



# WHAT WILL BE REMEMBERED ABOUT US?

*How to preserve personal archives in the 21st century*

CITY COUNCIL OF GIRONA

DEPARTMENT OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT, ARCHIVES AND PUBLICATIONS

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Legal Deposit: GI-1045-2014

City Council of Girona, Department of Records Management, Archives and Publications. 2014

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# WHAT WILL BE REMEMBERED ABOUT US?

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## *Introduction*

Although if you were to ask the majority of the population, it is probable that the answer would be otherwise, what is fundamentally true is that archivists are essentially interested in and committed to the future. We have known, for a long time, that memory is memory more for what one forgets than what one remembers. And we know, too, that in order to ward off this forgetfulness, humanity has created an unbeatable machine: the document.

Documents are the material of memory and they become a tangible guarantee of the durability of our actions and our memories. But, it is true. Documents are fragile, their organisation is complex and it is often a difficult task to distinguish what is incidental from that which is essential. Difficult, too, to convince ourselves that our daily actions, our many times spent anonymously and seemingly of little relevance, may have interest to those who will come after us.

What will be remembered about us? How to preserve personal and family documents in the 21st Century is the proposal that the Department of Records Management, Archives and Publications (the SGDAP) have put forward to commemorate the International Day of Archives. Its approach has been eminently practical and is intended to highlight the importance of all types of document whatsoever (text, graphic, photographic, audiovisual), the fragility of all media (from parchment to digital) and the significance, personally and collectively, of the information the documents contain.

It has also served to demonstrate once more that the Archive is a public service, open to the entire population and one which works to meet the needs of citizens.

Joan Boadas i Raset  
Municipal Archivist



## *From letters to e-mails: personal archives in the 21st century?*

Lluís-Esteve Casellas

The wording of the title implies the possibility that, in a not-too-distant future, personal archives will cease to exist, but is this really the case? Will the step from the paper to the digital world be the end for our personal archives? Certainly not, however it is essential to deal with the problems and difficulties arising from digital preservation, and to confront them with the same assiduity with which we use technology to create, manage, share, and "Save" information.

In a context such as the current one, with the many and varied resources that technology offers, it might seem that putting the conservation of our personal documents in doubt is mere archival scaremongering motivated by professionals focused on the management of memory, on the management of the past... Error! We will only have the 'past' if we focus on the management of our present, and it only makes sense to preserve the present if we use it to build our future. The question lies in whether, as an individual, we want to preserve our personal and family memories for ourselves and, when the time comes, are also able to bequeath them with sufficient guarantees to the people we love.

For all this, the objective of this text is, if you like, very simple: to create an awareness of the fragility and the vulnerability of our personal memory. And I say simple because everyone knows from experience that digital information is fragile, thus its vulnerability depends on us, the decision is ours. This is a key difference compared to a document on paper, because the latter will continue to be a document on paper even if we don't take any preservation action: it might age or suffer some damage but, in general, it will continue being useful for quite some time without us having to do anything. On the other hand, not taking systematic and regular care of a digital document means its loss will be assured through the failure to update software, the expiry of the format, media obsolescence, loss of the final version among multiple duplicates, lack of back-up copies, impossibility to access e-mail accounts, etc.

The popularisation of the means of producing and managing documents has meant that, for the first time in the History of Humanity, the majority of the population has the capacity to create documents relating to their personal memory both as an individual and as a part of a family or social collective. However the paradox is that, together with the resources to produce and share information and documents of all kinds, the risk of losing all of this generated memory has also greatly increased, either through technological issues or simply by the great mass of information we create.

Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that we can access our personal archives in the future and, also, that we will be able to transfer them to our descendants.

## To file or not to file, that is the question

"But as regards archives, in the true sense of the word, I don't have any, perhaps a few papers..." This is a usual response when individuals talk to the professionals about the subject. Normally, the qualification as to whether a set of documents is an archive or not, by the same person who produced them, is motivated by a biased and magnified vision of the archive as a set of documents significant to, and likely to be considered important by, other people or by the community in general. This widespread opinion coincides with the vision of the traditional concept of the archive.

