10 Tips for Outsourcing Your Family Photo Scanning

Genealogy Bargains

Everyone has a different approach not just to scanning photos and documents, but also opinions on how to best use their time for these projects. If you feel overwhelmed by the scanning technology and spend too much time just choosing the right scanner, then sending your items out to be scanned might be a better choice. However, if you want more control over how items are scanned and you want to save money, the "do it yourself" route is likely your best bet.

☐ **What equipment is being used for scanning?** The company should be using professional quality scanners.

☐ **What resolution is used for scanning items?** A company should list their minimum resolution for scanning. Beware of companies that aren't up front about their scanning resolution. They may be using high-speed scanners that focus on rapid scanning of large amounts of photos, saving the time & money.

☐ **What about customer service?** How accessible is the company when you have a question or want to track the status of a scan job? Is the customer service based in the United States or handled overseas?

☐ **Do you offer standard features such as color correction?** Some companies will "nickel and dime" you for services that are standard such as color correction.

☐ **Do you offer free shipping?** Most companies charge you for the return of the photos unless you have an order totaling $50 or $100 or more.

☐ **Is there an additional charge for large photos?** Some companies will have a standard price per photo up to a specific size, such as 5" x 7".

☐ **Do you offer a free sample scan?** Many companies will allow you to send a photo for a free sample scan. You'll receive the original photos returned in the mail and the digital files sent via e-mail. You can then judge the quality of the scan, the scan resolution and the file format used.

☐ **Where is the digitization work performed?** Is it done in-house by the company or is it further outsourced? Many companies send materials overseas for scanning, so make sure you understand where your items will be scanned.

☐ **Maintain a list of submitted items.** Take inventory and create a list of what you've outsourced. This is useful if you have multiple photo scanning projects.

☐ **What happens if my photos are lost in the mail?** Make sure you read the Terms of Service for the company and purchase insurance if available.

Check out the **Photo Scanning Resource List** on the back page!

Creating a Photo Digitization and Preservation Plan

Ever hear the phrase "Make No Small Plans?" I this was the motto of my ancestors, but it can be one you also use when starting a photo organizing and preservation project. The ideal plan allows you to make real progress and continue working on organizing and preserving images going forward. Here are the basic elements of a solid plan:

- **Take Inventory.** Create a list of items that need to be scanned. Include all photos, slides, negatives, movies etc. Also list photo sizes as well as media formats; remember that negatives can be 110 and other sizes! The same goes for slides . . . you don't want to purchase the wrong type of slide scanner, right?

- **Set Standards.** Research the minimum standards for each media type and list them. Use these to set preferences for equipment such as a flatbed scanner. As well as which outsourcing company to use if that is your preference.

- **Create a Tracking Mechanism.** One you've done your inventory, it should be simple to track digitization projects from start to finish, whether you scan them yourself or send them out to a service. Also track costs of equipment, cost of outsourcing projects and even time spent scanning items.

- **Decide on DIY or Outsourcing.** Once you have taken inventory and put in place a tracking mechanism, decide if it is better to send the photos out or scan them yourself.

- **Data Management and Backup.** Once items are scanned, you'll need to focus on file naming standards, keeping items organized and backing up your data!

Photo Scanning Resource List

Take time to determine the overall cost of a digitization project including money spent on technology, time spent just researching technology, and time spent actually scanning and organizing digital files. Personally, **Larsen Digital** in the Salt Lake City, Utah area is the BEST place to outsource your valuable photos, slides and more. They even convert audio tapes and vinyl records!

- Larsen Digital
  https://larsendigital.com/thomas/
  Best quality and secure photo scanning

- *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Scanning . . . but Were Afraid to Ask!* by Thomas MacEntee
  https://genealogybargains.com/interview-with-larsen-digital-everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-scanning-but-were-afraid-to-ask/

- Technology for Genealogy Facebook Group
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/techgen/

- The Organized Genealogist Facebook Group
  https://www.facebook.com/groups/organizedgenealogist/