Working with the 3D Warehouse

The *3D Warehouse* is a huge online collection of 3D models that is searchable and, most importantly, free for everyone to use. To access the 3D Warehouse, all you need is an Internet connection. If you have a SketchUp model that you want to share with the world, share with just a few people, or store on SketchUp's servers for safekeeping, the 3D Warehouse is where you put it.

Why Warehouse?

TIP Before we go on, let us dispel a popular misconception right away: When you upload a model to SketchUp's 3D Warehouse, you aren't automatically donating your hard work to the world — you can make uploaded models and collections private.

With that understanding, here are some awesome reasons to use the 3D Warehouse:

- » **Sharing is good for your self-esteem.** To be clear, we don't subscribe to the *nouveau tech* mindset that all information wants to be free of charge. If you spent a lot of time on something and you don't want to give it away, you shouldn't have to. But if you're proud of what you made, and sharing it with others would make you feel good, the 3D Warehouse offers a great way to contribute to the 3D modeling community.

- » **Create your own personal component library.** Because SketchUp can download models directly from the 3D Warehouse into the model you're working on, making your own online collections is incredibly handy. Everything you upload is accessible anywhere you happen to be working.

  For example, you can maintain a collection of the furniture in your house. Whenever you need a model of your sofa, you can just download it — no matter what computer you're using.

- » **Explore uploaded models in 3D without having to download them.** You can orbit, pan, and zoom around any model you can see on the 3D Warehouse — *without* having to download it into SketchUp first. If you want to show someone your model in 3D, you can just send her its 3D Warehouse link. Better yet, you can embed a 3D viewer window on your web page; anyone who visits your page can poke around.

- » **It's never a bad idea to have a backup.** If all you're looking to do is save a copy of your work in the cloud (where you can't spill your coffee all over it), services like Dropbox, Google Drive, and Microsoft OneDrive are great choices. None of these, however, give you direct access to your models inside of SketchUp. When you upload something to the 3D Warehouse, it's both safe *and* readily available.

Getting to the 3D Warehouse

You can get to the 3D Warehouse in two ways:

» **From SketchUp:** Choose File ⇒ 3D Warehouse ⇒ Get Models; when you do, a mini web browser opens right in front of your modeling window.

» **From the web:** Browse to https://3dwarehouse.sketchup.com.

TIP   Accessing the 3D Warehouse from the web is a great way to hunt for 3D models without opening SketchUp first.

Go ahead and poke around the 3D Warehouse. It's amazing what you find; thousands of people add new content every day. Much of it isn't very useful, but you still find plenty of interesting things to download and look at.

TIP   Taking apart strangers' models is a great way to figure out how they're built.

Refer to Chapter 5 for plenty of information about grabbing what you need from the 3D Warehouse.

Uploading a model

Follow these steps to upload your model to the 3D Warehouse:

1. **Open the model you want to upload in SketchUp and fiddle around with your view until you like what you see.**

   When you upload a model to the 3D Warehouse, SketchUp automatically creates a preview image that's a snapshot of your modeling window.

2. **Choose File ⇒ 3D Warehouse ⇒ Share Model.**

   A mini-browser window opens, and it shows the logon screen for the 3D Warehouse. If you want to upload models, you need a Trimble ID or a Google account. Both types of accounts are free; you just need a valid e-mail address to get one. If you don't already have one, follow the on-screen instructions to sign up.

3. **Enter your account information, click the Sign In button, and fill out the Upload to 3D Warehouse form as completely as you can:**

   - *Privacy:* You can choose to make your model Public or Private. Checking the Public option gives anyone the right to find, download, and use your model however he likes. If you select Private, your model stays hidden (from everyone but you). Flip ahead to "Managing models online," in this chapter, for more about this topic.

   - *Title:* Enter a title for your model. If it's a public building, you may enter its name. Something like Royal West Academy would do nicely.

   - *Description:* Models with complete descriptions are very popular among people who

hunt around the Warehouse. Try to use complete sentences here; the more you write, the better.

- *URL:* If you have a website address that you want people who view your model to visit, enter it here. For example, if your model is a historic building, you may include the website that provides more information about that building.