However, the truth is that everyone has a personal archive. What's more, creating a personal archive throughout our lives is inevitable in the same way that, to a greater or lesser extent, everybody takes on the role of "Archivist" of their own documents, at least in the classic sense of the concept.

In fact, in today's society we begin to generate documents from the very moment we are born, with our registration in the Civil Register<sup>1</sup>, or when we form a family with the corresponding matrimonial acts and entry in the Civil Register, and the presentation of the Official Family Book in which the births of our sons and daughters are also recorded, etc. Even when we die, it entails an entry in the Civil Registry, in the municipal records of funeral services or in the municipal roll of inhabitants for example. The point is that, as a result of the various major events throughout our lives, we produce documents that we often keep ourselves, whether or not they are also kept by public institutions or private bodies. So, for example, we accumulate documents relating to our school and academic life, our administrative identity (National Identity Card, passport, etc.) which, in addition to vouching for our identity, also confirm us as citizens and grant us certain rights, such as the right to vote or to use public services, such as public health with the relevant health insurance card, which, in turn, also generates new documentation such as our personal medical records. Other documents linked to these major events might be in relation to purchasing or renting a home, or its sale if we move. Our work will create employment contracts, wage slips and payroll certificates, tax payments and social security contributions or pension plans, with which later we will be able to ensure our retirement.

The real importance of these documents is demonstrated precisely when we can't find them or, worse, when we don't have them and they can't be easily proved. Recent history shows striking examples, such as the piles of passports and other personal documents the exiled Albanian Kosovans were forced to leave behind by the Serbian army before being expelled to Macedonia. How can you prove who you are, where you live and where you come from? Who owns your home, what is your job, what are your qualifications or your marital status? Without our personal archive and the references to other public or private archives, it is difficult to recover each of these documents but, if these public and private files have also been destroyed, the task becomes a practically impossible mission.

The facts of one's life, therefore, inevitably entail the creation of a personal archive

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of documents taken from Catalan and Spanish Public Administration.



dependence towards the current ability to fix memories, in short, to produce documents as never before had been possible.

The value we attach to the documents is a key factor in their preservation, especially in the technological environment in which we live. So, for example, the inherent sociability of humans applied to the technologies of the Internet and social networks allow us to establish multiple and complex social relationships and exponentially increase the creation, storage and sharing of all types of information, such as text documents, images or sound. The first question to consider is whether all of this information and documentation forms part of our personal archive. The initial response would be Yes, it forms part of our personal archive and this raises a second question: what do I want to do in the future? Do I want to keep everything? What will happen to all this when I am gone? But also, how do I resolve the technological diversity of formats and devices (computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones...) and, also, what can happen with everything I have stored in online services, the famous and feared Cloud Computing?

## Digital preservation: new problems added

Can we give some order to the chaos that we are generating? Yes, it is certainly possible, but it requires dedication, perseverance and caution, but to start with it requires solving the old problems, those that we are already familiar with and which focus mainly on the organisation of documents and its conservation. With regard to organisation, it is necessary to keep four fundamental concepts clear:

1. The identification of documents.
2. A classification or groupings by function.
3. A brief description.
4. The existence of basic ordering criteria.

The correct identification of the documents is essential to be able to clearly distinguish their function, i.e. what they are for. At the same time the identification also makes it easier to evaluate the degree of importance of the documents according to their usefulness or the difficulty in obtaining a duplicate or copy in case of loss. To identify the basic functions, it will be useful to be able to establish a classification and thus be able to manage coherent subsets instead of a single set as if it were all of the same nature and importance. On the classification that we adopt it is advisable to apply the sorting criteria we consider most suitable and, at the same time, to create a brief description of the documents, either individually or in each subset: what it is, who made it, when and why (the 4W).

In terms of conservation, if we are talking about mainly paper documents, it is necessary to ensure their physical preservation. If, on the other hand, we refer to digital documents, in addition to the aspects of organisation mentioned above, preservation should be based on preventing the technological obsolescence of our

devices (computers, tablets, mobile), of the applications that we use, the storage media (CD, DVD, USB stick) and, finally, of the file formats used. That is to say, nothing that we don't already know from our own experience when we have suffered some loss of information.

