



## MEMORY SAVERS

### Quick Pics

Bogged down with boxfuls of family photos to digitize? We show you three ways to speed up the scanning process. | By Rick Crume

Scanning your family photos, slides and negatives opens up many possibilities. You can use the digital images in your genealogy software and share them with relatives on a CD, DVD or photo-sharing Web site. And though you certainly won't want to discard the originals, digital copies serve as backups in case disaster strikes.

The catch: Scanning photos one by one is time-consuming—especially if you have hundreds or thousands of pictures to convert. There's got to be a better way, right? We dug into different digitizing options and discovered three routes to swifter scanning.

#### 1. Scan multiple photos at once.

Using the right software can shave precious minutes from the scanning process. Adobe Photoshop Elements <www.adobe.com>, a \$99.99 photo-editing and -management program, lets you simultaneously scan multiple pictures with a flatbed scanner. Fit as many pictures as you can on the glass and scan them all together. Then open the file in Elements' Editor and select Divide Scanned Photos from the Image menu. The program will automatically create a separate file for each picture in the group of photos you scanned. Sometimes the software doesn't split the images in the right places, and you'll end up having to scan those pictures individually. But this option is still a great timesaver.

#### 2. Get a photo-focused scanner.

Any flatbed scanner can handle photos, but some models are designed for that purpose—and even support slides and negatives. For instance, the Canon CanoScan 8600F, about \$180, does a good job on photos and handles up to 12 35 mm negatives or four 35 mm slides at a time.

If you have a lot of pictures to scan, you might consider Epson's photo scanners. The Perfection 4990 Photo, about

\$400, produces high-quality photo scans and handles various negative sizes, including up to 24 frames of 35 mm negatives at once. It also holds up to eight slides. The Perfection V700 Photo scanner, about \$550, holds up to 12 35 mm slides.

Flatbed scanners do all right with negatives and slides, but for the best quality, you need a dedicated film scanner. At the low end, the \$190 Plustek OpticFilm 7200 scans only one slide or negative at a time, but it's pretty speedy. The Nikon Coolscan V ED film scanner is loaded with advanced features and has gotten terrific reviews, but it'll set you back about \$565.

#### 3. Use a scanning service.

High-end scanners aren't the most economical choice for most genealogists—cost- or timewise. Even if your scanner operates quickly and handles multiple slides and negatives at once, scanning a big photo collection could still take a long time. Getting good results also takes practice, especially with slides and negatives. If you're reluctant to invest the time and money to scan your pictures yourself, consider batch-scanning services. They use high-speed scanners to digitize thousands of photos in minutes. Your original pictures are returned to you, along with digital images on a CD or DVD. One service, 30 Minute Photos Etc. <scanmyphotos.com>, will do up to 1,000 photos for \$49.95—pretty reasonable when you consider the time it'd take you to do it yourself.

The downside: Unless you live near one of the scanning facilities, you'll have to ship your precious pictures across the country. If that's not enough to set your stomach aflutter, one service, ScanCafé <scancafe.com>, then sends your pictures to *India* for scanning. The company says it's never lost pictures and even offers a \$1,000 shipping guarantee. By taking advantage of lower



AL PARRISH

### DIGITAL DIY

Follow these guidelines to get the best scans:

■ **Resolution:** Scanning prints at 300 dpi (dots per inch) and slides at 1,500 dpi is OK for printing them at the same size as the original photo. Scan prints at 600 dpi and slides at 2,500 dpi or higher if there's any chance you'll want to enlarge a picture or part of a picture.

■ **File formats:** Save your scans in JPG format with low compression (high-quality) or TIFF format. TIFF files are usually much larger, but better if you plan to make enlargements or manipulate the images on your computer.

labor costs abroad, the company can competitively price extras, such as individually reviewing and restoring each photo.

Most scanning services won't accept mounted photos or pictures that can't bend. Batch-scanners are most appropriate for modern prints in good condition, not fragile old photos. And you won't want to disassemble an old photo album—it's an important artifact filled with clues based on the photos' arrangement.

See the chart at right to compare four scanning services, their prices and turnaround times. Is the best solution to your scanning project hours spent at your computer or a few days or weeks waiting nervously for your pictures to come back with a disc full of scans? You'll have to decide.

Contributing editor *RICK CRUME* has spent countless hours scanning his old family photos by hand.



## EXPRESSLY YOURS

The four batch scanning services compared here represent just a few of your mail-order options—find more at <[www.familytreemagazine.com/batchscanning](http://www.familytreemagazine.com/batchscanning)>.

Service	Photo scans	35 mm slide and negative scans	Other services and fees	Biggest draws and drawbacks	Turnaround time
<b>30 Minute Photos Etc.</b> < <a href="http://scanmyphotos.com">scanmyphotos.com</a> > Irvine, Calif.	Two package deals: as many 3½x5- to 8x10-inch photos as you can fit in a prepaid box for \$99.95 (it holds 1,600 4x6 photos), or up to 1,000 3½x5- to 11x17-inch photos for \$49.95	2,000-dpi scans cost \$1.50 each for up to 50 slides, \$1 for 51 to 150 slides or 75 cents for 150-plus slides, and \$9.95 per 24 exposures of negatives.	Optional photo enhancement; photo memory books; photo-wrapped cookies, chocolates and lollipops	Fastest turnaround, inexpensive package deals	1 business day for photos, several business days for slides and negatives, plus shipping time
<b>Digital Pickle</b> < <a href="http://digitalpickle.com">digitalpickle.com</a> > San Francisco	19 cents each for 100 or more 3x5- to 5x7-inch photos scanned at 300 dpi; 29 cents each for 600 dpi	69 cents each for 2,500-dpi JPG or TIFF images	Add \$10 for a CD or DVD, and \$19.95 for package deal (includes cropping, rotating and organizing); \$5 set-up fee for orders under \$50.	Speedy, inexpensive package deal	1 week plus shipping time
<b>DigMyPics</b> < <a href="http://digmypics.com">digmypics.com</a> > Mesa, Ariz.	39 cents each for 300-dpi JPGs created from 8x10-inch or smaller prints; 34 cents each if you order 5,000 or more scans	2,000-dpi JPGs from slides cost 49 cents each (44 cents for 5,000 or more); JPGs from negatives are 44 cents (39 cents for large quantities).	Prices include cropping, rotating and manual color and exposure correction.	Instant online access to view and approve your images	3-5 business days for less than 200 photos, 5-10 business days for 200-400 photos, 10-18 business days for 400-1,200 photos, and 18-25 business days for 1,200-1,300, plus shipping time
<b>ScanCafé</b> < <a href="http://scancafe.com">scancafe.com</a> > Burlingame, Calif., and Bangalore, India	27 cents each for 600-dpi JPGs from pictures up to 8x10	3,000-dpi files cost 19 cents per strip of three to five negatives, and 24 cents per slide.	Includes manual rotation, cropping, color correction, red-eye removal and scratch and dust removal. Pictures are organized in folders if you labeled them.	Inexpensive, but slow. Photos are manually reviewed and restored. View your scans online and pay for only the ones you want.	5-8 weeks