SVG and other formats. (Windows. Multiple pricing plans, including \$180/year.)
- [OmniGraffle](#) is similar to Visio. (Mac. Versions for \$99 and \$199.)

The following applications use raster graphics, sometimes called bitmap or “painting” programs, where each pixel can be shaded independently:

- [GIMP](#), a free and open-source program for creating bitmap graphics, which can do pretty much everything most people would need Adobe Photoshop for, although with a very different interface. (Linux, Windows, Mac.)
- [Pixlr](#) and [Pixlr X](#), free online image editing programs. (Web-based.)
- [Paint.net](#), another free bitmap editing program. (Windows.)
- [AutoDesk Sketchbook](#), free. (Windows and Mac.)
- [Adobe Photoshop CC](#), a popular commercial painting package. (Windows and Mac. Multiple pricing plans, including \$120/year.)
- [Corel PaintShop Pro](#). (Windows. Versions for \$64 and \$80.)

For more information on the distinction between vector and raster images, see [this article](#).

Nearly every vector graphics application will export in raster formats, for example allowing you to convert SVG images to PNG or JPEG files.

To convert a raster image to vector format (ie to import a JPEG image into a tool that works with SVG files), you can use Inkscape's “Trace Bitmap” feature, or [an online tool to convert other graphics formats into SVGs](#):

- [Auto-Tracer](#) will make your JPEG or PNG graphics into scalable vector art.

Online Design Suites

These are great for doing mockups of ideas, or for creating personal displays. For SCA purposes however, these should be used with caution, as the shield shapes are not the same as used for SCA submission forms. They also do not always include charges, field divisions, or ordinaries that the SCA commonly uses, and they may include tinctures, charges, and treatments that **do not meet submission standards.**

- [Coat of Arms Design Studio](#) by Inkwell Ideas. The paid version adds a lot of stuff (namely non-standard lines), but even the free version is fairly robust.
- [Uplink, a set of resources for RPGs](#), which includes a basic coat of arms design suite.
- [Blazonry Server](#)

When using these programs, consider the [unofficial RGB Tincture Mapping chart](#).

HERALDIC CHARGES - ARTWORK/CLIP ART, ETC.

Note: The “meaning of symbols” in heraldry is largely post-period — those Victorians have a lot to answer for. Heraldry is about identification, not about symbolism.

There is no one master list of all registrable charges - we add new ones all the time, and we remove others that are determined to be not something found in period heraldry. But these resources can give you a good idea what's out there.

- [The Pennsic Traceable Art Project](#). Note that some charges have been labeled SFPP and some are no longer allowed - so use at your own risk! When you use [this index hosted on the SCAHeraldry Wikispace](#), it includes notations about which charges have been ruled SFPP, and which are no longer allowed.
- [Book of Traceable Heraldic Art](#). The Book of Traceable Heraldic Art is a compilation of armorial illustrations intended to facilitate SCA device and badge design.
- [Pictorial Dictionary of Heraldry 3.0](#) (PicDic). Compiled by Bruce Draconarius.
- [SVG Graphics for Heralds](#)
- [SVG Heraldry Wikia](#)

- [WikiMedia Commons](#) - Many SVG files are available, but use with caution. Many of the images are post-period, and some cannot be registered by the SCA. Please respect the copyright status of specific images.

- Auto-Tracer will make your graphics into higher quality vector art - <http://www.autotracer.org/>

But I want something that's unique or unusual!

- Previously unregistered charges, as posted periodically on SCA Heraldry Chat by Bruce Miller.
- A report from Morsulus about most frequently used charges registered in the OandA (spring 2018)
- A blog post reflecting common and uncommon charges (spring 2018)

INDIVIDUALLY ATTESTED PATTERNS (IAP)

- IAP resources on SCA Heraldry Wikispace
- Tincture IAP Database
- Add examples to the Tincture IAP Database
- IAP compilation - this spreadsheet lists some of the IAPs previously registered, which can help when looking for evidence for your own IAP
- Examples of Individually Attested Pattern Registrations - blog post detailing all known IAP registrations.
- IAP Guidelines in SENA A4

PERIOD ARMORIALS

- The Medieval Heraldry Archive
- Yehuda's database of period rolls of arms
- Gunnvor's Links to Online Rolls of Arms
- German rolls of arms "wappenbuch"

- [WappenWiki](#) - a link to online rolls of arms
- [Heraldica Nova](#)
- [Aspilogia](#) - modern reproductions, but they are great to look through for inspiration
- [Coblaith's Heraldry Stuff](#)
- [SCA Armory Articles](#)
- [Banners, standards, and badges from a Tudor manuscript in the College of Arms](#) - depictions of period badges

Also consider this article by Bruce Draconarias which discusses regional differences in heraldry.

