

## Digital Photography for the Genealogist

### Request Companion Resources:

1. Copy of PowerPoint presentation
2. 20- page ready reference.
- 3.

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**Course Description:** Turn the digital camera into one of your most valued genealogical research tools. Effectively acquire records and preserve documents. Cut your reproduction costs by a minimum of 50%, achieve 3 times more with your available time. Also learn how to preserve, catalog, and file images for easy access.

### Where to find Photo Studio In-A-Box from American Recorder Technologies:

<http://www.americanrecorder.com/>

### Where to find camera mounted adapters for copying slides with a digital camera?

[www.specialtyphotographic.com](http://www.specialtyphotographic.com).

### Define Digital Imaging

1. The Digital Advantage Versus Film Advantage.
2. Desired Features when Choosing a Digital Camera.
3. Defining Image File Formats.
4. Moving Photos from your Camera to your Computer.

### Photographing as a Genealogist

1. Digital Photography is all about Lighting and Location.
2. Photographing Unbound Pages.
  - a. Mount your camera on its stand, in shooting position.
  - b. Use a white sheet of paper, or the white painted cookie sheet.
  - c. Set the pre-set white balance on your camera.
  - d. Choose auto white balance if your camera doesn't have a pre-set option.
  - e. Place your document in position and anchor it with magnets.
  - f. Select the camera's macro mode if necessary.
  - g. Zoom in so that your document is properly framed.
  - h. Check to make sure the focus is clear and sharp.
  - i. Set the camera's self-timer, and press the shutter.
  - j. View the picture on the LCD, and zoom in and check for the proper focus, exposure (brightness and contrast). Can you easily read the text?
  - k. If the focus and/or exposure are incorrect, make the camera corrections, and re-shoot the document.
3. Photographing Bound Pages

Books can be a problem, because the pages seldom lay completely flat when the book

is opened to a normal reading position.

- a. Shoot book pages with the cover held up at about an 80-degree angle.
- b. Rotate the book so that the spine is facing the back of the copy stand.
- c. Open the book to the first page you want to shoot.
  - Make sure there are no shadows falling on the page.
  - Hold the front, or back cover and the pages preceding the one you are shooting.
- d. Set the timer and press the shutter button halfway down and hold in position for a few seconds to give the camera time to adjust the automatic focus and exposure settings.
- e. Check to make sure the focus is correct before pressing the button all the way down so the timer releases the shutter.
- f. Before photographing the next page, place the opposite cover down on the table.
- g. Slide the book back into position so that it is under the camera, with the spine of the book toward the back of the stand. Note: if the page is upside down, that's ok. You can fix that during your editing.

#### 4. Photographing Oversized Pages

- a. Set up your stand, and adjust your camera.
- b. Open the large book/page.
- c. Adjust the camera and take photos.
- d. If the page is too large for your camera (e.g., map, newspaper) consider taking multiple photos with can be "stitched" together in editing program.
  - Use card: START (On top of page to be filmed)
  - Use card: 1 (Quadrant 1) (Top nearest spine)
  - Use card: 2 (Quadrant 2) (Top nearest right edge)
  - Use card: 3 (Quadrant 3) (Bottom nearest spine)
  - Use card: 4 (Quadrant 4) (Bottom right edge)
  - Use card: END (Placed on top of the page just filmed)
- e. Rotate the book/paper as needed.

#### 5. Photographing Photos

- a. Best shot with a mobile studio set-up (Better lighting with copy stand).
- b. Mount your camera on it's stand, in shooting position.
- c. Use a white sheet of paper/copy stand.
- d. Place your photo in position and anchor it with magnets.
- e. Select the camera's macro mode if necessary.
- f. Zoom in so your photo is properly framed.
- g. Check to make sure the focus is clear and sharp.
- h. Set the camera's self-timer, and press the shutter.
- i. View picture on the LCD, zoom in and check for the proper focus, and exposure.
- j. If the focus and/or exposure are incorrect, make the camera corrections, and re-shoot the document.

#### 6. Photographing Microfilm

Note: These are the backlit or rear projection readers that shine a light through the film and use a series of mirrors and/or lenses to display an image of the film on a

vertical or flat surface, the image displayed on either style can be easily photographed.

