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How to Care for Your Photographs

By Andrew J. Morris

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Photographs are wonderful, mysterious things. Yet we have become so accustomed to them that we take them for granted. 1999 marked the 160th anniversary of the public introduction of photography. Prior to 1839 you could not see what distant places truly looked like, or see yourself as you appeared when you were younger. Most people didn't know what the President of the United States really looked like, or the King or Queen of England. Oh sure there were pictures, artists drawings and paintings, but they were all interpretations — even the most faithful representations were influenced by the style, medium and mind of the artist. Along came the invention of photography, and all that changed overnight.

With every picture you take, you are freezing a moment in time; capturing a view that can never be exactly the same again. You may have a closet full of such frozen moments, or just a few rolls from your last vacation. If you want to be able to enjoy those moments far into the future, you need to take some care in the handling and storage of those images. If you have family photos handed down from earlier generations, you have a responsibility to future generations to pass them on in as good condition as possible.

When taking care of older photographs it helps to know something of the process by which they were made, but it not essential. If you would like to learn more about 'Identifying and Dating Old Photographs' there is considerable information available. In practice, all photos

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need to be protected from the same dangers. Light is enemy number one. Chemical degradation is another problem, and much less easy to deal with. And of course you must protect them from physical damage, be it the curiosity of children or the fury of storm, flood or fire.

LIGHT

Photographs are made by the action of light on a specially treated chemical surface (at least they were before digital imagery was invented, but more about that later ...) Little wonder then that even after they are fixed into a stable

image, photographs can still be affected by light. Bright light will cause photos to fade. Actually, all photographs are fading at all times, but light greatly accelerates the process. The degree of fading depends on the type of process used to create the image, how well it was processed, and other factors. As a general rule, color photos fade faster than black and white.

Of course you have to expose photos to light to view them, and what good are they if they are never seen? But you should be careful to store them in light-proof boxes. Pictures you hang on your walls should be thought of as disposable -- don't hang the original if it is a family heirloom -- make a copy and hang that. Avoid placing pictures where they will be in direct sun.

CHEMICAL DEGRADATION

When pictures fade from sunlight it is really a form of chemical degradation, but there are other factors that can contribute to this process. If the pictures were not properly processed when they were made, they have more damaging chemicals on them, and will suffer the effects of chemical degradation much faster than properly processed images. If you are having copies made, or prints from new photos that you want to last well into the future, you can have them archivally processed to ensure the fewest possible damaging trace chemicals will remain on the print. Old prints can be re-processed to remove chemicals, but that process should only be attempted by professional restoration experts.

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Another source of chemical degradation is the paper (or on mounted pictures, the cardboard the print is mounted on) used in making prints. If the paper is too acidic, it may fall apart with time, disintegrating slowly from within. There are sprays available that can be used on the back of photos to slow this process.

Photos can also pick up deleterious chemicals from their environment, the air around them, other pictures, or the material they are stored in. To ensure long life, store your pictures in safe materials designed for archival storage. Never use those so-called magnetic photo album pages that are sticky — that sticky surface is made of chemicals that will destroy your pictures.

Other factors than can affect the chemical degradation of photographs are temperature and humidity. Like most chemical

processes, those that damage your pictures are accelerated by heat and humidity. Excessively low heat or humidity can also be damaging however. All materials expand and contract with temperature changes, which can lead to cracking of the image surface. Rapid changes in temperature and humidity can be very destructive. Very low humidity can also cause curling. Store your photos in an area where the temperature is steady and avoid extremes such as would be found in an attic or basement. Again, proper storage materials will help ameliorate the effects of fluctuating temperature and humidity.

PHYSICAL PROTECTION

How many times have you seen interviews with survivors of a disaster such as flooding or fire, where they lament the loss of their irreplaceable family photos? There is a simple solution to this problem. Photos have the wonderful property of being reproducible. You can have copies made in any quantity. Always have multiple copies made of your favorite photos, and send them to relatives living in other parts of the country. If you have pictures of historical significance, contact museums in the locality where they are from, they may be happy to accept copies. Distribute your images far and wide, and you will always be able to find another copy should yours be destroyed.

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There are less severe forms of physical destruction that you can protect against. Bent corners, folds and smudges from greasy fingers can all damage your pictures. Children will scribble on the backs if given the chance. Store your pictures securely, in safe materials. Don't just stuff them in a drawer. There are chemically inert plastic sleeves available for picture albums that allow the pictures to be viewed without removing them from their page.

