

Personal Digital Archiving Managing Your Photo Collection

A LibGuide prepared by Corrie Commisso
LIS504, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
December 12, 2017

1.2 trillion photos.

InfoTrend's most recent forecast indicates that consumers will have taken 1.2 trillion photos over the course of 2017.¹ The advent of digital photography has made it easy to snap hundreds of photos in a short period of time — photos that quickly add up and become digital clutter on our phones and computers. Unfortunately, while taking photos is easy, organizing them is not. This guide was prepared to help public library patrons begin to tackle the process of digitally archiving their photo collections. It includes a variety of resource types that cover topics like how to digitize old photos, file naming strategies, keywords and tags, suggestions for organizing files, and reviews of digital tools and platforms that can be used to get digital photo collections under control. The guide assumes a basic level of computer skill, and is targeted towards adult patrons (or perhaps older teens) in a public library setting. Since it is designed to provide information for a general public audience, the selected sources are written in accessible language and are not highly technical or academic in nature. The links in this document are live and link directly to the sources recommended.

I envision this guide as one of a series on personal digital archiving (PDA), with other guides covering topics like documents, email, and social media archiving. I chose to focus on digital photo archiving for this guide because, according to the Library of Congress, a majority of questions they receive at presentations about PDA are specifically about archiving digital photograph collections, which indicates a high interest in the subject.

¹ Perret, Eric. "Here's How Many Digital Photos Will Be Taken in 2017." *Mylio.com*, 19 Jan. 2017, mylio.com/true-stories/tech-today/how-many-digital-photos-will-be-taken-2017-repost.



General Resources: Getting Started

In this collection of General Resources, patrons you will find information that will help you get started with organizing your digital photos. These resources provide a broad view of topics you will need to consider, including why it's critical to preserve your digital photos, suggestions for organizing your files, and what kind of technology resources you will need access to. The list also includes resources for more in-depth training and a 10-week plan to help you start getting your digital photo collection under control.

 [1. Why Digital Preservation is Important for you](#)
The Library of Congress is one of the most well-respected sources of information related to preservation of archival materials like photos. This video, which is a part of the LOC's very thorough resource guide on personal digital archiving, offers some practical strategies and tips for getting started with personal digital archiving, and serves as a good introduction to the subject for those who may be venturing into it for the first time.

 [2. Thousands of Images. Now What: Painlessly Organize, Save, and Back Up Your Digital Photos.](#) by Mike Hagen
Professional Photographer Mike Hagen offers a complete guide to developing a system for managing digital photo collections. His expertise as Managing Director of the Nikonians Academy, which produces photography workshops and education worldwide, is invaluable in understanding the nuances of photo management. The book has very good reviews on Goodreads and Amazon, with readers commenting on the writing style as clear, concise, and easy to follow, even for casual photographers.

 [3. Top Ten Ways to Improve Your Messy Photo Collection](#)
Lifehacker is a popular web site that provides tips and ideas for making life easier. This article provides a quick overview of some things patrons can easily do to get a better handle on their digital photo collections. In addition, there are lengthy comments at the end of the post where commenters describe in detail what has worked for them.

 [4. The Ten-Week Digital Photo Organizing Challenge](#)
It can be overwhelming figuring out where to start when it comes to organizing a huge collection of digital photos. Natalie at Refined Rooms, who is Association of Personal Photo Organizers certified, has created a ten-week jump start program that breaks the process down into easy-to-follow steps. The ten steps are freely accessible and include video tutorials, checklists and printables to help patrons get started in photo organizing.

Personal Digital Archiving Managing Your Photo Collection



Articles



Videos



Graphics/Images



Books



Downloads



Digital Tools



Web Sites

General Resources: Getting Started (continued)



5. Digital Photo Archiving Pinterest Boards

Pinterest is a popular social media tool that allows users to “pin” resources and links that they find useful to share with others. Below are several collections related to digital photo archiving that patrons may find useful.

- [Digital Photo Organizers](#)

- [Your Organized Life —Photo and Digital Organizing](#)



6. Lynda.com — Organizing and Archiving Digital Photos Online Course

Lynda.com offers online training in thousands of business, technology and creative subjects. For patrons who might want more hands-on instruction in organizing their digital photo collection, Lynda.com offers a number of courses. Some are more specific to particular applications (i.e., Photoshop or Lightroom), but I chose this course as a resource because it offers a more general approach and is marked as appropriate for beginner-level skills.



7. Here's How Many Photos Will Be Taken in 2017

This article from Mylio, a digital platform designed for digital photo archiving, includes infographics that visualize key data about digital photos and storage and archival practices for digital collections. The article also offers key steps patrons can begin to take towards organizing their photo collections. The visualized data is helpful in understanding the scope of the challenge when digital collections are not properly organized.



8. Digital Photo Pro

Digital Photo Pro is both a web site and a magazine for photo enthusiasts. While the content is geared towards patrons with photo experience, I selected it as a resource for its coverage of digital photography workflow, managing files, and tools for digital photo editing and management that may be useful to a variety of patrons.

Photo Digitizing and Storage

How can you get the best scan of your old photos? What resolution should you scan at? What if you don't have access to a scanner? And once your photos are digitized —where should you store them? This list contains resources and tips for scanning as well as suggestions for storage and backup of digital photos.



