



Archiving a Life Story: How to Preserve Family Records

Set Your Goals

- **Assess the Scope:** Determine what types of items you have (e.g., photos, letters, textiles).
- **Define Your Purpose:** Are you preserving for family history, research, or future generations?
- **Set Goals:** Decide on specific goals (e.g., preserving fragile documents or digitizing old photographs).

Survey & Organize Your Collection

- Identify any urgent preservation needs (e.g., fragile papers, old photos).
- Decide whether to maintain the original order of documents or reorganize them for ease of use.
- Label folders and storage boxes clearly, both digitally and physically.
- Create a catalog of your items, noting details like type, date, condition, and storage location.

Preservation Tips

- **Documents & Photos:** Store in acid-free folders and boxes to prevent degradation.
- **Textiles:** Use archival tissue paper and avoid folding. Store in breathable boxes.
- **Environmental Control:** Keep items in a cool, dry place with stable humidity levels.
- **Northeast Document Conservation Center:** <https://www.nedcc.org/>
- **Archival Supplies:**
 - **Gaylord Archival:** <https://www.gaylord.com/>
 - **University Products:** <https://www.universityproducts.com/>

When to Consult a Professional

- For rare, fragile, or deteriorating items, consult a conservator to prevent further damage.

Tips for Digitizing Your Collection

- **Scanning Standards:** Use at least 300 dpi resolution for photos and documents.
- **Storage:** Back up digital files in multiple locations.
- **File Naming:** Organize digital files with clear, consistent naming conventions for easy retrieval.



Minimum Specifications and Resolution Chart

Original material	Scanning resolution	Bit depth	Approximate scanned dimensions	Approx. size of preview image
<i>Photographs</i>				
16" x 20" +	200 ppi	24-bit color	6400 x 8000 pixels	146 MB
8 ½" x 11"—16" x 20"	300 ppi	24-bit color	3200 x 4000 pixels	36 MB
8" x 10"	400 ppi	24-bit color	3200 x 4000 pixels	36 MB
5" x 7"	625 ppi	24-bit color	3200 x 4000 pixels	36 MB
4" x 5"	800 ppi	24-bit color	3200 x 4000 pixels	36 MB
4" x 2 ½"	1200 ppi	24-bit color	3200 x 4000 pixels	36 MB
<i>Text</i>				
Print—no images	600 ppi	1-bit bitonal	Varies	Varies
Print—with images	300 ppi	8-bit grayscale or 24-bit color	Varies	Varies
Manuscript	400 ppi	8-bit grayscale or 24-bit color	Varies	Varies

Wisconsin Heritage Online, *Quick Guide to Scanning*, 2010