Preserving Your Digital Possessions

April 24, 2013
The purpose of this presentation is to spread awareness about how easy it is to preserve and manage your digital photos and other digital files.
About this presentation

The purpose of this presentation is to spread awareness about how easy it is to preserve and manage your digital photos and other digital files.

We want to inspire you to take action so you can be confident that your digital stuff will be well preserved and accessible.
The Problem
Traditional storage of material valuables

We can ignore paper photos and documents for years and trust that we can enjoy them anytime.
21st Century digital valuables are different

Plus:
- social media profiles
- game characters
- network of business associates that you may have built up over time on business networking sites
- …and more artifacts of your online life.
The challenge of preserving your digital files

Digital photos and other digital files require a special storage container.
The challenge of preserving your digital files

Each digital storage medium has vulnerabilities and a limited lifespan.

There is no 100% safe medium.
Obsolescence

Each digital storage medium becomes obsolete as technology Improves. The danger is that your stuff could get trapped on obsolete media.
The risk of loss

It’s easy to lose track of your digital stuff, scattered on CDs, websites, floppies, thumb drives and buried in your computer.

Photo by the Library of Congress
The risk of loss

Email, social media, cloud storage and other online services can go out of business or could get hacked.

Graphics by the Library of Congress
The risk of loss
The Solution
Personal Digital Archiving

- Identify what you want to save
- Decide what is most important to save
- Organize your collection
- Backup copies in different places

Move your collection to a current storage medium once every five to seven years or replace frequently used storage devices.
Organize

Identify what you want to save. Gather your stuff from:
- Thumb drives
- Social media sites
- CDs
- Floppies
- Video from DVDs
- Email accounts
- Photo sites
- Digitizing
…from everywhere.

Graphics by the Library of Congress
Organize

Decide what is most important to save

Photos by the Library of Congress
Organize your collection however you want. Be consistent with your system.
Organize your collection however you want. Be consistent with your system.
Organize

Descriptive folder and file names help you and others find things.
Backup

Copy the folder to at least **two** different types of storage devices.
Backup

Verify that the files copied over

Spot check your files and open a few -- especially the more important ones -- to verify that they copied over intact.
Backup

Save copies in different locations.

Bugatti 1938 Atlantic 57SC (Ralph Lauren) AD by SocialIsBetter on Flickr

Violet Hill house by Grant MacDonald on Flickr

Le yacht "Sunrays" (85 m), amarré au port d'Antibes by Axou on Flickr

Golden Eye by Kansaphoto on Flickr
Backup

If you backup to an online storage service – “The Cloud” – also keep a backup on a nearby storage device.

“Clouds” on Flickr by fifikins.
Backup

The professional photographer’s 3 - 2 - 1 rule:

- Make 3 copies
Backup

The professional photographer’s 3 - 2 - 1 rule:

- Make 3 copies
- Save at least 2 onto different types of storage media
Backup

The professional photographer’s 3 - 2 - 1 rule:

- Make 3 copies
- Save at least 2 onto different types of storage media
- Save 1 in a different location from where you live
Manage

Move your collection to a current storage medium once every five to seven years, well before your current storage device becomes obsolete.

Upgrade any storage device that you use frequently.
Manage

When planning your estate, let a loved one know where you store your important documents. Supply passwords, if needed.

“Last Will and Testament” on Flickr by Ken_Mayer
Digital Photos
Digital Photos

“...The only shots I can get on a rope line are other shots “ on Flickr by Albumen
Digital Photos

Four things happen immediately when you take a digital photo:

“You pointing that at me!” on Flickr by Steve 2.0
Digital Photos

Four things happen immediately when you take a digital photo:

The camera:

1. saves the photo as a file

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The camera:
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“You pointing that at me!” on Flickr by Steve 2.0
Four things happen immediately when you take a digital photo:

The camera:
1. saves the photo as a file
2. names the file
3. inserts technical information inside the file
4. saves the file in a JPEG format. (Most consumer cameras.)

“You pointing that at me!” on Flickr by Steve 2.0
Digital Photos

1. The camera saves the photo as a file. As soon as possible, get your photo files off your camera and back them up.
Digital Photos

2. The camera names the file.

![Image](IMG_1467.JPG)
Digital Photos

2. The camera names the file.

If you rename the file with a descriptive name it can help you identify the photo without displaying it.
3. The camera embeds technical information within the photo file.
3. The camera embeds technical information within the photo file. Some photo editing software will enable you to add a \textit{description} into the photo file just as you would write a description on the back of a paper photo.
WARNING

With some photo-editing and photo-managing software, after you enter descriptions to the photo, those descriptions remain in a database linked to your photos.

They do not get inserted in the photo files themselves.
Digital Photos

WARNING

If you add descriptions to photo files, uploading your photos to social media sites and photo sites -- and as email attachments -- may wipe out your descriptions.
Digital Photos

WARNING

Backup your original photo.

Never discard your photo just because you have a copy online.
4. The camera saves the file in a JPEG format. (Most consumer cameras.)

Don’t worry about formats unless you have an interest in working with a special format.

Leave the file as it is and back it up.
Modifying Digital Photos
Digital photos are made up of millions of colored and shaded dots or squares called **pixels**.

This image is ten pixels wide.

Pixel density is usually measure by the inch, so if this image was an inch wide the pixel measurement would be 10 dots per inch (DPI) or 10 pixels per inch (PPI).
The **more** dots or pixels per inch, the more dense and sharp the photo and...
Digital Photos

…the higher the quality of the photo.

Digital Photos

The **fewer** the dots or pixels per inch...

MORE

FEWER
...the lower the quality of the photo.

WARNING

When you upload photos to some websites, such as photo-sharing or social media websites, they may get **compressed** to reduce the size of the file.
Digital Photos

WARNING

A *compressed* file is easier to upload or attach to an email because it is much smaller than the original photo file.
WARNING

However, compression reduces the size of the photo file by deleting colors from the photo’s color palette.
Digital Photos

WARNING
So compression can lower the quality of the photo by reducing the number of pixels in the photo’s palette.
WARNING
Once a photo is compressed and pixels are removed you can never regain the original quality.

That’s why you should always safely preserve your originals and work with copies.
Digital Photos

Scanning

“Scanner de Diapositivas” on http://www.arteyfotografia.com.ar by leonidas
Digital Photos

Scan 4”x6” 5”x7” and 8”x 10” photos at 300 dpi/ppi.
Digital Photos

Scan slides and tiny photos at about 1800 dpi/ppi.

You need **more dots/pixels per inch** to capture the detail.
Digital Photos

If you have a choice of file format in which to save the scanned photo or slide, JPEG is still the common standard.

Some websites will only let you upload JPEGs.
Summary
Personal Digital Archiving

- Identify what you want to save
- Decide what is most important to save
- Organize your collection
- Backup copies in different places

Move your collection to a current storage medium once every five to seven years or replace frequently used storage devices.
And finally...
The Public Library: Your Community’s Information Resource
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- Public libraries play a unique role in their communities
- Genealogy, family and local history
- Scanning
- Center for digital literacy
Personal Digital Archiving in a Few Simple Steps

We cannot save our digital possessions — such as photos, documents, and recordings — in the same way that we save our material possessions. For example, we can toss paper photos in a box and trust that they will be safe for decades. But this benign neglect doesn’t apply to our digital possessions. Technology changes rapidly and, without proper care, our digital possessions may get trapped on obsolete computer hardware and become difficult to access.
Thank You

For more information, please visit:
http://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/

Please email me if you have any questions that we don’t get to:
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