

General Best Practices for Digitizing Archival Materials

One of the valuable resources provided by NARA is a set of proven best practices for digitizing archival images to multimedia formats while best preserving the integrity of originals.

- “Digitize at the highest resolution appropriate to the nature of the source material and to avoid re-digitizing and re-handling of the originals in the future.
- Digitize an original or first generation (negative rather than print) of the source material to get the highest quality image.
- Create and store a master image file that can be used to produce copied image files and serve a variety of current and future user needs.
- Use compression techniques and file formats that conform to current technology standards – particularly those in the cultural preservation areas.
- Create backup copies of all files and store on servers that have an off-site backup strategy
- Create meaningful and intuitive metadata for image files or collections.
- Store digital files in an appropriate server environment.
- Document a migration strategy for transferring data across generations of technology.
- Plan for future technological developments.”

- When You are Scanning More than a Document

Ask anybody what document scanning is, and they will probably say it involves using the scanner function built into the company copier. They might add that it is a laborious task processing one page at a time by either placing the document on the flatbed of the machine or using the auto-feed tray. This is not a very exciting job for the user but usually satisfies day-to-day office requirements.

What if you need to scan a book, preserve a historical document, or scan very delicate archival documents? That makes the task more complicated. Finding the right solution for these purposes may require a specialized process and technology.

Tackling Complex Scanning Projects

Let's take the example of a museum curator who discovers a treasure trove of historical books and artifacts that need to be preserved and archived. The administrators realize that this is not a project for a clerk standing over a copier machine, scanning rare books page by page. What should they do?

The best practice would be to consult with an expert who can provide advice on the right technology to manage this type of project. NEdocs has decades of experience in high quality scanning of archival material. For example, we use technology and equipment from world-renowned Zeutschel, which has developed technology to archive not only “bound originals such as books or large-format documents like magazines, but the focus has now widened to include other original material such as films, slides and coins.”

Zeutschel has commented that other camera systems used for archiving typically have limitations affecting productivity such as user-friendliness and the ability to reproduce high-quality, fine detail results. Professional overhead scanners may offer improved features but often cannot handle different types of original materials such as transparencies.

By utilizing Zeutschel equipment, NEdocs provides customers a premium scanner and photographic studio under one roof. Plus the machine is designed to handle volume production. Simply stated, not only is our Zeutschel system like a museum-quality camera, it's a workhorse!

For further information about how to optimize all of your scanning needs, or to set up a demo, call NEdocs today!