USING THE FLICKR API

Queensland State Archives

Capturing records from Flickr

If you want to export content from Flickr, a simple way to do this is to use the Flickr API, called the Flickr API Explorer. You can access it through your usual browser. If you query or call the API, you get formatted results that you can copy and paste into documents that you can then save into your internal recordkeeping system.

The Flickr API is very flexible and provides excellent functionality for exporting information about your Flickr photos. But note that it doesn't export the photos themselves.

Using the API

To access the Flickr API, go to this page:
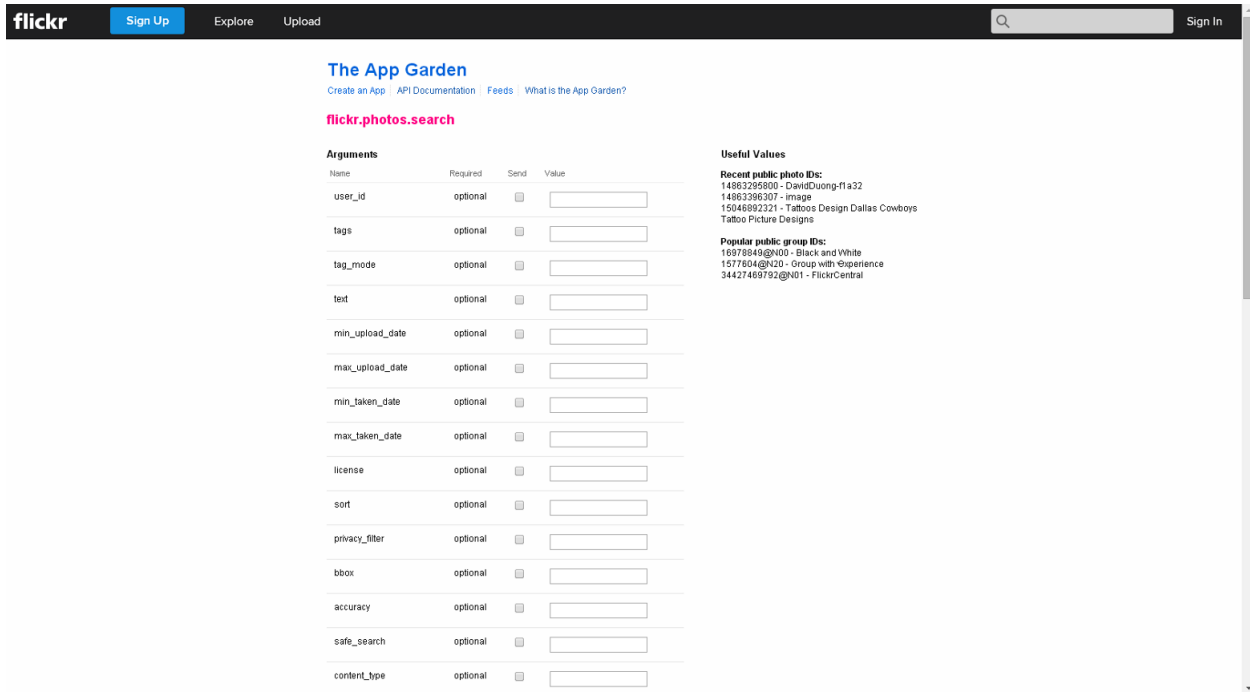
https://www.flickr.com/services/api/

Flickr provides a range of pre-formatted queries for you to use. They are listed under **API Methods** on the righthand side of the API home page. All you have to do is click on the URL of the query you want, input the relevant information, and call the results.

Useful API calls

If you want to capture recordkeeping information from Flickr, perhaps the most useful call you can make is **flickr.photos.search**. The template form for this call is here:

