How to create custom library locations in SketchUp

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In my previous tutorials on **adding materials to SketchUp** and **editing materials in SketchUp** you would have gained knowledge on how to grow your materials libraries. But an often overlooked feature of SketchUp is the *ability to create custom library locations* outside of SketchUp default library locations.

In this tutorial we will focus on *creating custom libraries in SketchUp* that allow you to easily manage your assets and speed up your workflow. Understanding how these custom libraries are created and located will make transitioning to newer versions of SketchUp a walk in the park!

Setting up your Folder Structure in SketchUp

We all know the drill. You download a file and it sits in your downloads folder eventually forgotten about. Or you lump all those lovely models, textures and styles you gather over time into the default C/User/Program Files/SketchUp..... location and things quickly become a mess. Then SketchUp go and release a sparkly new version and the whole process repeats itself again.

Fear not....here's my take on how to properly setup custom library locations for SketchUp that will make life easy! Structuring SketchUp's file system from the beginning is the best way to keep a firm grip on your assets, become more productive and build something that is futureproof.....almost!

Below you can see the folder structure I use for SketchUp. There's 10 folders of which 7 play an essential role in .

# Typical File Structure for asset management

These '*magnificent 7*' folders are the backbone of SketchUp's custom libraries...

- Models
- Components
- Materials
- Styles
- Texture Images
- Watermarks
- Export Models

The remaining folders are ones I add that facilitate other features in SketchUp that I like to keep in the same area. There is no hard and fast rule on the naming convention of the folder but it does help to keep them somewhat familiar with SketchUp's suggestions.
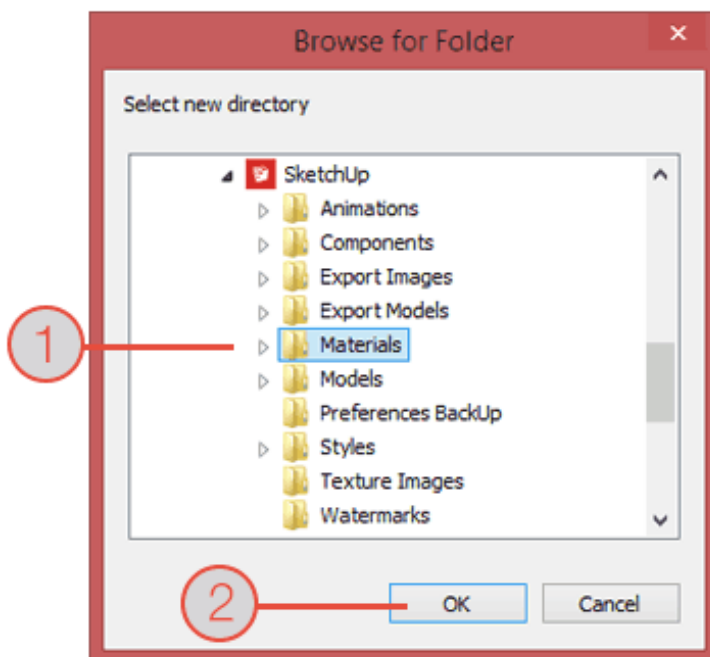
Creating the Custom Library links in SketchUp

Now that we have our folder structure in place it is time to let SketchUp know. With SketchUp open go to *Window > Preferences > File* to see the magnificent 7! In this example I will walk you through setting up a custom Material Library but the process is the same for each.
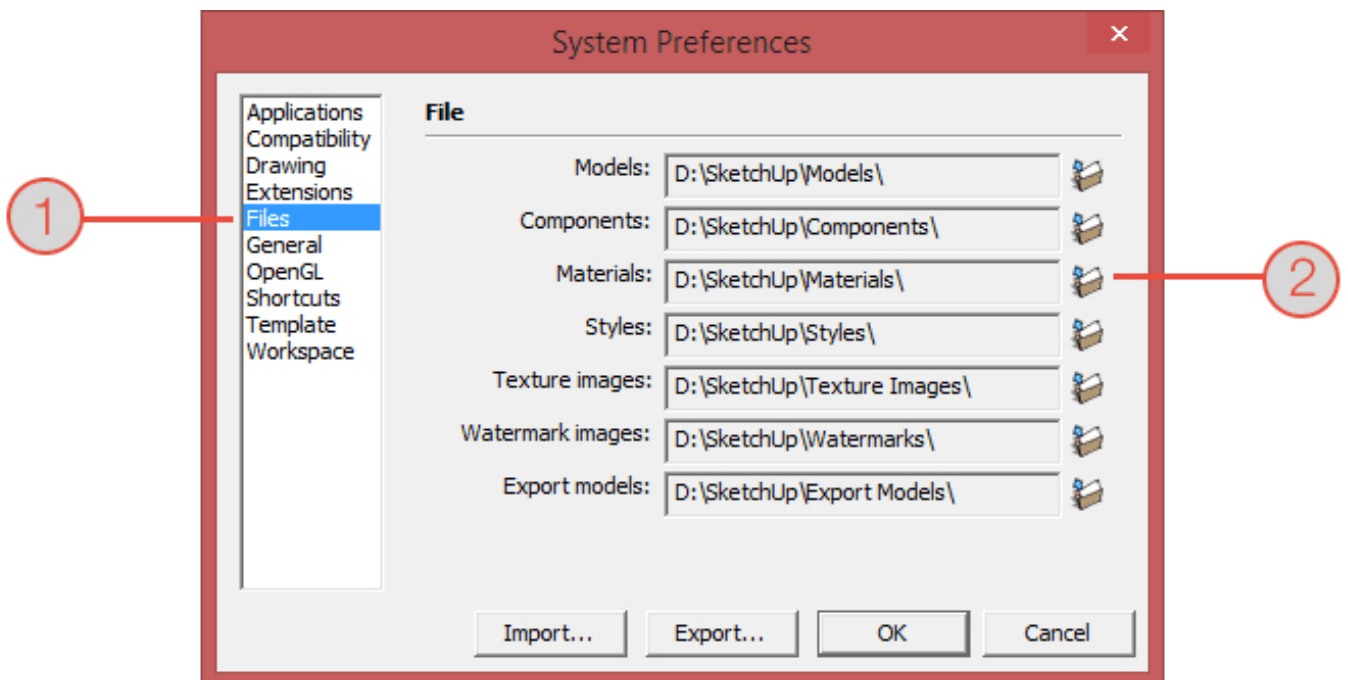
Above you can see the Preferences dialog with the *File* tab picked. This will then show the dialog that allows you to add those earlier created folders as custom library locations.