9. CNET How To: Tips for Scanning Photos

CNET is a world leader in technology news, reviews, videos, forums and how-to's. This video provides an introduction to scanning photos and teaches viewers how to scan quickly, choose the proper resolution, keep their scans organized. It is easy to follow and helpful for patrons who like to learn visually.



10. Scan and Save Old Photos with your Phone

Another video tutorial from CNET, this tutorial focuses on using a cell phone to scan old photos using an app called Shoebox. Since most patrons are more likely to have access to a cell phone than a scanner, this video offers a good tech alternative for traditional scanning.



11. Google Just Made It Way Easier to Scan Your Old Photos

This article from Wired (an industry-leading digital and print publication covering technology and media) reviews Google's new Photoscan app and offers suggestions for how to use it to quickly scan old photos if you don't have access to a scanner. It also discusses how the app syncs to Google Photos, which is a popular photo organizing platform (reviewed later in this document).



12. Building a Comprehensive Photo Storage Backup System

Having a good system in place for storage and backup of your digital photos is critical to maintaining an organized collection. This post from PetaPixel, one of the leading photography blogs, discusses in detail recommendations for setting up an external storage and backup system.



13. Backing Up Digital Photos: Is Cloud Storage Right for You?

Should you be storing and/or backing up your digital photos on a cloud server? It's convenient and easy, and there are a number of options for cloud storage. This post from Digital Photography School, one of the most popular and longest running blogs on the web about photography, reviews some of the advantages and disadvantages of the different cloud storage options. The comments at the end of the post also offer customer feedback on the services discussed (as well as some not discussed).



14. How Long Will Digital Storage Media Last?

Digital storage media has a relatively short shelf life — consider that the music CDs people purchased just a few decades ago are now obsolete. So how long will that external hard drive you just bought to back up your digital photos last? This is a helpful guide from the Library of Congress that you can use to think about when you might need to consider upgrading your storage hardware.



15. Can I scan that photo—legally? Understanding Copyright and Fair Use

When scanning old family photos, the question of legality rarely comes into anyone's mind. But should it? Does a portrait studio or newspaper hold the copyright to your treasured family photos? This article discusses why ownership matters when scanning photos for personal use and when the legal concept of Fair Use is

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- Articles
- Videos
- Graphics/Images
- Books
- Downloads
- Digital Tools
- Web Sites

File Naming and Metadata

How you name and describe your files is a critical part of maintaining an organized photo collection. Don't be intimidated by the word "metadata" — it just refers to the keywords, tags, and other embedded information that describe your photos. This list offers resources for ensuring good file naming and metadata practices.

16. Metadata and Photos. Part I: Simplifying the Concept
In the first of a two-part series on digital photo metadata, The Photo Organizers explain metadata and how to attach data to your photos. The Photo Organizers are a community of personal and professional photo organizers who help people learn to manage their photo collections. This post does a good job of explaining a technical concept in easy-to-understand terms.

17. Metadata and Photos. Part II: Let Efficiency Rule
This post, part two in series from The Photo Organizers, focuses on ways users can apply metadata to their photos in a quicker and more efficient manner. It covers batch processing and how to develop taxonomies and controlled vocabularies that allow more efficient processing of collections.

18. What's in a Name? Nomenclature, File Structure, and Saving Digital Images
A good structure for naming your digital files helps you find the images when you need them. This tutorial from Envato Tuts, a site specializing in tutorials for creative skills, provides a good overview of considerations when naming digital files and folders. The article is also useful in that it links to other resources on their site for further learning on the subject of digital file naming and organization.

Digital Tools and Platforms

There are a range of tools and platforms available to help you organize and share your digital photo collection, from a free Flickr account to paid services that allow you to do more with your photos. This list includes reviews of some popular platforms so you can choose the photo organizing tool that best suits your needs.

19. Google, Flickr or Dropbox: Who Should You Trust with Your Photos?
FastCompany, a progressive media company with editorial focus on innovation in technology, reviews the pros and cons of these three major platforms for photo management. I chose this review because it is written with the common user (not necessarily a professional photographer) in mind.

20. Photo Storage Showdown: Google Photos vs. Apple iCloud vs. Amazon Prime vs. Dropbox vs. Flickr
Time Magazine offers this online review that also includes a recent newcomer to the photo management world: Amazon Prime Photos. Again, this review was chosen for its applicability to the average consumer.

21. Review: SmugMug
This review from PC Magazine of photo management platform SmugMug is slightly more technical in nature, but still targeted towards the average consumer. The review also includes the capability to compare SmugMug's features to other similar photo management platforms.

22. The Best Photo Manager Software of 2017
Top Ten Reviews provides a detailed and comprehensive side-by-side review of the best software packages for managing and editing digital photos. The products are ranked on file management, sharing, editing, and tech support features.

Photo Management Platforms Price Comparison

* Amazon Prime Photos is free for Prime members only, otherwise the starting cost is \$11.99 per month. Dropbox is free up to 2 GB and further plans begin at \$5.99/month.

S — Less than \$100/year or \$10/month
SS — \$100-\$200/year
SSS — More than \$200/year

	FREE	S	SS	SSS
<u>Google Photos</u>	●●●			
<u>Flickr</u>	●●●			
<u>Dropbox</u>	●●●●			
<u>Amazon Prime Photos*</u>	●●●●●●●●			
<u>SmugMug</u>	●●●●●			
<u>Adobe Lightroom</u>	●●●●●●●●			