# Personal Archiving

About this program…

Today's focus will be archiving memories, documents and correspondence that are already in a digital format. This course will also cover archiving easy-to-digitize documents like photos, medical records and financial records – things that are easy to scan and save.

For in-depth information or resources on genealogical/historical archiving and research, visit the Florida History and Genealogy Library at the John F. Germany Public Library.

Why Archive Digitally?

- **Access**: Important records and files can be readily available, no matter where the physical files actually live.

- **Searchability:** Digitally organizing files allows for easier searching – a file is a few clicks away.

- **Protection:** Physical files can become damaged or destroyed. Converting important documents to a digital format can be vital, especially during an emergency.

- **Space:** Archiving saves you physical space in your home and digital space on your computer.

What Can Be Archived?

- **Photos**

- **Audio/Video**

- **Personal Records (medical, financial, etc.)**

- **Social Media**

- **Email**
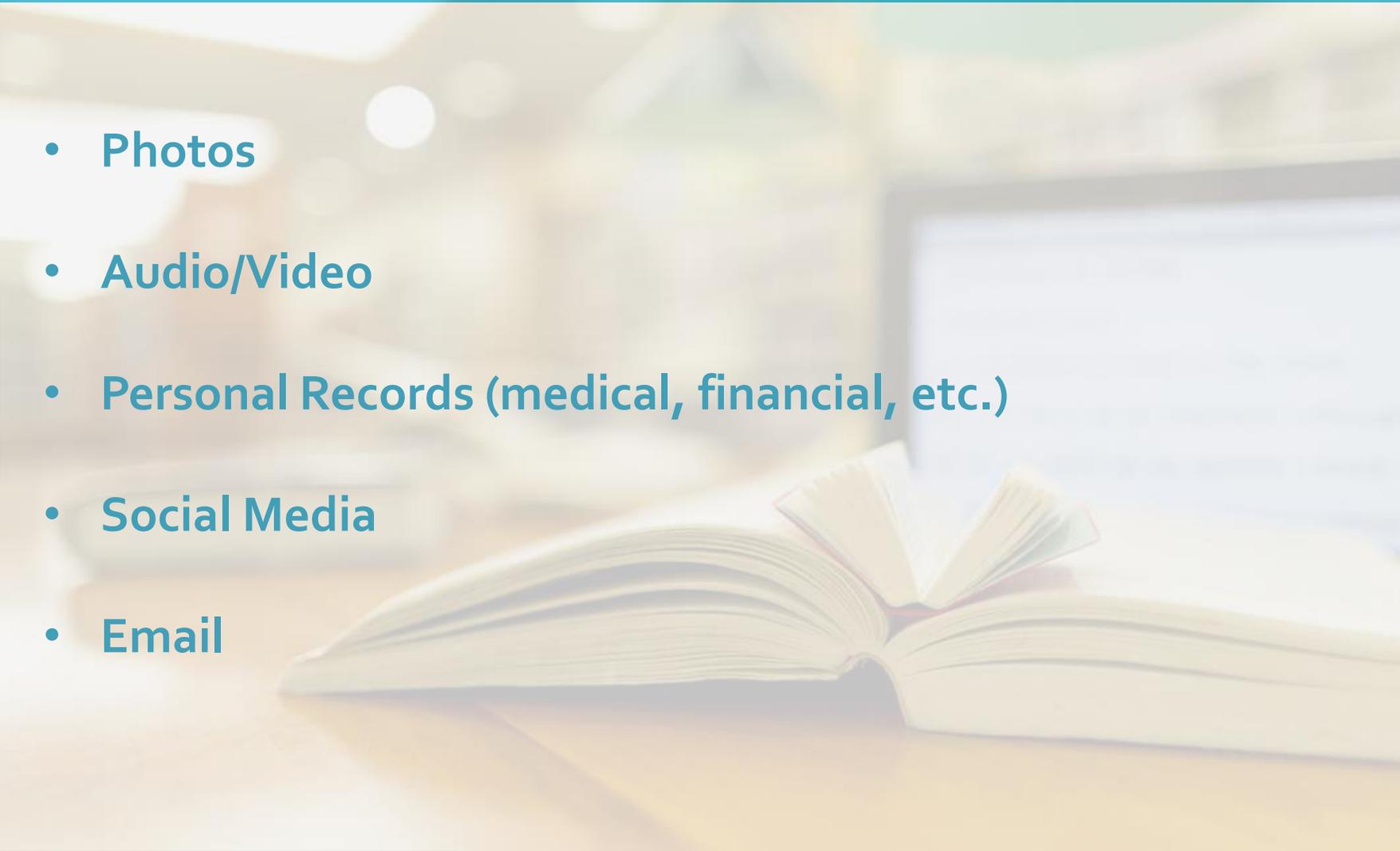
Archiving Photos

- **Plan ahead.** Organizing and digitizing photos takes a lot of time. Plan enough time to organize, scan and tag your photos.