Go ahead an click the folder icon next to the Materials slot, navigate to your custom Materials folder and click OK.

Repeat for the remaining folders to now have SketchUp primed for total asset management.

Adding Collections to the Custom Library

Typically you will download SketchUp Material collections in a **compressed format** that will need to be extracted or uncompressed. There are built in tools in your Operating System that handle this or you can **download numerous free utilities** that cover different compression formats.

Below you can see a .zip folder of the Paving Pack that you can download from the Shop. Extract the folder and keep the folder hierachy in place.

① 📦 suc-paving-full.zip

Compressed .zip folder containing SketchUp Materials will need to be extracted before adding them to SketchUp

② 📁 suc-paving-full

When extracting it is best to maintain the folder structure this can differ on Windows and Mac but if you make a mistake it is easy to fix it!

In this case I have extracted the *suc-paving-full.zip* into a folder named the same. My extraction software of choice is **7zip** and it provides and option to extract the compressed files into a folder of the same name.

Delving inside this extracted folder you will see a bunch of files with the extension *.skm*. This is what SketchUp uses when you convert images into materials.

①

📄 suc-paving-001.skm	📄 suc-paving-002.skm
📄 suc-paving-008.skm	📄 suc-paving-009.skm
📄 suc-paving-015.skm	📄 suc-paving-016.skm
📄 suc-paving-022.skm	📄 suc-paving-023.skm
📄 suc-paving-029.skm	📄 suc-paving-030.skm
📄 suc-paving-036.skm	📄 suc-paving-037.skm
📄 suc-paving-043.skm	📄 suc-paving-044.skm
📄 suc-paving-050.skm	📄 suc-paving-051.skm

.skm files are SketchUp's version of image files that contain some hidden secrets!

What you need to do is add this folder to your custom library location so the final path would be *path/to/folder/Materials/suc-paving-full/* with the *.skm* files within that folder.

suc-paving-full

suc-paving-001.skm	suc-paving-002.skm
suc-paving-008.skm	suc-paving-009.skm
suc-paving-015.skm	suc-paving-016.skm
suc-paving-022.skm	suc-paving-023.skm
suc-paving-029.skm	suc-paving-030.skm
suc-paving-036.skm	suc-paving-037.skm
suc-paving-043.skm	suc-paving-044.skm
suc-paving-050.skm	suc-paving-051.skm

