QUEENS MEMORY

THE MEMORY KEEPER'S GUIDE TO PHOTO PRESERVATION

QueensMemory.org

QUEENS COLLEGE

Teri Graham on her tricycle, August 1962.
Donated by Teri Graham.

Are you the memory keeper for yourself and the people in your life?

If you are looking for ways to share your important photos and keep them safe for the future, the Queens Memory Team is here to help.

A snapshot of a loved one can become a family treasure as years go by, a bridge from one generation to the next. But a snapshot can be a surprisingly difficult thing to keep safe. Framed pictures fade. Albums damage photos by falling apart, or even worse... by sticking together!

And digital files are no more secure from damage or loss than negatives and prints. The coating of a CD can flake off; a cloud storage service can go out of business; water can spill on your hard drive. Digital files require both software and hardware to access, and when either become obsolete (like Adobe Flash Player, or a floppy disk) you will lose access to them. The tips in this guide can help you to ensure future access to your most important images.

Norma and Leonore Lanzillotti on 41st Street and 48th Avenue, 1947.
Donated by Leonore Lanzillotti.

Gladys and John Weaver's wedding, 1947.
Donated by Gladys Weaver.

STEP 1 — CONSIDER YOUR GOALS

The answers to these questions will help you make a plan.

- What photos are most important to save first?
- What is the size of this project? Every photo you own, or just one specific photo album?
- What information or context about these photos is important to capture?
- Do you want to give other people access to these photos too?

STEP 2 — GATHER ALL MATERIALS TO BE PRESERVED

- Identify all the places where your photos are stored. While you're on this search, you might consider also looking for important documents, video, and audio.
- Check for materials on computers, laptops, cameras, phones, social media, scrapbooks, and photo albums, VHS tapes, CDs, DVDs, flash drives, etc.
- Ask others who care about these materials if they have related items they can contribute to the project.

STEP 3

IMPORT MATERIALS INTO YOUR COMPUTER

Transfer all of the digital files from your devices onto your computer. Also transfer photographs or other materials you've newly scanned or digitized. For some items, like VHS tapes, you may need to work with a service provider to help you digitize the content so it is viewable on a computer.

TIPS FOR SCANNING:

- Clean your scanner glass with rubbing alcohol and a clean microfiber cloth.

- DPI (Dots Per Inch) affects image quality. A higher DPI creates a more detailed image (and also a larger file, so keep an eye on the available storage space left on your drive!). Our recommended settings are:

    - Photos and documents: 600 dpi

    - Photographic slides and negatives: 1800 dpi

- Save the files as TIFF or high-quality JPEG.

- Name your files in a consistent and descriptive way. Consider a numbering system that will make file names sort into an order you want within a folder. Include the date, location, person, event, or other keywords. This will help you find images quickly when looking at a big list of file names and ensure the most important information about them does not get lost. Some examples of good file names are "1996-01-03_Claudia_Birthday" or "Rome_2019_001."

- Queens Public Libraries have scanners you can use for free to do this work. This video queenslib.org/Preserve provides step-by-step directions for using those machines.

Inez Lewis, Sinclair Lewis, and Ethel Gomez, circa 1960.
Donated by Inez Lewis.

Natalio Tabaco created elaborate albums documenting his life, home, and family during his retirement. This page includes photos from his family's 1966 trip to the Philippines.
Donated by Alex Tabaco.

STEP 4 — DECIDE WHAT IS IMPORTANT

- If you've uploaded the contents of your camera or smartphone, delete any files that aren't meaningful. Think back to the goals of your project.

- If you have multiple copies of the same file, delete duplicates and keep the highest quality version. If you're feeling cautious, you can move duplicates to a separate folder for later review before deleting. Hint: You will most often want to keep the duplicate image with the largest file size because it is likely of a higher quality.

STEP 5 — COPY & BACKUP YOUR FILES

- Create and save at least 2 copies of your files.

- Follow the 3-2-1 rule: Keep 3 copies of each file, save them in 2 different storage media (ex: in a cloud storage folder and on an external hard drive), and keep 1 set of copies offsite. You can keep your most important information safe from fires and floods by storing it in a couple places.

- "What is the cloud?" Services like Google Drive and Dropbox maintain servers all over the world that store the files we upload to store with them. When someone stores a file "in the cloud" it just means they are using one of these services instead of saving it to the hard drive on their own computer at home.

- Copy your digital files to a new storage drive every 5 years. Technology changes quickly and this will ensure that your copies remain accessible.

Larry Kappel and friends, Sunnyside, circa 1952.
Donated by Steve Kessler.

STEP 6

SHARE YOUR WORK

Great job! You've created your own digital archive of photos and other materials that are important to you and the people you care about. Here are steps you can take moving forward:

- Invite others who care about these pictures to contribute to your archiving project.

- Make a reminder in your calendar to open your files a few times a year to make sure your software is still working and the files are where they should be.

- Make sure any cloud storage services you use are accessible and subscription payments are renewing properly.

- Replace external hard drives every 5-7 years.

- Consider donating a copy of your photos to your local public library or historical society. If you'd like to archive your photos with Queens Memory, you can share them at queenslib.org/DocumentQueens.

QUEENS MEMORY

The Queens Memory team is here to help you be the best memory keeper you can be. We provide training and materials for those wishing to create oral history interviews, photographs, or other records of their neighborhoods, families, and communities. Come to meet us at one of our free programs or workshops to learn more about Queens rich history and how you can be part of preserving it.

PLEASE BE IN TOUCH!

QueensMemory@queenslibrary.org or leave a voice message at **718-990-8532**.

QUEENS PUBLIC LIBRARY
We speak your language.

QueensMemory.org

89-11 Merrick Boulevard, Jamaica
718-990-8532

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