INFORMATION

The value in common snapshots and portraits lies mostly in the associations we have with them. Portraits of our ancestors interest us more than unidentified portraits. Pictures of places we have been, houses we have lived in, are more interesting than similar pictures for which we have no associations. Even indirect associations lend worth to an image — a snapshot of the pyramids in Egypt may not approach the many professional images available of those wonderful monuments; but if we know it was Aunt Lizzie who took that picture while on her honeymoon, the picture suddenly has more sentimental value. These associations

require information not contained in the photo itself.

Always label your pictures! The who/what/why/when/where associated with an image makes a world of difference in how it is valued by others. Never write on a print with a pen, the ink may have chemicals that will damage the picture. Write on the back, using a dark pencil, and don't press so hard as to damage the front side. At a minimum, put the date and names of persons shown and/or location of the photo. If you store them in clear plastic sleeves, don't put two pictures back-to-back in one sleeve — leave the back visible so you can see if there are any notes without having to remove the picture from its sleeve.

DIGITAL IMAGES

With the advent of digital imaging, we have a whole new type of image to deal with. It does not degrade, and can be copied at little expense. It is also more easily manipulated. Long-term storage is technology dependent, and less predictable than the physical processes affecting chemical photographs. Will CD's or DVD's made now be intact a hundred years from now? Will there be machines capable of

reading them? Who knows? But the opportunity to duplicate and distribute your images at minimal cost, with room to include as much information as you want, rather than just the little note that will fit on the back of a print, makes this an attractive way to share your pictures. You can be sure that when the time comes that the CD or DVD formats are phased out, there will be a "window of opportunity" during which time it will be easy to transfer the digital information from those to whatever format replaces them.

The author, Andrew J. Morris, is a writer, programmer, researcher, publisher and general infopreneur. Explore his varied expressions at <http://ajmorris.com/> and <http://epmassoc.com/> and <http://larimerco.com/> and <http://sharedrss.com/>

Digital Photos

By Ransy Reynis

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Digital Memories

The hottest thing on the internet right now is digital photos, how to protect them and what service to choose and with good reason! Because currently one trillion photographs need to be digitally formatted and saved before they are lost forever and each day the number increases. For most of us few things in life are more valuable than the time we spend with family and friends. We often capture these moments with pictures that help us remember those special times.

But how does we prevent our memories to be lost and forgot?

Have you ever wondered where all of your family photos are?

Are you like so many others always planning on organizing your photo albums but never find the time to do so?

They never make it into an album, and most are contained in the original envelopes. We look at them once, and rarely ever look at them again.

Preserve Your Precious Memories

People today have family members and friends living far away in another state or, even in another country and are sharing their memories with them. The Internet makes it possible to wipe away long distances. The possibilities for yourself, your family and friends of sharing your photos and easily and repeatedly enjoying them, are limitless.

Your memories are priceless, therefore to best enjoy these precious memories, proper care and preservation of your photographs is crucial. All photographs are susceptible to damage and will eventually deteriorate if not properly protected. Whether they are stored in a scrapbook, box or picture frame, your precious memories will begin to crack and fade with time. Photographs are also threatened by a number of natural disasters including fire and flooding. These unexpected disasters can occur at

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any time and have the potential to completely destroy your priceless photos.

Online Photo Albums

For many converting photographs into a digital format and creating 3D page–turning digital Photo Albums that look and feel like the real thing, is a passion and a hobby. Anyone can create great online photo album without any special knowledge. Online photo album is extremely easy to use and you don't have to be a webmaster and know HTML to create online photo album that will be a subject of envy. They are great for both home and professional to use. You can add images, optimize, shrink and trim your images with an easy to use set of editing functions and leave comments for others to read. Every family should have online photo album having fun creating them and let family and friends all over the world, enjoy looking at fun filled and cherished photos either by e–mail, by Website download, or with a CD disk, that will prevent precious memories from getting lost and forgot.

Protect your photographs by converting them into a digital format now. Where they can be viewed, stored, and shared through your computer. When you convert your photographs to a digital format, you can rest assured that your precious memories are properly taken care of and safe from any harm.

Thanks

Ransy Reynis

Ransy Reynis is an Independent Wealth Builder and a Web designer. Helping individuals earn career incomes from home. For more information <http://www.onlinedigitalalbum.com> <http://www.wtpowers.com/32642> <http://iboss.mypharmaneusa.com>



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