This PC ▸ Projects (D:) ▸ SketchUp ▸

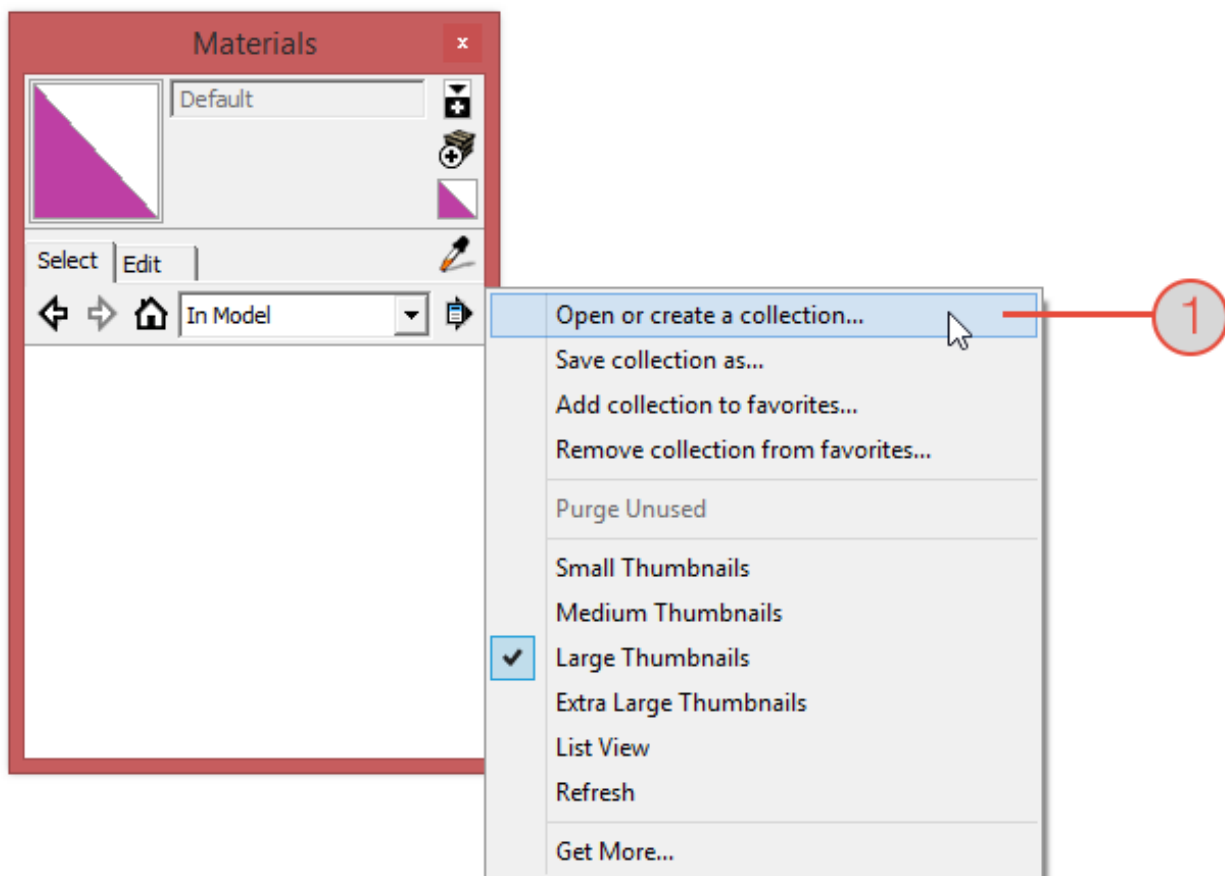| Name	Date modified	Type
Animations	19/04/2013 15:58	File folder
Components	30/10/2013 16:10	File folder
Export Images	02/09/2013 10:29	File folder
Export Models	18/11/2013 22:21	File folder
Materials	30/10/2013 17:21	File folder
Models	02/11/2013 23:51	File folder
Preferences BackUp	24/05/2013 16:56	File folder
Styles	11/02/2013 12:33	File folder
Texture Images	15/01/2013 21:13	File folder
Watermarks	15/01/2013 21:13	File folder

Adding Custom Material Coolection to SketchUp

Now you can use the *Details* button in the Materials Browser to *Open a collection...* and navigate to your newly added library. You now can access te library at any time using *Open a collection...* or if you want it to be part of the Materials Browser on start up choose *Add collection to favourites..*

Materials

Default

Select | Edit

In Model

Open or create a collection...	①
Save collection as...	
Add collection to favorites...	
Remove collection from favorites...	
Purge Unused	
Small Thumbnails	
Medium Thumbnails	
✔ Large Thumbnails	
Extra Large Thumbnails	
List View	
Refresh	
Get More...	

Remember earlier where I mentioned *.skm* files contained some hidden secrets? In the next tutorial we will show you how to add some extra flair to your material previews to make them a bit different!
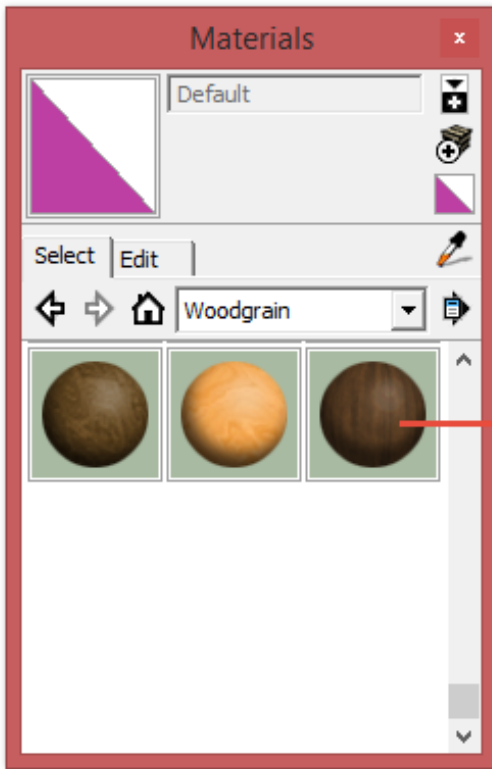
Changing your Material
Thumbnails is up next...

Tags for this article: **Library** | **libraries** | **custom** | **assets** | **sketchup** | **materials** | **styles** | **components** | **textures** | **thumbnails**

About the Author

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