Digital Imaging Organization

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The digital photo shoebox or the digital junk draw on our computers is something we all have. Even today, I have digital images that are dumped in my image folders, like My Pictures, and not organized. Some of these are screenshots or a cute image sent by a friend.

To me, most of those images in time get trashed. A few will go to be screen savers, or used in one way or the other. And those images will be properly stored on my computer or on one or more of my digital back ups.

Whether you have an iPhone, advanced digital camera or some other type of digital imaging system, one needs to get or be organized. For nothing else, being organized helps you find what you have.

Down loading your images from your digital device can be a simple as using your USB cable or removing your memory card (like a mini SD card) to send the images to your computer or storage device. The instructions often come with your device. Or you can ask someone to help you!

In this handout, we are going to cover the following areas that includes a on line article on this subject.

Images for genealogy and family history research
Raw images
Storage folders
Culled images
Image formats
Long term storage
6 steps for organizing your messy photo library - article

Images for genealogy and family history research

In my [KISS GENEALOGY](#) class and handout, I encourage researchers to cite pictures properly for genealogy and family history research in the **Pictures** section. The following is copied from KISS.

I have mentioned that the primary goal of KISS genealogy is research. If you find a picture or pictures, you may or may not use it for future reports. You need a simple way of documenting and storing the picture for any possible use. Regardless of the format you use, keep it simple and be consistent. In your note field, add an entry such as IMAGE: or PICTURE: Then give the name. This way you can find that image when you need it.

Hint: Always have a Flash Drive to store images and notes. And in the field use your smart phone or digital camera to record images on the go.

Some people use the ID or Record Information Number (RIN) of the computer genealogy record. All individual entries in a genealogy program are given such a number by the program. You may not see it if the option is turned off. For larger databases where you have multiple or even a thousand people of the same name (John Smith for example), an
ID or RIN number helps distinguish who is who. If it works for the program, you can use it also. But it is always your choice. Just be consistent and KISS. The following are some format examples with and without RINs.

RIN 134284 Henry Carpenter Bible
Carpenter Henry - Bible
RIN 98658 Mary A Carpenter BIRTH
Carpenter Mary A - Birth
RIN 142274 Orr Carpenter Marriage3
Carpenter John – Marriage-1883
RIN 148625 John Carpenter PicwWife
Carpenter John – PicwWife
Carpenter John - PicwFam
RIN 6758 Cyrus Carpenter 1870

Carpenter Cyrus - 1870
RIN 6758 Cyrus Carpenter 1875
Carpenter Cyrus – 1875 IA
RIN 23055 Silas Carpenter 1892
Carpenter Silas – 1892 NY
RIN 64023 George Hancock 1901
Hancock George – 1901
RIN 142541 Shubal Carpenter Land1817
Carpenter Shubal – Land 1817
RIN 149585 Ruby Fisher Carpenter Obit
Carpenter Ruby Fisher - Obit
RIN 142549 Abigail Eldred Brownell GRAVE3
Brownell Abigail Eldred – Grave3

The key is to avoid symbols that conflict with the computer format for images. Thus a period or comma, for example, is not used in the description. And yes, some people delete the spaces or use an under score for the space. The key is to KISS and be consistent.

Raw images

Remember that KISS GENEALOGY does not focus on the basic storage of raw digital images. The term raw digital images are before any modifications, adjustments or enhancements.

Raw images are those that you have moved from your digital camera, phone or imaging device (like a scanner) to your computer for storage or processing. The real bad images on my camera, like the accidental floor or thumb shots, are or should be deleted before transfer. And, yes, I even have to delete the few I missed after the transfer.

Storage folders

The best format I have found for storing raw images is creating storage folders based on year, month and date if needed. For many people, just the year and month may be adequate. For someone on vacations shooting hundreds of images a day, then adding the date would be needed. These two options and more is a menu option for most digital cameras to save them on your memory card.

If I saw a folder in My Pictures called 2011-07, then I would know that folder contains images from July 2011. And 2011-07-20 would be the 20th of July 2011.

Why not just use 2011-July? Because the computer will not sort in month order, but by alpha-numeric order or maybe, if your camera setting allows it, the date the folder was created. By using the numeric of the month (01 to 12) the folders will neatly be displayed in order.

And your digital camera by default will save your images in a sequential number order by IMG or DSC or similar header. My camera started at DSC00001 and will reset to that number after DSC99999. This means I can shoot 99,999 digital images before the sequence repeats.

My old digital and my wife's digital camera (IMG_0000) allowed only 9,999 images before rolling over. And yes, one can shoot more than 10,000 images on one vacation. Today with action and burst shooting I this is easier to do. Now imagine what would happen if you did not have a folder system properly set up?

HINT: Even if you delete most of your pictures, the camera does not care, it will use the next sequence number until 1) by default it rolls over or 2) it is reset by the user.

