DIGITALIZING AND PRESERVING THE OLD FAMILY PHOTOS

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June 28, 2018

Remember flipping through dusty, old photo albums at your parents' house? Stuffed away in storage units and tattered shoeboxes are the stories of your family history and the memories of special ones who have shaped you. As you thumb through the worn, yellowed family photos, you may wonder what you can do to preserve the old photos and give new life to the stories they tell.

Perhaps you have thought about preserving old family photos, but feel overwhelmed by the daunting task of scanning and printing all of those photos. Here at SimplePrints, we've compiled a guide to help you get started, determine the best scanning options, and create a modern photo book to give old photos a new life.

Step 1: The Gathering

Family old-time photos tend to be scattered. They seem to accidentally take up permanent residence in aunts' and uncles' closets, or in a frame tucked away in a miscellaneous drawer. Split between half-baked scrapbook projects, numerous households, and various mislabeled boxes, it can be difficult to track down the old family pictures you'd like to preserve.

Determine which photos you'd most like to use in your project. Then, call your family members and ask them about which old photos they may be storing. Get a sense of what is out there and what is relevant to your project. Ask your family members to find a way to share their old photos with you either through snail mail, text, email, or an online platform (keep reading for some easy options!)

Step 2: Creating Digital Images – Scanning Options

To create a custom photo book online with the SimplePrints app, you first need to have digital images. Digitizing family photos is easier than ever with new technologies and services available today. When deciding how to digitize your photos, you have three basic options; scan them at home with a scanner, use your mobile phone (our recommendation) or outsource the project to a photo scanning company.

Let's dive into these three options.

Option 1: Scanning at home

Most of us have access to a scanner or a combination printer (with a scanning option) at home. If not, you can buy a decent machine (300 dpi or higher) for about $100. Clean your photos with a microfiber cloth and place them on the flatlay glass of your scanner. Depending on size, you may want to speed up the process by placing 3-4 images on the scanner at once. You can always go back and crop them later. Save your scanned images, choose an organized naming system, and import them into Photos, Facebook, Dropbox, or Google Photos.

Using an at home scanner will guarantee a good quality image and give you maximum control over how to organize and save them to your computer, but it can also be time consuming. If you're willing to sacrifice a bit on quality and save time, consider using your mobile phone.

Option 2: Using your Mobile Phone

Your mobile phone can be your best digitizing friend! Perhaps you don't own the picture, or you are visiting a relative and see an old photo framed on their wall— whip out your mobile phone and you're on your way to owning a digital copy. Whether you want to keep it simple (open your camera and take a photo of your photo) or pay for a more robust app, your mobile phone is a great tool for helping digitize old photos.

If quality is not a concern, simply open your camera and snap a photo. Check the lighting and position yourself in a way that avoids direct sunlight. (Direct sunlight can negatively impact the color of your digital image.) If needed, you can hover over the photo and use your shadow to prevent glare or discoloration. Be sure the lens is close enough, tap the screen to focus (for a higher resolution), and snap!

If you want a better, more organized option, many awesome apps for scanning are available that make scanning photos with a phone a breeze! Here are a few apps to check out:

Google PhotoScan: Google PhotoScan scans photos using your smartphone's camera in a way that eliminates glare, removes shadows, and automatically crops out edges and white borders (like in an old Polaroid shot). You can even leave photos in their frames if you want to. Easy to use and imports/saves directly to your GooglePhotos.

Generation Story: Designed to tell the story and history of a family, GenerationStory allows you to organize family photos and document family heirlooms. Take a high-resolution picture of your photo, add details and dates, and create a searchable database for your family treasures.

Pic Scanner: At $1.99. Pic Scanner has a simple design and a user-friendly interface! This app allows you to scan 2-3 images at once. It can auto-detect photo edges to crop and save each image.

Pic Scanner Gold: At $4.99. Created specifically for scanning old photos, this app allows you to batch scan multiple photos (and entire album pages) at once and automatically crops and saves each picture. It also includes 19 editing tools and makes it easy to import photos from your photo storage apps.

Option 3: Outsourcing

Some of us simply do not have the time or mental energy to sift through, organize, and compile the hundreds of family photos out there. Maybe you have a huge family or a photo-happy great grandmother, or perhaps you are in a time crunch to create a family photo album. Lucky for you, there are many quality companies out there that you can trust with your preserving old family photos. They will sort through them, organize them as best they can, scan high-quality photos, and send you a DVD/CD or digital folder of your photos.

This option is more expensive but might be best for some projects. Here are a few companies we found:

Scanmyphotos.com: For $50, this professional scanning company will scan up to 1000 photos for you on the same day they receive them, and get them organized and saved onto a DVD.

ScanDigital: Reviewed as a reliable, trusted scanning company, ScanDigital employs scan technicians to do light edits (cropping, color correction, red-eye removal) all for about 70 cents per image. They also accept old slides and photo film negatives. After they are finished with your images, you will receive a USB drive of your family photos.

ScanCafe: ScanCafe spends an average of 4 minutes on each image, scanning and enhancing each by hand to ensure quality. They do not work as quickly as some of the other companies but have good reviews and affordable pricing.

MemoriesRenewed: A highly rated company that accepts a great variety of media formats (slides, photo albums, prints, home videos, negatives, etc.) and offers flexible digital options (CD, DVD, USB). Memories Renewed offers restorative services, and timely turnarounds paired with good customer service.

Step 3: Creating the book

Once you have your digital images cropped, edited, and saved to your phone, you are ready to preserve old family photos in a beautiful custom photo book. Open SimplePrints app, start a new project, and get creating!

For a quality family photo book, be sure you have high resolution images (300 dpi or higher). If your digital images are not high quality, consider using collage layouts on your pages. Add captions to each image to share dates, locations, background stories, or details of the people represented. Share digital copies with your family members so they too have preserved family memories to hold onto.

Sources:

http://www.photobookgirl.com/blog/qa-my-photos-arent-digital-how-do-i-make-a-photo-book-scan-your-photos/ https://www.cnet.com/how-to/how-to-scan-and-archive-your-old-printed-photos/ https://www.cnet.com/how-to/improve-your-tbt-efforts-with-googles-new-photoscan-app/ http://time.com/4570817/google-photos-new-app-

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