

Using Digital Photography in Family History Work

Using digital cameras to save document images

Presenter: Bob Curry

Using Digital Photography

Disclaimer: Any reference to specific products is for illustration purposes only and not an endorsement or recommendation for that specific product.

Using Digital Photography

Challenge: once you have found a document, how do you add it to your collection?

In days gone by (and even today)

- Transcription
- Photocopy (books, physical document)
- Print an image (microfilm, microfiche)

Using Digital Photography

- Transcription
 - Takes time
 - May make a mistake
- Photocopy
 - Takes time
 - Usually a cost per copy
 - May have to make more than one copy to "get it right"

Using Digital Photography

- Print an image
 - Need appropriate equipment
 - Image quality may not be the best
 - Usually a cost per copy
 - May have to make more than one copy to "get it right"

Using Digital Photography

One alternative

Use a digital camera

Using Digital Photography

Advantages

- Digital cameras come with many features that make taking a picture easy
- Pictures can be taken of different forms (original documents or images)
- See the results right away
- No cost (once past the initial investment)
- Portable

Using Digital Photography

Advantages

- Pictures can be taken in almost any light
- Image can be edited
- Easily shared with family
- Images can easily be copied to a computer or flash drive
- Storage/retrieval

Using Digital Photography

Considerations

- Lighting
- Stability
- Parallelism
- Edge Distortion
- Exposure
- Size
- Quality
- Reference/Context

Using Digital Photography

Lighting

- Use indirect light, preferably day light
 - Avoid using the flash (you may not be able to anyway)
- Position object to avoid glare
 - Use a piece of white paper or cardboard on shiny surfaces to cut glare
- Be aware of potential shadows

Using Digital Photography

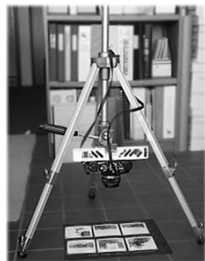
Stability

- Try to make sure there is a minimum of camera shake. You can use your camera's remote or self-timer to take a "hands off" picture (since pressing the shutter can induce camera shake).
- Special table top photo stands are available. Do a Google search for "table top photo stand" or "copy stand".

Using Digital Photography



Using Digital Photography



Using Digital Photography

Stability (continued)

- If you can't use a tripod, try holding the camera with your elbows on the table or held firmly at your sides.
- Use the image stabilization feature, if your camera has it.

Using Digital Photography

Parallelism

- The camera lens should be exactly parallel to the work being photographed. Use a small level to make sure (first make sure the object you are photographing is level, then level the camera lens).

Using Digital Photography

Parallelism (continued)

- Lay photos or historical documents flat
- Do not force books or bound documents to lie flat, instead use a book cradle or prop up the covers

Using Digital Photography

Edge Distortion

- Most wide angle lenses have some distortion. This is usually in the form of bowing of the edges. Since most digital cameras have zoom lenses, try to take photos with your camera lens at 10 mm or greater (35mm camera equivalent of 49 mm or greater). Distortion can also be minimized by keeping the camera lens exactly parallel to the work.

Using Digital Photography

Exposure

- If possible bracket your shots. Take 3 pictures of each object, one at normal exposure, one 2/3 to 1 f.stop higher and one 2/3 to 1 f.stop lower. It is very hard to judge exposure on the little LCD screen. The photo can only be judged when you get it back to the computer.

Using Digital Photography

Size

- Ideally you want to set your camera to capture the largest image size it can.

Using Digital Photography

Quality

- make sure your camera is set to either a lossless format (RAW or TIF) or if using JPEG, make sure it is on the best quality or superfine setting.

