



## Research Guide

# Sharing Memories Digitally

by  
**Midwest Historical and Genealogical Society**  
1203 N Main  
Wichita, KS

**(316) 264-3611**  
**mhgswichita.org**

*Problem: You have a collection (large or small) of interesting items related to your family. These may include photos, important documents, artwork, textiles and other heirlooms. You wish to share these with your family members, and you have decided that you want your finished product to be digital.*

Your first step is to decide on the scope of your project. Is this a once-in-a-lifetime project, or is this the first in a series of smaller projects? Hint – it’s going to be easier to think of this as the first in a series of projects. In addition to making for a smaller project, it will seem less stressful. But, of course, sometimes one chance is all you get.

Your second step is to get your items into the digital world. Whole books have been written on this subject. To keep it simple, we’ll stick to the following guidelines:

- Use a scanner to digitize flat things like pictures and a camera to take pictures of 3-dimensional things like wedding dresses or teapots.
- Save your files in either .jpg or .tif format. Scan at 300 dpi, unless you are going to want to crop or enlarge a photo (for example, if you have a picture of a person standing in a field, and you want to crop out most of the field to focus on the person). In this case, consider 400 or 600 dpi.
- Use a consistent naming scheme to organize your images. You can have long file names, so devise a system that includes names, places and/or dates to help you, and other people, locate files.
- Save your “original” files in a safe place and make a copy to work with.
- Refer to the Library of Congress document *Scanning Your Personal Collections* at [http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/documents/PA\\_scanning.pdf](http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/documents/PA_scanning.pdf) for more information.
- If you don’t have access to a scanner or digital camera, we can help you at the library.

Now for the fun part. You have many options for sharing your digital memories:

- Copy your digital files to disk and distribute copies. This is the simplest and most bare-bones presentation method. It is probably best for sharing items with recipients who already know the people in the photos and the stories behind the heirlooms (such as sharing childhood pictures

with your siblings.) If you want to take it up a step, write a letter describing the items in the files and include the letter on the disk. If you want to make this a gift, there are many interesting disk cases available.

- Use the web. It is possible to use the web to share photos and stories without making them available to the public.
  - You can make a private Facebook page and only allow selected individuals to see it. This might be a good choice if you want other people to share their own photos or to comment on yours, perhaps to help identify people, places or events. This option also allows you to post a few items at a time rather than doing everything at once.
  - If you have a strong genealogy focus to your collection of photos, you can create a tree at Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org, or WikiTree.com. Once you have created a family tree, you can upload pictures and attach them to the appropriate people in that tree. Different sites have different privacy policies, so be sure to check out who can see your files (if you care.)
- Create a digital scrapbook and distribute it on disks. You can share just the scrapbook, or also include the individual image files for those who would like to use them in other contexts.
  - You can use ordinary office software like a word processor or presentation program. Insert a photo or other image, then add your text.
  - If you know how to use it, go wild with Adobe Photoshop. There are many sources of backgrounds, fonts, and graphics you can combine with your digital images.
  - You can also buy digital scrapbooking software that lets you build a digital version of a paper scrapbook. These programs include templates for pages, plus backgrounds, fonts and graphics. When your scrapbook is finished, the software will allow you to burn a viewable version of the scrapbook to a CD for distribution. There's a review of several programs, with summaries of their features and links to their websites, at <http://scrapbooking-software-review.toptenreviews.com/>