- *Tags:* Type a string of words that describe the thing you modeled. The 3D Warehouse search engine uses whatever you enter here to help people find your model. To increase the number of people who see what you made, add lots of tags. For example, if you were uploading a modern coffee table, you might enter the following tags: coffee table, table, coffee, modern, living room, furniture, glass, chrome, metal, and steel. You get the idea — be exhaustive.

4. **Click the Upload button to add your model to the 3D Warehouse.**

   If everything works properly, you see a page with your model on it, along with all the information you just entered. Congratulations — you're now a full-fledged member of the SketchUp universe.

   TIP It takes a while for the 3D Warehouse's robots (its *backend*, in geek parlance) to process your model after you upload it. You won't be able to search for it, see it in your collections, or even preview it in 3D for a few minutes. But that's okay — just sit back and reflect on what your great-grandfather would say if he heard you complaining. He *did* have to walk 50 miles to school, after all.

Managing models online

The 3D Warehouse isn't a free-for-all of individual models floating around in cyberspace. It's actually a pretty organized place. Take a look at any model's individual details page to see what's possible. Figure 12-9 is a screenshot of Aidan's couch in the 3D Warehouse, taken in March 2014 (it may look slightly different by the time you read this).
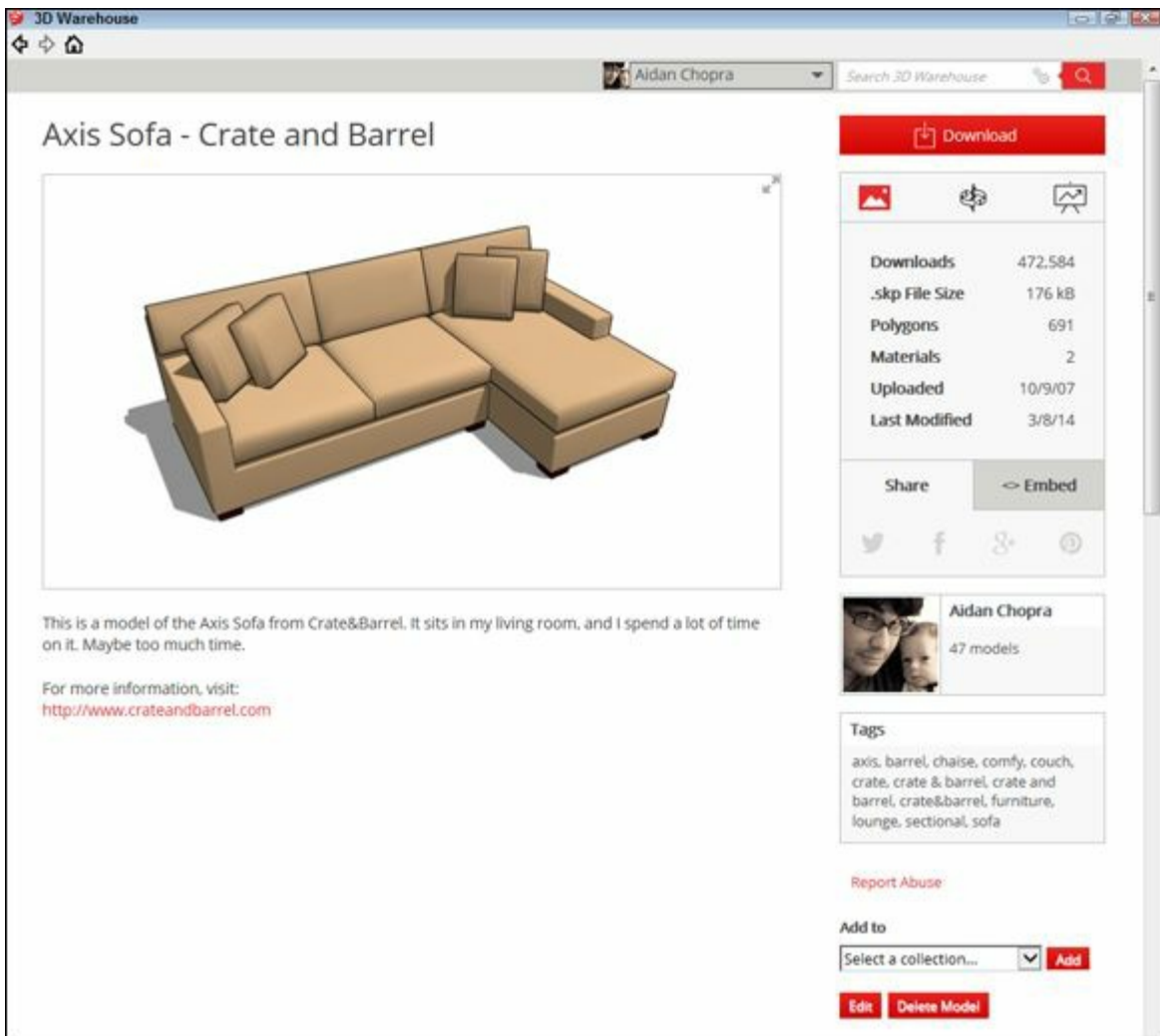
FIGURE 12-9: Aidan's couch's details page on the 3D Warehouse, circa March 2014.