- a. Place your camera on a tripod located in front of the reader screen.
- b. Place a white paper on the read surface as the target area for shooting.
- c. Adjust the camera/tripod position so that the information you want to copy fills the LCD frame, not the viewfinder.
- d. Set the macro mode if necessary. This will depend on your camera model and how far away it is from the microfilm reader.
- e. Make sure the flash is turned off.
- f. Set the camera's self-timer.
- g. Gently press the shutter button halfway to lock the exposure and focus.
- h. Press the button completely down, move away from the camera and wait for the self-timer to trip the shutter.
- i. Take several shots. Consider using the "best shot selector" and/or auto bracketing your shots if your camera has these features or manual bracketing if it doesn't.

#### 7. Photographing People

- a. Enjoy taking photographs.
- b. Take close "tight" photos of your subject.
- c. Take candid pictures.
- d. Use natural light.
- e. Avoid harsh shadows.

#### 8. Photographing Children

Make picture-taking a part of your everyday life with children. Children are always climbing, building, exploring, and trying out new things.

- a. Begin a photo tradition.
- b. Be patient.
- c. Shoot at eye level.
- d. Take candid pictures.
- e. Include friends.
- f. Get close.
- g. Let kids record their world.
- h. Place your subject off-center.

#### 9. Photographing Babies

- a. Take pictures frequently.
- b. Capture feelings.
- c. Get close.
- d. Try different angles.
- e. Include other people in pictures.
- f. Use a simple background.
- g. Use natural light.

#### 10. Photographing Landscape

- a. Include a strong point of interest.
- b. Include an interesting object in the foreground.
- c. Place the point of interest off-center.
- d. Include people for scale.
- e. Use lines to lead the eye.

- f. Wait for the right light.
  - g. Take pictures, even in bad weather.
  - h. Turn-off your flash.
  - i. Avoid distractions.
11. Photographing Buildings
- a. Choose your angle, avoid distractions.
  - b. Include an interesting object in the foreground.
  - c. Take pictures of the buildings architectural details.
  - d. Include people when appropriate.
  - e. Use lines to lead the eye.
  - f. Wait for the right light.
  - g. Consider the direction the building is facing.
  - h. Take pictures, even in bad weather.
  - i. Turn-off your flash.
  - j. Remember the green grass and blue sky.
  - k. Choose your angle, avoid distractions.
  - l. Winter, spring, summer, fall.
  - m. Take your time, frame the photograph.
12. Photographing Scrapbooks/Artwork
- a. Photograph your children with their art.
  - b. Take individual photos of each piece.
  - c. Frame it.
  - d. Document the process.
13. Photographing a Walk in the City
- a. Collect brochures, flyers, from the city.
  - b. Photograph points of interest to you.
  - c. Include a picture of street sign and house number.
  - d. Include pictures of city names.
14. Photographing in the Libraries
- a. Know the library's policy about digital photography before you go.
  - b. Do not use flash.
  - c. Set up photo stand or tripod.
  - d. May need to sign an intended uses statement.
  - e. May need to have their staff handle rare objects.
  - f. Only take photos of intended artifacts.
  - g. No photos allowed of interior of buildings or people.
  - h. Set up camera in corner away from others so as not to disturb.
  - i. Set up near window to gain most from natural light.
15. Photographing Museums and Archives
- a. Check first to see if photography is allowed.
  - b. Objects covered with glass or plastic are best shot at angle.
  - c. Remember to snap a separate picture of a caption or a label of the exhibit.
  - d. Use the Tripod along with your camera's self-timer night/lowlight setting.
  - e. No tripod? Then brace yourself.

## 16. Photographing at the Cemetery

- a. Take photos of the cemetery entrance, sign, book of records, and church.
- b. North, South, East, West: Best time of day for photographing headstones.
- c. Large headstones require close-ups of inscriptions.
- d. Family grave plots require group and individual photos of each headstone.
- e. Consider taking photos of all headstones in small community cemetery.
- f. Look at the base, top, sides, and back of headstones.
- g. Take eye-level photos of headstone inscriptions.
- h. Talk to the sexton.
- i. Take time to clear grass and other foliage away from inscription.
- j. Use a little chalk for the hard to read old headstones.
- k. Tilt your camera to the angle of the headstone.
- l. Black and gray polished marble shoot at angle.
- m. Try using flash on headstones covered by shade or cloudy days.
- n. Try soft brush or natural sponge and water to remove surface soil.
- o. Never use hard objects or stiff brushes to clean the stone.
- p. Removing lichens with sharp objects most often destroys surface.
- q. Keep a written record.
- r. Post your photos of headstones on family websites or sites such as Virtual Cemetery. [http://www.genealogy.com/vcem\\_welcome.html](http://www.genealogy.com/vcem_welcome.html)