

CREATING A DIGITAL LEGACY: TIPS, TOOLS AND MEMORIES

Silicon Valley Computer Genealogy Group

November 8, 2025

Kathy Nielsen

knielsen68@gmail.com

What is a digital legacy? How do we create one? Kathy Nielsen will offer some tips on digitizing, organizing, and sharing your family's story. Curating a digital archive will preserve your family treasures, and enable you to share them with generations to come. Discover the best digital tools, platforms and practices to protect your family's legacy.

Kathy Nielsen is a retired reference librarian and a family historian. She has hosted a virtual series, All Things Relative, at the Monterey Public Library and has taught classes at the popular OLLI program at Cal State Monterey Bay. Kathy has been featured on Lisa Louise Cooke's bi-weekly YouTube program, Elevesens. She is a co-founder of the Monterey County Genealogy Society's special interest writing group, Off the Charts. Kathy incorporates her skills as a historian, storyteller, and librarian in her search for her family's history.

What is a legacy?

- Financial assets: property, investments, wealth
- Physical belongings
- Values, traditions, wisdom
- Acts of kindness...How we made a difference in someone's life
- Life's work
- Love and warm memories left with family and friends
- Family history

Our family legacy may be reflected in...

- Family research
- Documents
- Photos

- Stories

How do we pass this family legacy on to our loved ones?

- Our family may not be interested at this time
- Our children and grandchildren may be minimalists and not interested in boxes of family stuff
- But we all have a family legacy worth preserving
So it is up to us to curate that legacy for the future

We can do that through our stories

- Stories connect us to our family
- Stories may be more important than the physical things we own
- We can start small
A single photo of an item can easily bring back the memory of that item and the story associated with it
- Although families may not be interested in the physical items that we cherish, they will be interested in our stories and our photos

What do we have that help us tell those stories?

- Family research, books, audio tapes, home movies, photos, slides, photo albums, scrapbooks, journals, diaries, memoirs, yearbooks, postcards, ephemera, heirlooms and furniture

How do we share the stories?

- Create a book
- Post family history on genealogy sites
- Share family history with libraries
- Create a digital legacy

Challenge

- Curate the story of our lives, that of our family, and our ancestors
- Bring it together in one place
- Find a place that is safe from natural disaster
- Available for the family when they are interested
- Possibility of existing for 100 years or so
- Preferably not with a monthly or annual subscription that the family would have to maintain

Digitize physical family items

- Audio tapes, family videos, slides, photos

Scanning services

- TMC The Multi Media Center, Salt Lake City
- Photos, Movies, and More, San Diego
- LegacyBox, Nashville, Tennessee
- ScanMyPhotos, Irvine, CA

Organize paper photos

Cathi Nelson, Photo Managers recommends the ABC's of photo organization

- A Put photos in an ALBUM or ARCHIVE
- B Put photos in a BOX to keep
- C Put photos in a CAN to toss
- S SHARE the stories

Scanning resolution

- Photos 300 DPI to 600 DPI
- Slides 2000 DPI to 4000 DPI

Aids in scanning large and odd shaped objects

- iPhone
- Photomyne
- Table tripod and a digital camera
- Photographic copy stand
- Professional book scanner

Create a digital photo hub

- Label photos
- Use metadata

Digital photo organization sites

- Adobe Bridge
- Mylio
- MyFamilyArchive
- Google Photos

- Amazon Photos
- SmugMug (Flickr)
- Artfcts
- WeAre.xyz
- Apple...PHOTOS

Two companies where you pay up front...no subscription costs

- Forever.com
- Permanent.org

Digital photo organization sites are only a tool

Conclusion

- It is all about curating and sharing our family's story with our family
- Creating a digital legacy is one way to share that story
- We can start with one photo and a short story (3 sentences)
- Our special photos and memorabilia will be in one place
- They will be waiting for our family, when our family is ready