



Managing Your Agency's Digital Photographs

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The digital camera and ease of access to the camera phone have increased the use of photographs within state agencies. While seemingly simple to create and download, these images can become cumbersome when not managed over time.

Set up a centralized file structure(s) in your agency for digital photographs

When staff take photographs of events, board meetings, outreach, tours, exhibits, or staff activities, these digital images should be placed in a centralized file structure. Do not keep these photographs on your computer or a personal drive. Keep the photographs in a separate section from scanned images, presentations, or office documents. Task an individual in your agency with the responsibility of maintaining this file structure.

Weed unrepresentative photographs

Delete photographs that are blurry, dark, unflattering, or not representative of the event. The one simple task of having the staff member who photographs an event, visit, or location delete all but the most representative photographs will save your agency resources over time.

Label your photographs

Label, at a minimum, your file folders to include the date and event, such as **2017_07_31_BookTalk_WayneFlynt_MockingbirdSongs**. Use no spaces or dots in your file name as it could cause trouble when files are copied and migrated over time. Underscore is an acceptable option for creating separation in naming.

- **Create comprehensible file folder names without a deep structure**

When creating a file folder title under the outer structure, keep it simple and follow the format but be clear to someone who may look at this name in a decade. Operating systems and software limit the acceptable length of file names. Some systems allow up to 256 characters, while others allow far fewer. Creating too deep of a file structure will hinder long term management of those files.

- **Avoid using special characters or spaces in a file name**

/\ : * < > [] & \$, . - are frequently used for specific tasks in an electronic environment. For example, a forward slash is used to identify folder levels in Microsoft products, while Mac operating systems use a colon. Periods are used in front of file name extensions to denote file formats such as .jpg and .doc. Spaces in a file name can cause broken links because some programs recognize a space as an opportunity to move to another line.

(Example: **2017_06_25_BabyShower_Name**)

- **Underscores can be used**

Underscores are not used for specific tasks by either Microsoft or Mac operating system. Thus, they can be used in place of periods and spaces in a file name. Underscores may aid in understanding the file name.

(Example: **2013_11_01_BookTalk_EtheridgeEric_BreachOfPeace**)

- **Be Consistent**

Follow the file naming convention of other folders within the file structure. File renaming tools can help easily label all photographs within a folder simultaneously.

The Council of State Archivists, through the Program for Electronic Records Training, Tools, and Standards (PERTTS), provides some resources on how to use a few specific file renaming tools.

Enter descriptive information

Photographs are only as useful as the information known about those images. When possible, enter descriptive information or metadata into the photograph, by either using software or simply entering it into the properties of the photograph. Descriptive information could include such data as names and location.

- **Use Notepad to create a Brief Description When Necessary**

While naming or entering metadata for every photograph may be unreasonable, good folder names may not provide all the information necessary. If your event may need some context in a decade, use Notepad to create a two to three sentence description of the event or possibly include relevant names. Simply place that .txt file in the folder.