



Digitizing Your Family History

1. Assemble your family's archives

- Decide on a focus for your project—what are your priorities?
- Collect materials together in a place you can dedicate to your project
- Ask relatives if they have materials they are willing to share

2. Select what you want to digitize

- Sort and organize materials by format, date, or topic
- Separate duplicate materials unless they are distinct in some way
- Decide the scope of your project—how much do you have time to digitize?

3. Scan, photograph, and convert materials

- Use the right equipment for each format
 - Flatbed scanner for flat items like documents, photographs, and slides
 - Digital camera or smart device for objects, clothing, furniture, and awards
 - Light box or white sheet and bright light for any photography
 - Conversion equipment for obsolete technology like VHS, 8mm, and floppy disks
- Create descriptive filenames, e.g.—“smith_annual bbq_19790805_001.jpg”
- Pick resolution and file format
 - Resolution: 300 or 600dpi good for most, 1200dpi+ for highest resolution
 - Formats: PDF, JPEG, TIFF, WAV, MP4, MOV
- Scan in color for the richest detail, even for black and white photographs
- Preserve your physical collection as you go (think twice before tossing paper files!)

4. Describe and organize your files

- Add information (metadata) to each file or a spreadsheet
 - Names, places, dates, brief descriptions, etc.
- Organize files into folders by date, family, topic, etc.

5. Store and care for materials

- Store two copies of files in two different locations
 - Best: hard drive, cloud
 - Rarely or only for sharing: flash drive, CD, DVD
- Periodically check files to make sure they still work; convert to new formats if needed

6. Share your family history

- Share online: social media, family history blog, genealogy website
- Share digital copies: cloud, flash drive, CD, DVD
- Share printed copies: frame a favorite photo, create a memory book

Born-Digital Family History

- Items created in a digital format like emails, digital photos, social media posts, etc.
- These files need care just like your physical materials
- Take the same steps: assemble, select, describe and organize, store, and share
- Emails can be saved as TXT files or PDFs
- Consider printing some of your most treasured born-digital files

Preserve Your Family History

- Don't throw away physical copies if you have space to store them. Paper is the longest-lasting format and you can't get originals back once you get rid of them!
- Remove staples, rubber bands, non-stainless steel paperclips, and tape to avoid damage
- Store paper in folders, photos in mylar photo sleeves, and wrap fabric and objects in tissue paper. Acid-free materials are the best if you have the budget.
- Store in boxes in a cool, dry space (not the basement or attic!)

Digitize @ Ela

[Digital Media Labs](#)

The Ela Area Public Library has two digital media labs on the second floor for you to create and edit media with quality technology equipment and software. For registered cardholders.

[Library of Things](#)

Check out unique, non-traditional items from the library. Save money and resources by borrowing items you may not use often or just want to try out. For Ela cardholders.