After I have my raw images saved outside of my camera (digital camera, iphone, wife's camera and other images sent to me) and I have properly saved them in a folder system, then I proceed to the next step.

Culled images

The next step is creating a subfolder in which I cull out or save only the best which I have. And occasionally a not so good picture if needed. It is then in this folder that I then tag, add keywords, modify, enhance, Photoshop, et cetera the digital images. And each version of the image is saved by the image name and adding an alphabetical sequence. Thus DSC07789 becomes DSC07789a or DSC07789b, and so forth. Because later I will compare the various versions on a larger screen and decide which ones I will use.

For me, only about 10 to 15% of raw images go on to the next stage and only about 25% of the next stage get used. Some become screen savers and less get printed in larger print formats. My wife also will go through and select images for her projects. She creates albums, calendars and greeting cards.

And no, I do not then throw out the raw images. Storage is cheap, so I save them for at least ten years. Why? Because I may write (needing an image) or donate (to the public domain) one of those images. This in addition to taking a memory re-vacation of the trip!

And when I am converting (digitizing) paper images, slides, negatives and especially family images from others, I use a header followed by a sequence number for the raw images. Then I cull or select out of the raw images those I wish to use for the project in question.

For genealogy and family history, I use the format mentioned in KISS GENEALOGY handout.

There are hundreds of articles and dozens of programs or apps out there for organizing your images. Each one has their own bells and whistles like face recognition and tagging. And too many of them only last about five to seven years before they are no longer updated or supported.

This is why keeping your raw data and your culled images safe and backed up is so important. It is not a question of if, but when one of those neat photo organizers and/or editing programs crash, or are no longer compatible or when an update corrupts your images.

Image formats

In the article, *What to do with the genealogy and family history I collected,* I encourage people to prepare ahead of time in sharing their data later on.

I wrote: Create a plan, work the plan. Evaluate and adjust as needed. The more preparation you do early on, the easier it is to do. Well documented and organized genealogy and family history, in physical and digital formats, can be shared with many different people and organizations.

Later I cite formats in which images can be stored …

There are dozens of computer programs, like Microsoft Word and Scrapbook Factory, and other family history utility programs that you can buy that will help you go step by step in creating digital and printed family history works. Family History Centers (FHC) and FamilySearch Libraries (FSL) have digital scanners that can be used for free. This includes flatbed, picture and possibly slide and negative film scanners.

The most common industry standard for word processing programs is the Word document format. (.doc) and it has been around since the 1980s. This format is used around the world in business and will be with us for some time.

The same thing goes for images. JPEG (.jpg) is a file extension and has an average 10-1 compression of the image that is also referred as JPEG. The Joint Photographic Experts Group created the standard in 1992 and it has become the "de facto" standard for many digital organizations around the world.

Another format for both documents and images is called the Portable Document Format (.pdf) by Adobe and was created in 1993. Many who use it believe that it is the best for what you see is what you get (WYSIWYG) and preserving what the author intended. For books, it is the most popular format and very likely to be around for a long time. For example, FamilySearch International (aka Familysearch.org) is using this format to scan their books and images as their standard format. They also encourage people to submit quality scans in the same format.

Remember - Before sharing old physical images or breaking up photo albums – scan them. Make a digital copy for everyone. Do not throw away old letters or stories before you take a good picture of them or scan them. When in doubt take or create an image. This also includes slides and negatives. If possible label all images or create a document with snapshots of the images, a list of who is who in the image with a where and when it was taken.

When in doubt always take a digital picture or make a digital scan at 6 megapixel or 300 dots per inch (DPI) level or better. Use higher resolutions when working with smaller images or any group of images.

Long term storage

Long term data storage on physical data DVDs (digital video disc) are optical discs and many are rated for up to 20 years. But only about 5-10 years for the ones you do for yourself. These discs have been around since 1995 and can store any kind of digital data. Businesses around the world rely on this method and will likely continue to do so for some time. Their biggest weakness is scratches from improper use.

Digital data can be easily transferred to any long term storage media device in the future. Since copying digital data to a new media creates a virtual copy, the copy will last longer than the original material. So make copies of your long term data to preserve the shelf life.

The current and most popular methods to hold larger amounts of digital data are called Flash Drives (2000) and the electronically similar Secure Digital (SD & mini SD) Card (1999). Both of them claim to have an ideal 10 years of storage life and both are backwards compatible. Backwards compatible means the newest version can read the older versions. Since the data is digital, it is also forward compatible with future digital storage devices.

Be aware that both SD & Flash drives are rated for the number of cycles used. The more you use such an item; this shortens the shelf life of the data. And in time, serious errors in the digital media will cause it to be corrupted. The average SD card in a smart phone will last less than five years with daily use. The average SD card used only a few times and properly stored can last a decade.

(end cite)

Finally, a recent article on line is recommended.

6 steps for organizing your messy photo library

By Kim Komando, The Kim Komando Show
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http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2017/10/22/6-steps-for-organizing-your-messy-photo-library.html

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