

NO BOUNDARIES IN PRESERVATION

SMALL ACTIONS, BIG RESULTS: Best Practices for Small Digitization Projects



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO
University Libraries

INTRODUCTION

Have you already start a digitization project in your library or archive? Do you have family materials in need of digitization? Does your community church have records in need of preservation? This poster will guide you through a few basic steps on how to start digitizing small paper collections and personal memorabilia using cameras.

Preservation of paper materials through digitization provides accessibility of information to many different communities around the world. Digitization also contributes to the protection of records from constant handling and damage.

Not all collections are suitable to use flat scanners, especially books. The pressure imposed upon book spines when open may cause severe damage to the item. We can say photographing is a more gentle way to safeguard a collection.

Planning is the best way to start your digitization project. Decisions made early on will guide the project steps and will help in avoiding unexpected obstacles. Start with a manageable amount of items, so you can easily reach your goal. The first project will serve as a learning tool, which will later lead to more complex projects in the future. It is important to start with items significant to you or to your organization.

Ask questions like:

- What should I digitize?
- Why should I digitize this type of content?
- Are there items in need of special attention?
- What are the resources required?



Before digitizing a collection wash and dry your hands!

BASIC DIGITIZATION STEPS



After choosing what to digitize, the most important steps in your project are:

- 1 - Select your equipment.
- 2 - Create an initial description of the item.
- 3 - Set up and stabilize the equipment.
- 4 - Photograph the material.
- 5 - Save the images.

STABILIZE AND PHOTOGRAPH

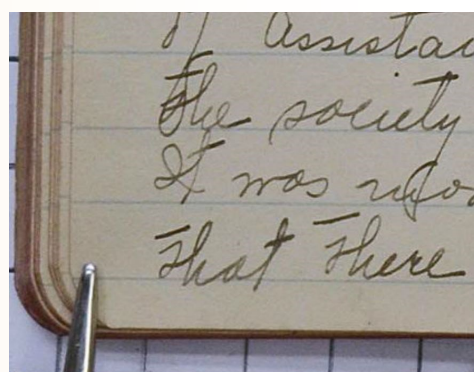


The best items to start with are usually those items that are important to you or to your organization. You can digitize documents, letters, books, photographs, or any other item that is relevant.

A thick piece of glass can work very well for making the material flatter while capturing the image. It might not work for every item, you will need to try and check the final results. Also be careful while handling the glass and make sure the edges are protected.



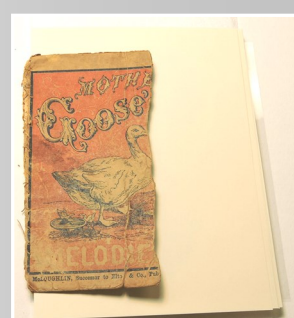
You can also use a bone folder or any other tool that is not sharp to hold the page down. Avoid putting too much pressure on the material you are working with, as it can cause damage.



FRAGILE ITEMS

Items in poor and delicate condition are in need of special attention. There are a few ways to partially stabilize the materials without actually altering or adding to the original object.

You can use an interleaving support between fragile paper while digitizing. This will provide a more clear image of the content and help to support the material while turning the pages.

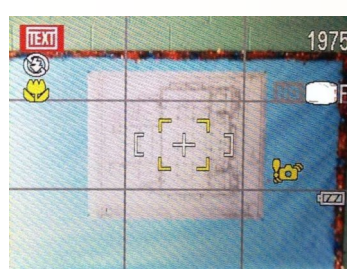


Contact a conservation or preservation professional for the best practices in handling and stabilizing these materials prior to digitization.

SELECT THE EQUIPMENT

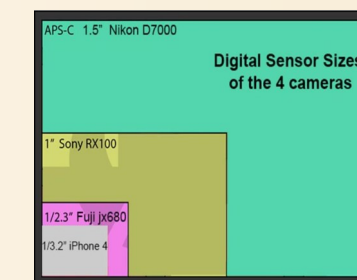
There are a variety of cameras on the market.

A few important points to consider when selecting a camera for digitizing materials are:



A **GRID SCREEN** is useful to have to help align the item, keeping it squared, level and parallel. This feature will later help when editing, straightening and cropping the image.

IMAGE SENSOR SIZE is important in determining resolution, even more than the megapixels. Most smartphones use a tiny 1/3.2-inch image sensor (4.54 x 3.42 mm), while a bigger camera, like the Sony RX 100 has a bigger 1-inch sensor (12.8 x 9.6 mm). The bigger the sensor size, the better the image will be.