Using Digital Photography

Quality - Formats

- RAW – Minimally processed data from image sensor
 - Not yet processed for printing or editing
 - Image must be processed by a raw converter
 - Huge file

Using Digital Photography

Quality - Formats

- TIFF – Tagged Image File Format
 - Standard for commercial & professional printing
 - No data compression means no lost image data
 - Very large files

Using Digital Photography

Quality - Formats

- JPEG – Joint Photographic Experts Group
 - Standard image compression format
 - Compression results in lost image quality
 - Smaller file size

Using Digital Photography

Reference/Context

–When taking photos of old objects such as photo albums and family bibles be sure to take a picture of each full page in addition to detailed pictures of each photo on the page. The full page picture will put the photos in context. Have they been grouped in a certain way? How were they fastened to the page? Even seeing the edge tears can add character and give the viewer a sense that they are seeing something old and valuable.

Using Digital Photography

Reference/Context (continues)

- Keep a log of citation information for each picture

Using Digital Photography

Records and Documents Shot List

- Title page of film roll or book
- Full record (be sure to get each page)
- Close-up of hard-to-read areas

Using Digital Photography

After you have taken your photos

- Transfer them as soon as you can to your computer.
- Rename each file to something that is short but descriptive.
- Add text or labels to the picture.
- Save the pictures to a CD or DVD.
- Share them with others.

Choosing a Digital Camera

Criteria to consider:

- Type of camera
- Lens
- Battery
- Storage
- Display
- Flash

Choosing a Digital Camera

Criteria to consider:

- Megapixels
- Adjustable aperture
- Remote control
- Inexpensive vs Expensive

Choosing a Digital Camera

Type of camera –

“Point & Shoot” vs Digital Single Lens Reflex

Choosing a Digital Camera

Type of Camera -

- | | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Point & Shoot | vs | Digital Single Lens Reflex |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Single built in lens• Many features• Compact• Light weight• Quiet• Less expensive | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interchangeable lens• Many more features |

Choosing a Digital Camera

Lens -

- Good optical macro (close up) capability
 - Useful for imaging small items.
- Should be able to set lens in macro mode using most common settings.
- Optical zoom

Choosing a Digital Camera

Battery -

- How many pictures can be taken on a single set
- Regular batteries
 - Convenient, can be purchased almost anywhere
 - Get the highest capacity available
- Rechargeable batteries
 - May be less expensive over long run

Choosing a Digital Camera

Battery continued -

- Proprietary batteries
 - Expensive
 - Often have an extended capacity

Choosing a Digital Camera

Storage (memory card) -

- Proprietary cards
 - More expensive
 - Less available
- Compact flash cards (SD)
 - Not as expensive
 - More common

Choosing a Digital Camera

Storage (memory card) continued -

- Don't skimp on the size of the card
 - 4GB is adequate unless you are taking a lot of pictures at a high resolution

Choosing a Digital Camera

Display -

- Your camera should have an LCD display
 - You can see the exact framing
 - Easier to use than the optical viewfinder
- A rotatable display can be useful

Choosing a Digital Camera

Flash -

- Make sure the flash can be turned off
 - May not be able to use a flash (library)
 - Can result in glare

Choosing a Digital Camera

Megapixel -

- This refers to the resolution that a camera can take a picture.
- Most cameras can adjust the resolution.
- The greater the megapixels will allow cropping into the details.
- 3 Mp is adequate for most pictures.
- Most cameras now can shoot at 10 Mp or greater

Choosing a Digital Camera

Adjustable Aperture -

- Adjustable f-stop
- This feature allows control of "depth of field".
- This is usually achieved by using the "Av" setting.

Choosing a Digital Camera

Remote Control -

- Cable release
 - Reduces camera shake
- Alternative - the camera's self-timer

Choosing a Digital Camera

Inexpensive vs Expensive -

- More expensive usually means more features
 - Larger zoom lens
 - Greater aperture range
 - More advanced auto features
 - Additional file formats
 - Remote shutter release

Choosing a Digital Camera

Research

- Find other sources on what to look for in a digital camera.
- Determine what features are the most important to you.
- Establish how much you want to spend.
- Look online

Choosing a Digital Camera

Research

- Go to a store and talk to the sales people.
 - Do what they tell you match what you know?
- Make your decision

Questions?

Credits

Ken Watson

<http://www.rideau-info.com/genealogy/digital/copying.html>

Maureen A. Taylor

"Digital Age", *Family Tree Magazine*, March 2011