ASIAN ARMORY RESOURCES

- [*O-umajirushi*](#) is a unique 17th-century compendium of samurai heraldry. It is the earliest surviving color compendium of Japanese crests and heraldry. This is in English.
- [Daibukan](#) - This is a chronologically organized roll of kamon (arms) by Hashimoto which includes the names of the owners, their titles, and their genealogies. The images up to 54 are pre-1600 or grey period. From there on, the entries become more problematic as you progress through the volume, and should be thoroughly double-checked. Some entries will be post-period, particularly after page 209. This is in Japanese.
- [The Elements of Japanese Design: a handbook of family crests, heraldry, and symbolism](#) by John Dower. This is in English.
- [Kenmonsho Kamon \(ca 1460-1470\)](#) is the earliest known Kamon book and is reproduced on pages 409 ~ 476 of volume 23 of Gunsho Ruijū. Gunsho Ruijū is one of several standard collections of koten (old books) used by Japanese scholars. It is abbreviated as GR in citations appearing in English language articles and monographs. This is in Japanese.
- [Toda City Library](#) has an interesting web page devoted to kamon which among other things indexes kamon both by family and by design. It also traces the history of kamon back to use by the kuge (imperial court nobility) in the 11th century. This is in Japanese.
- [Collection of precedents on Asian heraldry/heraldic elements](#) - This resource lists charges, patterns, layouts, and other motifs that originate in non-European cultures

that can still be adequately described using SCA European heraldic terms. This makes them registrable within our College of Arms even though we follow European heraldic tradition.

- [Japanese Kamon in SCA Heraldry](#) - a FB group for those interested in preparing kamon for SCA submission

CONFLICT CHECKING

- [Ordinary and Armorial \(OandA\)](#), the database of all registered SCA names and armory
- [Categories list for the OandA](#).
- [East Kingdom Heraldic University](#), which has a series of videos to explain charge group theory, basic conflict checking, and using the Complex Search Form.
- [SENA](#), the rules governing names and armory
- [Intro to Conflict Checking handout](#).
- [Conflict checking with the Complex Search form handout](#)
- [Conflict checking names](#)
- [Kiho's Blazon Parser](#): This tool has not been updated for 2 years, and is therefore not a reliable resource for conflict checking. It's still a totally cool project, but unless it's updated heralds will find that other conflict checking resources are more reliable.

SCA HERALDRY RESOURCES

- [Heraldry for Non-Heralds](#), a great basic primer of heraldry as practiced in the SCA
- [Home page for the SCA College of Arms](#)
- [The Standards For Evaluation of Names and Armory](#) - The official rules for names and devices.
- [SCA Heraldry Wikispaces project](#)
- [East Kingdom Herald University \(EKHU\)](#) - a series of video classes taught by Elmet Herald and others focusing on various aspects of serving as a Herald in the East Kingdom and the SCA at large. You may need to scroll right to see the video and handout links. Most lessons are basic heraldic knowledge and applicable to all kingdoms.

- [Modar's Heraldry Page](#) - A hub of information for all of the above topics, plus voice heraldry. Includes a lot of valuable articles for the pure beginner. (Some links are out of date, but most are still very helpful).
- Your kingdom's specific heraldry page will have information about its own rules for submission requirements, full heraldic achievements, populace badges, and more. A list of links to those pages can be found [here](#).
- Request a blazon from the archives - The SCA archivist is happy to send blazons upon request (redacted.) Please copy/paste the registration information from the OandA, and send via email to the Laurel Archivist archivist@heraldry.sca.org for images.

For Consultation Tables Without Internet

- [Ordinary and Armorial e-pub](#): Always look for the most recent version.
- [Herald Stick](#) - carry an offline mirror of the OandA and many common heraldry resources on a thumb drive. (requires a bit of technical savvy to install)
- [Aspilogia app for Windows 8.1](#), and for [Windows 10/Windows Mobile 10](#). This is a searchable copy of the Ordinary & Armorial, including support for complex armory search. NOTE: The database is packaged separately. When first run, the app will require the database be downloaded from the server (approximately 16MB compressed, requiring 48MB on disk).
- [Herald's Point Off-Site Group](#), a Facebook group where other heralds can help with conflict checks, drawings, etc. You should announce your event a week or so in advance so that people are aware of a need for support.
- [Golden Stag OandA software](#) - The purpose of this program is to provide a means of searching the SCA's Ordinary and Armorial (OandA) database.