Here's a list of the less-obvious doodads and gadgets on the 3D Warehouse that you'll want to know about:

>> **Account drop-down menu:** With options for going to a page full of your own models, creating a new collection (more on that later), and signing out of your account, this is a critical part of the Warehouse interface.

>> **Search bar:** Type in keywords to find models; there's nothing magical here — *except* if you click the little icon in the bar that looks like a couple of machine gears. This icon reveals options for searching for collections (instead of models), and a link to an advanced search page. This is your ticket to precision searching nirvana.

>> **Viewer settings:** These three icons let you choose between static images, a 3D view, and a chart that shows the model's popularity (views and downloads) over time.

TIP   Of the three views, 3D view (the middle icon) is the most revolutionary. Being able to orbit around a model without having to download it first will save you tons of time and energy.

>> **Statistics panel:** The numbers that appear on this section of the page are all interesting and useful, but the ones you should pay closest attention to are Polygons and Materials. These tell you the model's size in the two metrics that count most:

- *Polygons* is 3D modeling shorthand for faces; the more you have, the harder SketchUp has to work to display your model. If you're thinking about downloading a tree with 350,000 polygons, consider taking a vacation to Tahiti while SketchUp opens it.

- *Materials* are similarly taxing on your computer's performance, but they only come into play for models that have been heavily photo-textured.

>> **Share:** Shout out to Twitter, Facebook, Google Plus, and Pinterest here. Upload your model, and then tell your social networks about it.

>> **Embed:** Click here and the 3D Warehouse serves up some HTML code that you can use to embed the model on a web page.

TIP   The Embed feature is especially important for product manufacturers, designers, and anyone else who wants to let the public explore a model in 3D without leaving his or her website.

>> **Add to Collection:** One of the most productive things you can do on the 3D Warehouse is collect models — your own *and* other people's. Make yourself empty collections for things like chairs, scale figures, trees, and star destroyers. Then fill them with the amazing models you find as you're exploring. Back in SketchUp, in the Components panel, choose My Collections from the Collections drop-down menu, and there they are, ready to use in your own work.

>> **Edit:** Clicking the Edit button turns most of the text areas on the page into editable text fields; to change your model's title, just type a new one right where the old one was. Simple.

While we're on the subject of collections, here's how to create your own:

1. **Make sure you're logged in to the 3D Warehouse.**

   If you're logged in, you'll see your username on the account drop-down menu at the top of every page in the Warehouse. If you're not logged in, click Sign In (also at the top of every page) and put in your account credentials.

2. **Choose Create Collection from the Account drop-down menu at the top of any page.**

   You can create a collection in a couple of other ways, but this is the most universal one; it works no matter where you are in the 3D Warehouse.

3. **Choose a Privacy setting for your new collection.**

   Public means everyone on the Warehouse can see it. Private means only you can see it, and only when you're logged in.

4. **Give your new collection a title.**

5. **Write a brief but meaningful description of what your collection will contain.**

   Keep in mind that collections can contain both models and other collections.

6. **Add a URL (web address), if it's relevant.**

7. **Type in tags that might help others find your collection.**

   TIP   Tagging is especially relevant for collections marked Public.

8. **Click Create Collection at the bottom of the page.**