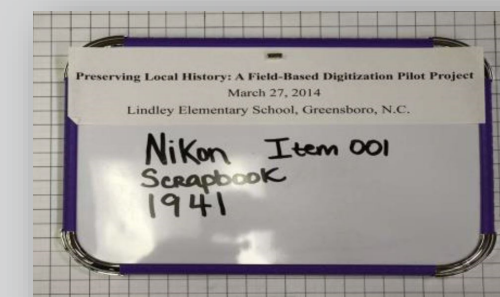
DIGITAL NOISE is a visual distortion and it looks like grain on the image. The film speed, usually called ISO, together with the shutter speed, will determine how "clean" the image is. Basically, if you use an ISO 100 the result will be a much crisper image than if you use an ISO 400.

FOCUS For most people it makes sense to use automatic focus, but just be sure you check the image sharpness. Manual mode is a little bit more complex, but offers more flexibility to find the proper focus.



DESCRIBE THE COLLECTION

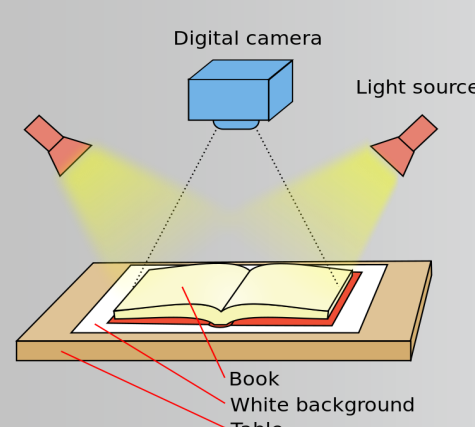
Document what you will photograph before you start shooting the material. A brief initial description of the item with title, ownership, date and location will be helpful later.



SET UP YOUR EQUIPMENT

The tripod is a vital and essential piece of equipment. It is impossible to hand hold a camera and get as sharp an image as you can when you are using a tripod.

An extension arm will solve the issue of not being able to get close enough to the copy platform or stand, and also any problems you may have with the legs casting shadows on an item.

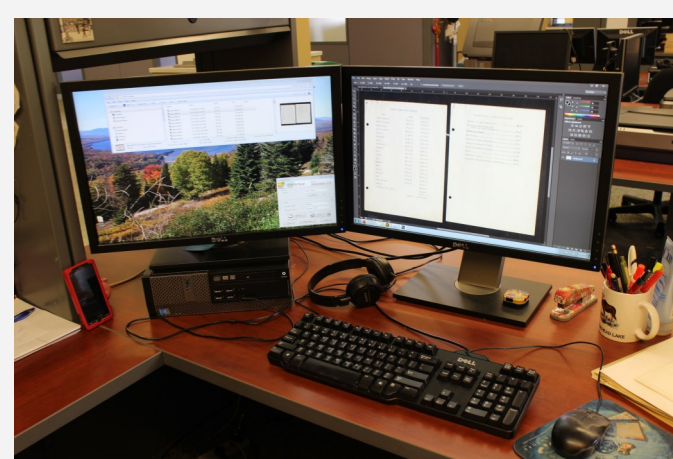


Choose a good light source, work close to a window or, if in a studio, use light from both sides.



SAVE YOUR WORK

Save the scans on at least two separate digital medias and keep them in separate locations.



Digitizing and uploading the content to a website provides accessibility to collections in a quick and convenient way.

As time goes by, technology becomes obsolete very fast and thus difficult, if not impossible, to copy over to an up-to-date device. Always update the format where you store your digitized collection, doing constant backups.

REFERENCES

- Using Digital Cameras to Preserve Historical Materials in the Field, A Best Practices Manual. Copyright to Stephen Catlett, Megan Coker, Rachel Sanders. <http://library.uncg.edu/dp/cbr/Manual.pdf>

Library of Congress <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/>

IMAGES

-Digital image of a scrapbook from West Market Street United Methodist Church Archives. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University Libraries. <http://library.uncg.edu/>

-Desk view in Digitization Lab at UNCG, photo by Audrey Sage. 2016. Copyright UNCG.

-Books and documents, photo by Audrey Sage. 2016, Copyright UNCG.

-Desk view in Digitization Lab at UNCG, photo by Audrey Sage. 2016. Copyright UNCG.

-Children's book prepared for digitization. Photos by Isabella Baltar. 2014, Copyright UNCG.

-Book scanner clipart, By Oona Räisänen [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.

Equipment for a Small Digitization Project

CAMERA



TRIPOD



GRID SCREEN



COMPUTER



PRESERVATION SERVICES

Special Collections and University Archives

UNCG

Email: preserve@uncg.edu

Website:

<http://library.uncg.edu/preserve/>

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