- **Save photos in multiple places.** Transfer photos off of portable storage devices (like flash drives and memory cards) to portable hard drives or cloud services.

- **Back up photos.** Use a cloud service (such as Google Photos or iCloud) that automatically backs up photos taken on a smartphone.

- **DELETE!** Not every photo is a keeper.

Archiving Audio/Video

- **Convert old recordings to newer formats.** Physical files (like CDs, cassette tapes, and VHS) deteriorate over time. Converters, of varying quality and price, can be purchased online. There are still some institutions that may rent them, the library however, does not.

- **Archive audio and video files in the same place.** Transfer files off of portable storage devices (like old cameras and memory cards) to a single portable hard drive or cloud service. Keeping archives in the same place makes them easier to find.

- **Update archives every few years.** Technology changes rapidly, and it is very important to save files in the most current available formats.

- **Keep the original format.** Sometimes the original format may last longer than the digital copy. Your original files are your backups. Keep A/V materials on a memory card or flash drive just in case.

Archiving Personal Records

- **Consider what needs to be saved.** Only keep essential records- files that could be needed at a later date. Financial, medical, automobile, tax and insurance records are the most important personal records to be kept. However, you don't need every single statement you've ever received. Keep the policy, not your monthly bill, for example.
- **Think about security.** Personal records have very sensitive data – make sure they are saved in a secure way. Cloud services may not be the best for storing personal records, as they are stored on a server that could be hacked. Consider a portable hard drive or flash drive kept in a secure area in your home.
- **Delete files that are no longer needed.** Not only does this keep your files from being cluttered, it lowers your security risk. For example, don't keep files on a car you no longer own.
- **Don't digitally archive *everything*.** Some items are better kept in their original paper/physical format. Personal identifiers such as birth certificates, social security cards, and driver's licenses should never be copied unless absolutely needed. This lessons your security risk.

Archiving Social Media, Blogs, and Websites

- **Identify all content on the internet.** Find all of your current and old blogs, social media sites, and websites. Your digital footprint is enormous, so this may take awhile.

- **Consider what needs to be archived.** Only keep the information that you feel is especially important. You don't need to archive a profile you no longer use, you may actually want to delete it.

- **Determine how to export the data.** Some sites have instructions on their platforms, or you may have to do some digging. Some sites, like Facebook, have their own archiving instructions.

- **Consider a social media archiving service.** There are companies that will archive all of your social media in one place, usually for a fee. See sites like webrecorder.io, archive.org and digitalpreservation.gov for additional resources.

Archiving Email

- **Most email providers have a built-in archiving service.** Check with your email service provider to see how to archive your data. Some services automatically archive older emails for you and many businesses will archive them anyway.

- **Keep business and personal email separate.** Most companies have strict data protection rules- don't mix business with fun!

- **Do you really need the email?** Sometimes it's best to archive the attachment on the email, not the email itself. For example, if your insurance company sends you a document, archive the document and delete the email.

- **Delete and unsubscribe.** A lot of personal email is junk that isn't needed. Update your spam/junk filters regularly and unsubscribe from email lists you don't use. Delete unnecessary emails.

Hold on to the original format

- Things happen. Keep the original formats just in case you need to make copies or your digital archive becomes destroyed.

- Keep photos and documents indoors in a cool and dry place. The lower the temperature, the longer your items will last. Keep the temperature below 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Avoid very low relative humidity because RH below 15% can cause brittleness. High relative humidity creates moisture; mold growth begins at RH 65%.

- Keep items away from sources of leaks, and keep on a shelf so they don't get wet (ex. flooding).

- Use archival acid-free containers that will fit and support the items properly, acid free folders, and archival polyester sleeves.

Putting It All Together

- **Only archive important or treasured items.**
    - Remember: not everything needs to be archived.
    - Don't be afraid to delete items that are no longer needed.
- **Update your archives often.**
    - It's best to stay on top of your archives so they don't become unruly. You may have to make new tags or reorganize information.
- **Ensure that the most up-to-date file types are being used.**
    - File types become obsolete – remember Zip drives? Make sure the file types you are using are the most up-to-date.
- **Keep your archived items safe.**
    - Make sure that sensitive data is password protected.
    - Try not to store sensitive data on cloud services.
    - Keep external hard drives in a safe place.

Notes

Thank You

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