

Why Register?

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One of the questions that a herald may be asked is, “Why register?” Since it costs a fee, it’s only natural for people to inquire why they need to register their SCA name and/or armory. First and foremost, realize that no one is –required– to register their name or their heraldry. But there are some good reasons for doing so.

The primary reason for registration is Social Courtesy. The SCA is a polite and honorable society. We attempt to enrich our organization, add to its ambiance and extend respect to all. Registration assists in this by having one’s name and armory added to the official rolls. This in turn allows the Crown, heralds and scribes to know what to call you and how to spell your name should you be granted an award. Additionally, registration allows you to be entered onto the Kingdom’s Armorial (Roll-of-Arms) thereby adding to the pageantry. And then there is the fact that registering shows you are committing yourself to the SCA and the ideals it is striving for. Because recording heraldic information is a period concept, the SCA strives to provide an opportunity for members to participate in that area, through the registration process.

The secondary reason for registration is to Safeguard. Registration includes SCA-wide protection, meaning that no one else in the SCA can register exactly the same name or armory that you have. It also means that your name and heraldic design will be checked to make sure that you don’t infringe on someone else’s design accidentally, thus saving you from claiming to be someone you’re not. Imagine a situation where you’ve been in the SCA for ten years and have been using a heraldic design, but never got around to registering it. Over the years you’ve placed the design on a lot of your things. Then one day while visiting another kingdom you see someone displaying a banner with your design on it. Upon investigation you discover this other gentle has recently registered the design, not knowing of you. You are now in the situation of having many items that you will need to change or replace because that design belongs to someone else. Registration is designed to prevent such things from happening. And yes, this has happened...safeguard yourself by registering.

The tertiary reason for registration is Education & Assimilation. By consulting with the heralds, researching valid heraldic designs and locating proper name documentation, a gentle can find themselves discovering aspects of the Middle Ages that they can utilize to maintain the authentic look and feel which enhances the SCA experience. Additionally registration may be a gentle’s first glimpse into the area of heraldry. This peek may lead to heraldry becoming an area of interest for them to learn about and participate in.

Side-Notes:

1. A fairly common misconception of new members, that heralds should be aware of, is the belief that if you are a paid member, you have registered your name (because the Registrar’s office asks for a person’s SCA name and the membership card they receive has that name on it). Of course it is not the case that paying one’s membership fee and getting a membership card means one has registered their name. The SCA Registrar will put any name you write on your membership form on your membership card. But the name Registrar and the phrase “registering a name” makes it sound like they should go together...hence part of the confusion. However, the Herald’s Office has a reciprocal arrangement with the SCA Registrar’s office: heralds don’t accept membership applications and fees; and the Registrar doesn’t register people’s names and armory. This works out very well for the offices involved, but can sometimes confuse new members.

2. A person does **not** have to be a paid member of the SCA to register a name and/or armory. Any gentle may submit whether they are a paid member or not. **HOWEVER**, because the College of Arms' filing system is based on SCA Names and not real-world names, to submit armory (device and/or badge) a submitter must either have a name registered or be submitting a name along with the armory.

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