Preserving and Accessing your Digital Stuff

RT0226 – Syllabus   Melody Condron

Class Description

Digital files —such as audio, video, photos and scanned documents — enhance your genealogy research but must be managed thoughtfully so they remain accessible later. File management is not difficult but it is crucial--ever had difficulty looking for a file because you forgot what you named it?

Choosing good file names and embedding descriptions into digital photos can be similar to writing a description on the back of a paper photo. Most cameras now automatically record where and when the photo was taken, too. This information – along with file naming & organization -- can make files easily findable.

In this session, I will talk about best practices in digital organization, digital preservation, and access for the individual genealogist or family historian. Specific help with digital photos, manifests and similar historical documents, and creating a file backup will be covered. This session will cover some basic and some intermediate tools/tips.

Objectives

- Discuss the reasons why digital file management is important to genealogy research
- Identify differences between "good" and "bad" file names
- Learn about file organization systems, and identify one that may work for you
- Review free built-in tools for batch-changing file names
- Identify backup options & learn how they are set up

Topics Covered

File Management & Genealogy

- Avoid loss of research due to hardware failure, theft, or technological change
- Aid in finding files when needed, through searching & browsing
- Aid sharing with friends, family & other researchers

What is metadata? How can it help me?

- What is saved/created automatically?
- What can I change and create myself?
- What happens when it is wrong? How do I fix it?

File Naming & organization

- The basics of file naming
- Bad file naming & why it can make it harder to find things
- Good file naming, organization & how to fix an existing system
- Review of batch changing tools
- Review of available tools for free or purchase (Apple Photo, Lightroom, Google Photos)

Genealogy-specific Challenges

- Is a manifest a photo or a document? Historical documents & related challenges.
- Proprietary file types versus open file types
- The importance of GEDCOM files
- Audio and video challenges

Setting up a Backup

- Backup options: online and hardware
- How backup files work
- Having multiple backups
- The importance of sharing research & other genealogy files

Checklist for attendees to use at home after this class:

- ☐ Try out batch changing file names/keywords on your own computer.
- ☐ Write down your preferred file naming scheme somewhere handy (near your computer).
- ☐ Save details from any proprietary genealogy software as GEDCOM files.
- ☐ Set up 2 backups for your computer/files!
- ☐ Share your research (even incomplete) with a family member or fellow researcher.

Connect with the presenter:

- Speaker Website: www.melodycondron.com
- By Email: melody.condron@gmail.com
- On LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/alchemydtp/
- On Twitter: @mtbeekeeper
- On Goodreads: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/16074528.Melody_Condron
- The tools used in this class are also explained in detail in my book: *Managing the Digital You* (2017), ISBN 9781442278875.

Class Evaluation
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