Digitize Old Photos, Slides, & Negs

Don't let your memories hide from you and everyone else. Digitize them so they can be viewed from anywhere on any device. Don't keep them hidden away in albums that you look at every ten years or on slides that you no longer have a projector to show, no better time than now to digitize. Don't be overwhelmed with the task to digitize, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". Start with a single photo album and go from there. A multifunction printer/scanner works for scanning photos and a slide scanner is easy to use. Over the last twenty years I have scanned and organized more than 15,000 images of my family and believe it or not, I enjoyed creating and sharing the photos. You can pay services like Astound on Cleveland Ave in St Paul that charge $1-$2 for each digital image. It can get very expensive when you have hundreds or thousands of photos and you still need to do the work of organizing and sharing. To scan mine it would have been $15,000 to $30,000 for just the scan cost.

Scanning - What You Need

- Multifunction printer/scanner for scanning photos. I use a Canon MF424dw printer/scanner. Manually scan one photo at a time or auto feed a stack of photos. 600 x 600 resolution. Max scan size 8.5" x 11".
- Phone or digital camera for large photos/pictures/documents that will not fit in the scanner. I use the App Google PhotoScan to enhance scans by removing glare, automatic edge detection, perspective correction, and smart rotation.
- Slide and negative scanner. I use a Pyle 22MP Film Scanner. Low cost $60-$140, good quality unit. Fast – Most of your time is spent organizing and cleaning.
  - Slides, Negatives, B&W. 135, 126, 110, and Super-8 Film Stills.
  - Camera Imaging Sensor: 22MP.
  - 2.4'' Digital LCD Display for Image Preview.
  - Self contained – No PC cable or PC software needed.
  - Digitized Images saved on SD Memory Card. Use on Mac, PC, or whatever.
- Software to edit and organize files. I use Google Picasa and Google Photos.

Scanning Tips

- Delete photos. Do not keep every photo ever taken, if the quality is not that good or you have multiple photos that show the same thing, delete them (your friends will thank you).
- Organize the photos by year and month before you scan. If you do not know the exact date, give it your best guess, you can change the date later after checking with friends and relatives.
- Remove duplicates or photos you already have digitized or gotten from other sources. I use the free software VisiPics to find duplicates after I have digitized.
- Clean the scanner glass of dust and fingerprints. Use a 3M High Performance Cloth after every 30-40 scans. Do not touch the glass with your fingers, use the next photo you want to scan to remove the scanned photo or gloves.
- Do not touch the slides or negatives, handle by the edges or use white cotton gloves that can be bought on Amazon.
- Clean the images of dust and smudges before you scan them. Use an air can and/or brush to remove dust for slides and negatives.
- Put the slide and negatives with the dull "emulsion" side down, so the image is not reversed.
- I can scan about 200 photos in an hour or 60 slides or negatives an hour. Take your time.
- If you have the original negatives and a scanner that supports negatives, scan the negatives instead of the photos. You will get better quality images than scanning a 3 x 5 photo.
- Any scanner will do for photos. I scan at 600 dpi and save images as JPGs at 95% with 5% compression (better quality/larger size).
- Scan other documents like awards, art works, old school papers, drawings, yearbooks, newspapers, and others.
- Take photos out of the album to scan.
- Some scanners have an auto document feeder where you can place a stack of up to 25 pictures and let it scan.
- Photos that are taped or glued in scrapbooks can be scanned as the entire page. Keep the page flat against the glass.
- Be very careful sliding negatives so you do not scratch the negatives.
- Some of my 1960 Ektachrome slides the color could not be corrected with tint and spots. I ended up converting to B&W.

Editing & Organize Tips

You can use many packages to edit and organize your images that range in price from $0 - $500. I recommend and use the free software Google Picasa. It is very fast, easy to use, and provides very good editing and organizing tools. Picasa was retired by Google in May 2016 and is no longer being updated, but still works for what I need. You can do most of what I will show today using the free software Microsoft Photos that comes with Windows or Apple Photos on the Mac. Websites like Google Photos or Adobe Lightroom $120 per year are also good.

Select the photos that need to be rotated and get them in the right direction. Then Edit (double click on it) and:

1. Straighten - most do not need, scrapbook images usually need a little.
2. Crop - unneeded parts of the image, especially on vertical pictures.
3. Auto correct levels - using the "I'm Feeling Lucky" auto color and contrast.
4. Sharpen in the Effects tab if needed.
5. Use B&W or Sepia for old non-color images.
6. Red eye - Automatically detects faces and corrects red eyes in your photos or can be done manually.
7. Do a People Scan of the faces to identify and manually add people to the photos and tags.
8. If the image still needs work, use some of the other tools available.
9. Continue on the next photo.

In 2020 MyHeritage, a family tree/genealogy service, offered free unlimited access to convert and sharpen B&W photos to color for several months. Colored photos look better and invoke more emotions than B&W because they appear natural and the examples looked great. I have a free account on MyHeritage and use the PC program for my family tree/genealogy. Trained on millions of images, the services use Deep Learning/AI to identify living and non-living objects and colorize them accordingly. You upload your image to the service, it works its magic in seconds, and they let you download your color image. A small percent of my photos did not convert well and it added a watermark to the photo, but I loved the results. They also have a service to remove scratches and to animate a short video of people.
https://www.myheritage.com/
https://education.myheritage.com/article/myheritage-photo-features

Naming & Organizing
● Back in the Library, I select the images that are from the same year and month and use the Picture\Batch Edit\Rename… feature to rename the images to a filename that starts with YYYY-MM-DD-#. This lets you sort your images by file name to get them in the correct order. Look at the photo, the slide, or make a best guess at the date. This is needed when you try to organize thousands of images and are combining your images with your parents, brothers, sisters, or anyone else.
● Tools\Adjust Date and Time... - Scans will have the date you scanned and need to be changed to match your new file name date. Sites like Google Photo use the Photo Date to organize photos.
● Add Geotag/GPS... - Scans have no GPS info. If you know the location, select multiple photos and set.
● Add tags to help search and organize. People, Birthday, Christmas, Trip, Wedding, etc.
● You can put the images into folders by year, trip, event, etc. Try to keep the number of images in each folder below 500 and use short meaningful names. Example Folder: 1974 Christmas.
● File\Export Picture to Folder... - The edits you make to a photo are only visible inside Picasa. Edits do NOT affect the original file on your computer's hard drive. To see, use, or print edited photos in other programs outside Picasa like Google Photos, you need to export the photos to use them.
● Move the Exported photos to a new Album or existing Album in Picasa and upload to Google Photos to share.
● Backup and share your images. I use both an external hard drive and the website Google Photos. With a Google account you get 15 GB of free space. Apple users can use the Apple iCloud to share photos. Amazon Prime members can upload unlimited photos and share.

Additional Links and Information

Carondelet Tech Help Resources: https://carondeletvillage.org/tech-help-resources/
Questions or comments can be sent to: TCKreuzer@gmail.com