https://www.flickr.com/services/api/explore/flickr.photos.search
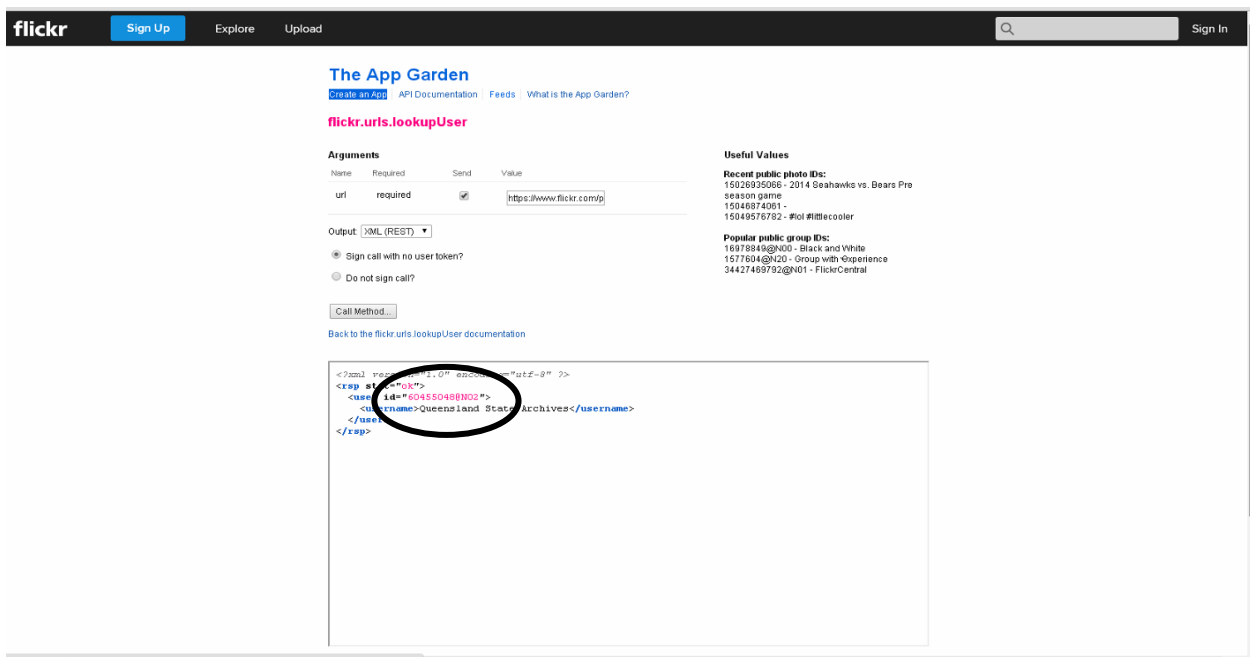
It looks like this:

You can use this template to search for many different kinds of information in Flickr. For example, if you want a list of all the photos in your Flickr account, all you have to do is enter your user ID in the **user_id** box at the top of the page, then scroll down and click the **Call method** button (not shown above).

If you don't know your user ID, you can easily find it by using the **flickr.urls.lookupUser** query. Simply navigate to this page:

https://www.flickr.com/services/api/explore/flickr.urls.lookupUser

and enter the full URL for your Flickr homepage in the **value** box for **url**. Click the **Call method** button and wait for the results. They will look like this (the Queensland State Archives Flickr account has been used as an example):

The user ID is the first piece of information returned. The ID for the Queensland Archives Flickr account, 60455048@N02, is circled as an example.

Now that you have your user ID you can use it to search for photos in your account using the **flickr.photos.search** call. Here is an example search for all photos in the Queensland State Archives account:

Note that the search results are automatically paginated. By default, only 100 results appear on each page. You can increase this to 500 by entering 500 in the **per_page** box in the query. If your query returns more results than can be returned on one page, you will have to repeat the query as many times as there are pages, adding the required page number to the **page** box for each query. For example, this is page 2 of the results for the query against the Queensland State Archives Flickr account (**per_page** number has been left at 100):

Note the number 2 in the **page** box and also the information in the results query telling you that this is page 2 of 6 in the results list. Entering 3 in the page box and re-running the query will return page 3 in the list, and so on.

Adding conditions to your call

The default query returns only a limited set of information for each photo. You can ask for further information by adding conditions to the **extras** box near the bottom of the form. Make sure you put a comma between each condition in the list. Some useful conditions are: **date_upload**, **description**, and **views**.

Note that the **date_upload** is returned as a UNIX timestamp. You can convert this into a normal date format by using one of the freely available timestamp converters, for example:

http://www.unixtimestamp.com/index.php

You can also tailor the search results by date, both the upload date and the date the photo was taken. Simply add the date limits you want into the **min_upload_date** and/or **max_upload_date** and/or **min_taken_date** and/or **max_taken_date** boxes in the template. The dates should be entered in this format: YYYY-MM-DD.

Further information on using and tailoring the **flickr.photos.search** query is available here:

https://www.flickr.com/services/api/flickr.photos.search.htm

Saving calls

If you want to save the content you've called through the Flickr API, you have to manually copy and paste the results into a separate document, like .txt. Note that you can only copy and paste one page of results at a time.

Further information

More information on the Flickr API can be found on the Flickr website:

https://www.flickr.com/services/api/