

Using a Digital Camera to Copy Records

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Using a digital camera for copying genealogy records opens many new doors, on research trips, in archives and cemeteries.

Success story using digital cameras

Planned a research trip, made lists in advance of the certificates needed. Three of us went to the NJ State Archives with digital cameras.

127 certificates = \$3,175 saved which more than paid for the trip

- 69 birth certificates
- 21 marriage certificates
- 37 death certificates

Other records were copied at the Archives the same day. We visited court houses, archives, libraries, cemeteries, and relatives. In ten days we copied 10,860 digital images.

What you need to know about digital cameras

It's not necessary to know all about camera settings. You just need to make a few basic adjustments.

- Automatic mode won't take an acceptable picture of a page of a book.
- Need to be able to customize settings.
- Even inexpensive cameras have the necessary features.

Macro close-up mode: the TULIP

- Allows you to place the camera close to the book and keep image in focus.
- Can be a couple of inches from the book in macro mode. Cameras differ as to how close.
- Have to be 20 inches away from book in normal mode

Must be able to turn the flash off

- Often not permitted
- Does not make a good picture up close

Flash off and tulip – every time for close up pictures.

More important features

- Camera must have a hole to screw onto a tripod, copy stand, or clamp
- Zoom lens: get closer or farther from the image without moving the camera. 4X optical zoom on my camera. More expensive cameras have more zoom power.

Memory Card

- The size of the memory card determines how many pictures you can store in the camera.
- Purchase at least 1 G – about 400+ images
- Some models don't support cards larger than 2GB
- Read on the camera manufacturer's Web site or in the manual to choose a card.
- The capacity on the label will always be higher than the actual capacity of the card.

Back up, back up

- Download images from camera to a laptop.
- Also back up to an external hard drive.
- Go to a store like Target with memory card, burn a CD, and send copy home.

Film speed or ISO

Controls the speed light is captured. Raise the ISO speed when shooting in a dark area.

Basic ISO for genealogists

- Set ISO at 400 in dark microfilm rooms or libraries with poor light
- Set ISO at 200 in cemeteries
- Read the manual for more understanding

The Manual

A manual came with the camera or go online to the camera manufacturer's web site for a copy of the manual in PDF format. The manual may be on a CD at came with the camera.

What about mega pixels?

- Mega pixels determine the quality and size of prints you plan to make.
- More dots (mega pixels) per inch allow printing a larger picture with good quality.

Will a 8 mega pixel camera vs an 4 mega pixel camera make better prints?

- 4X6 prints - most people won't notice the difference at 4 or 8 mega pixels
 - 8X10 prints – 8 mega pixel will make a much better print.
 - Planning to publish? Choose a camera with higher mega pixels.
- UGA Crossroads needs images with 300 dpi in .tiff format.

Batteries

- Have a supply on hand - essential for success!
- AA size alkaline, Lithium or Titanium batteries
- Rechargeable AA size NiMH batteries
- Nickel-cadmium batteries are cheap but unreliable and not recommended

Battery Recharger – very useful.

Card reader

When you insert the memory card, it will mount to your desktop just like another disc, and you can copy the photos directly to your hard disk. <http://www.dcresource.com/faq/faq.html>

Shooting images you will be happy with

- Taking pictures of microfilm on a microfilm reader works well with a digital camera.
- A flat screen microfilm reader works very well, but it must be in a dark area.
- Fiche copier also works.
- Smaller images are easy to copy with your camera
- Full pages are more of a challenge, but you can do it!
- Being able to zoom in on parts of the image is such a help!

Camera Holders for Microfilm Readers

Camera holder – Sunpac ClampPod PRO or other clamps sold for cameras. It will help your arm not wear out taking a series of pictures.

Timer

Set the Timer to a 2 second delay to prevent movement as you take the picture with a camera holder.

White balance

Pertains to what kind of light you are in. You can set your camera for sun light, shadows, light bulb (tungsten), florescent white light or florescent sunlight settings.

Beware of camera shadow when taking pictures with overhead lighting. Set a book at a slight angle.

Copy the source – the title and film number - with camera as well as the record

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs making photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of the conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction will not be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter9/9-b.html

You can take a copy stand or a tripod into a library

- Three-leg tripod – reverse the center pole so camera will point down
- Adjust the legs so the camera is as close as possible to the book and the image is in focus
- Check the lighting and the click away

Some people recommend keeping a picture log

- Title, number of images
- Helps when organizing images on your computer.

Take family pictures with you on a research trip to help identify places. This is probably your one chance to get a good picture. Be very aware of all we have talked about. Better to be wise and careful than sorry when you get home and have poor or out-of-focus images!

Not wiggling as you take a picture is crucial.

Recently I tried to copy records in Russian for a friend with my camera. We learned there are times when it's better to use a film copy scanner.

Sometimes digital cameras are not permitted

- In some court houses and historical societies.
- Some libraries or societies want you to photograph their name with each document.

Daguerreotype photographs

Copying with my camera worked when we created a semi-dark room with sweaters and blankets.

Steps to Add Text to a Picture in PhotoShop Elements

- Adobe Photoshop Elements - open a picture
- Size it in Image – Image Size. Make it small enough (3x4.5 for a 3x5 picture)so when you add .5 of text and then have a copy made to send to someone it will still come out at 3x5 or whatever you want the size to be.
- Save
- Go to Image – Canvas Size
- Increase the height (to get text on bottom of picture) or width (to get text on side of picture) by .5 of an inch.
- Click on the Anchor – in the top part where the arrows are to get text on the bottom, or on the bottom part to get text on the top.
- Click OK
- Click on the capital T in the bar of options on the left
- Click in the white space of the photo and type what you want to appear. Highlight text to adjust font size and color.
- Flatten the two images: Layer – Flatten Image
- Save As

Other processes in Photoshop Elements

- Convert images to grayscale
- Image – Crop
- Image – Adjustments – Auto Levels
- Convert a .tiff from a copy scanner to a .jpg
- Resize for printing, publishing, putting on the internet
- Highlighting your person of interest in a document

Photographing tombstones

- Go, go, go!!!
- Get as many of the tombstones as you can if you have lots of ancestors in the area.
- You can sort later.
- Good light, up close so you can read later
- No shaving cream or other agents
- Have a brush to clean the stone
- Walkie talkies are useful so you can go in different directions and copy all the cemetery

Internet Sites

http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-6451_7-6296352-1.html Picking the right memory card for your camera.

<http://www.dcresource.com/faq/faq.html> Digital camera resource page – Frequently Asked Questions

http://www.dpreview.com/learn/?/Glossary/Digital_Imaging/White_Balance_01.htm about white balance and different kinds of light

<http://www.dpreview.com/learn/?/glossary/> Glossary of digital camera terms with explanations