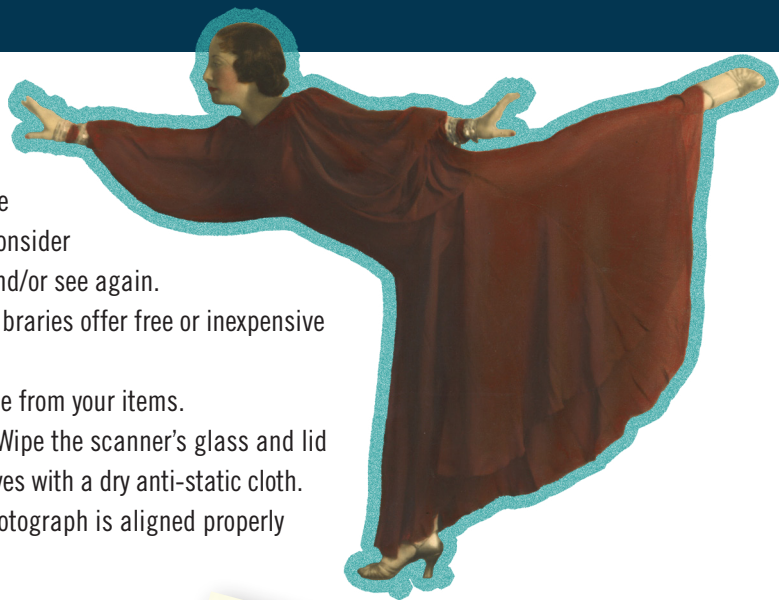


DIGITAL ARCHIVING FOR PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHS

STARTING OUT: IDENTIFY AND PREPARE

- Getting organized and deciding which photographs to include can be essential, as scanning can take considerable time. Consider limiting your selection to the items you most wish to share and/or see again.
- Use a flatbed scanner or multifunction printer. Many public libraries offer free or inexpensive access to these types of scanning devices.
- Make sure to carefully remove any paper clips, staples or tape from your items.
- Smudges, dust and hair can show up in your digital photos. Wipe the scanner's glass and lid with a lint-free cloth and lightly wipe photographs and negatives with a dry anti-static cloth.
- If provided the option, select "Preview" first to ensure the photograph is aligned properly for scanning.



THE TECHNICAL STUFF: SCAN PROPERTIES, FILE FORMATS AND NAMING

SCAN PROPERTIES:

Two main settings determine image quality: dots per inch (DPI) and bit depth. Remember that increasing these settings will always increase the file size of your images.

Optimal DPI Settings:

- Snapshot prints (i.e., Polaroid, etc.), 4"x6", 5"x7" or 8"x10" prints: 300 to 400 dpi
- Photographic slides: 1400 to 1500 dpi
- Photo negatives: 1500 to 2000 dpi

Optimal Bit Depth Settings:

- Grayscale prints: 8-bit or 16-bit
- Color prints: 24-bit or 48-bit

For routine scanning, select 8-bit grayscale or 24-bit color according to the color of the item. If you plan to edit any image or enlarge for printing, select either the 16-bit grayscale or the 48-bit color setting.





FILE FORMATS:

- Most common file-type options are TIFF and JPEG/JPG.
- Tiff is the preferred format for digital photo preservation as it retains the maximum amount of digital data and preserves image quality without degradation over time.
- If you have a choice and the storage space, save your original master scan as a TIFF and use JPEG/JPG copies for any edits or modifications and for sharing over email or social media.

NAMING:

- Most software will automatically assign file names. Rename with a descriptive word or two along with the year or the combined year and month of the photograph. Be sure to include a number sequence. For any naming system, consistency is key.

Example: *ArchivesMonth_LVATourEvent_October2025_001*
ArchivesMonth_LVATourEvent_October2025_002

STORAGE:

- Create and organize a folder-within-folder structure.
 Example:
 /My Documents
 /My Photographs
 /Virginia Archives Month 2025
- Consider the *3-2-1 rule*: three master copies stored across two different media sources (i.e., flash drive, DVD/CD, external hard drive, memory stick) and one master copy stored separately via Cloud storage.
- About every 5 to 7 years, transfer your images to an updated storage medium as software/hardware technology becomes obsolete.

Digitized images should not be considered a replacement for original photographs. For best practices on preserving your physical photographs at home, see our additional guide found on the **Virginia Archives Month website** at bit.ly/VAARCHIVESMONTH25.



BIT.LY/VAARCHIVESMONTH25

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