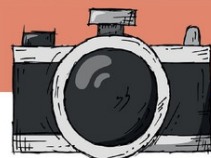


YOUR ULTIMATE FAMILY PHOTO PROJECT



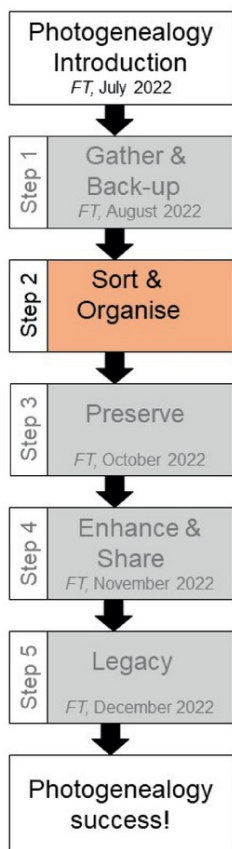
PHOTOGENEALOGY: STEP 2

SORTING & ORGANISING YOUR PHOTOS



Welcome to the second step of your photogenealogy journey!

This article in **Ann Larkham's** series will explain how to organise the digital photographs that were gathered and backed-up during Step 1, and how to sort the gathered physical photographs, for preservation, storing or disposal in Step 3.



As a family historian, you may already have systems in place for storing and accessing your family history photographs and documents, and you may already have a back-up strategy in place. If you do, there's no need to change anything. If, on the other hand, you struggle to find files or items, or don't have secure back-ups in place, the following may help...

Much thought and discussion is devoted to the best way to organise files and items. Ideally, an organisational system should be intuitive and applicable to both digital files and physical items. Remember though, there is no right or wrong system; just right for you.

NOTES:

- Superscript numerals refer to additional information, templates or checklists that are available from www.photogenealogy.co.uk until March 2023.
- The term 'physical photographs' includes prints of all types, slides and negatives.

Choosing a system raises many questions:

- How should files and items be arranged: by family, generation, Ahnentafel number, date or some other criteria?
- What if a file or item pertains to more than one person?
- How do you remember a system and apply it consistently?

But, what if none of that mattered? What if there was a simple system that you could use to safely store and easily find your precious files and items? And, what if you are already familiar with such a system, and you already use it?

You are and you do!

Browse or search?

To locate online family history records, we have two options:

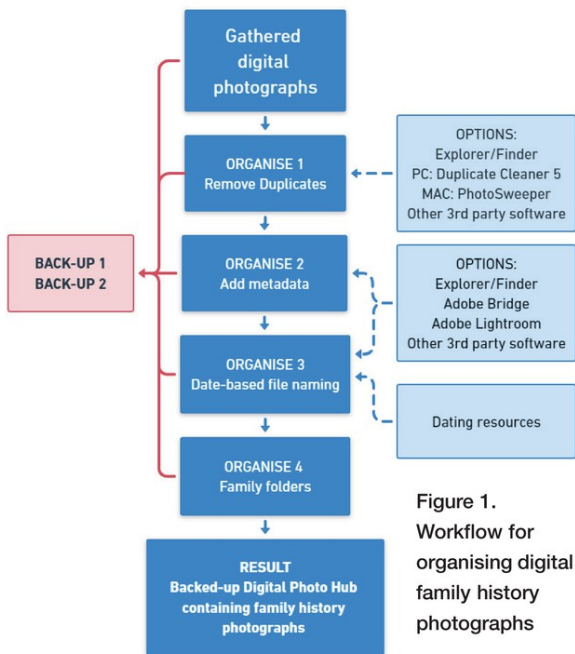


Figure 1. Workflow for organising digital family history photographs

means that digital storage can be just that, *storage*, rather than a filing system, thereby freeing it from:

- extensively-layered, hierarchical folder structures
- folder names that rely on their hierarchical location for clarity
- long, all-emcompassing, descriptive filenames
- multiple copies of files or potentially fragile shortcuts.

Organising digital files

Figure 1 outlines a workflow to produce a search-based organisational system for digital files. Please note, it is advisable to back-up regularly throughout the workflow. Following this workflow will produce a consistent and intuitive storage system that allows fast searching and retrieval of files. The wide range of programs available to help you implement this workflow precludes the inclusion of specific instructions here, but most programs provide help and there are online courses available.

ORGANISE 1 - De-duplicate

De-duplication is best carried out first and can be done manually, using File Explorer or Finder¹, or with third-party software².

ORGANISE 2 - Add metadata

Adding keywords or tags to the metadata of files^{1, 3, 4} makes them searchable. *How* you add tags is program dependant, but *which* tags you add depends on what you intend to search for. To retrieve photographs of a certain person, you need a name tag; to retrieve photographs taken in a specific location, you need a location tag; etc. Knowing the search terms you will use is critical to including the correct tags. Thinking and planning⁵ now will save time, but additional tags can be added later if needed.

The following tags are a useful starting point:

- full name
- family name at birth if different
- event
- location

These tags allow a search, for example, for photographs taken at a birthday party (event tag) at your grandad's house (location tag). The name tag from the photograph(s) returned will tell you who was there, and the filename(s), the date

browse or search.

While browsing can reveal unexpected genealogical gems and valuable context, we often use powerful search engines to locate indexed records because searching is faster than browsing. A similar approach can be applied to your digital files, including your family history photographs and research. A search-based digital organisational system will allow you to search for your files instead of browsing for them.

Searching rather than browsing



Figure 2. Adding tags to the metadata of a digital photograph in Adobe Lightroom. See enlargement of the keyword and metadata fields, right.