And new problems, what are they, do they have a solution? Yes, they have a solution, but it depends on how we ourselves act and, of course, of having previously solved the "old" problems too. In general, the difficulties added to the problems we have already seen, are determined by the most complex preservation of the information produced on messaging systems (e-mail accounts, Twitter, Whatsapp, SMS...), social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing...), shared and stored in the information cloud (YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Instagram...) and posted directly to the Internet, whether on the web or on a blog (WordPress, Blogger...). Broadly speaking, in this complex and diverse context the main problems are the management of metadata associated with the computer files, computer security, the preservation of our privacy and in maintaining the authenticity of the documents.

**Metadata** is the set of information associated with each file. This information can be both of a technological aspect, the type of format and its version for example, and concerning its content and context, that is to say, a brief description of what the document is, who created it, when and why. On another level the metadata also serves to ensure the authenticity of the documents. The technological and technical data (characteristics of the taking of a photograph) are usually automatic, while the content and context will depend on us, since we will have to add this information in order to be able to identify and classify the files correctly.

In order to understand its importance more easily, we only need to imagine a collection of canned foods without their respective labels. It is clear that we could only know their contents if we opened them one by one, but still we wouldn't have the preparation instructions or even the expiry date. With documents something similar happens and it is quite evident in the case of photographs when we no longer remember who a particular person is who appears in the photograph. This is particularly common over a period which encompasses the third generation of a family. If the third generation is not able to pass on the information regarding who the people pictured in a photograph were, it will be difficult for the fourth generation to feel especially linked from an emotional point of view. Therefore, they can easily lose interest in its preservation unless it has an aesthetic value or even economic importance to justify keeping it. This example, with a possible wider application, is more critical in the digital environment, particularly because of the huge number of images we produce and because a mis-identification and a poor organisation of images can cause accidental losses which are difficult to put right. That is to say, in a context of mass production of documents, metadata is not only essential from the technical and technological point of view, but also from the perspective of the content and the context of the document so as to be able to correctly identify what we want to preserve and for how long, or what we want to delete without the risk of losing essential information: knowing what to keep, knowing what to discard.

Regarding **computer security**, a long list of preventive actions might be mentioned, though at a more general level emphasis should be placed on three fundamental

aspects: work habits, the diversification of the media we use, and prudence. Establishing specific security routines as part of our work habits is without doubt one of the best and most cost-effective options we can take. This requires consistency in taking certain measures which are not limited to just making back-ups, but also includes the need to properly preserve our passwords to access e-mail accounts and social networks, changing them regularly and adopting rules for selecting easy-to-remember passwords without them being obvious to anyone else. In the same way, it is essential to protect the devices, especially mobile phones and tablets which remember passwords automatically when connecting directly to e-mail accounts or the web. In fact, this option should be avoided entirely.

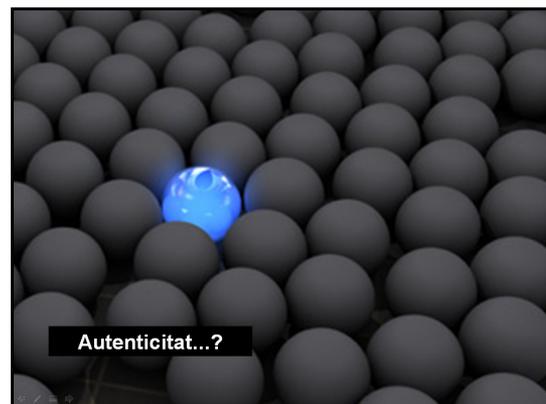
Diversifying the media used to create back-up copies is essential, so that you don't have all the information in one place, whether on a single hard disk, a DVD or a USB drive. The best option is to combine various types of copy in a habitual manner and, in addition, adopt rules to identify easily the date or version. Noting that this solution may seem absurd now when it seems that everything is easily recoverable from the Cloud Computing, but we must be prudent. In this respect, we must remember what the closing down of the Megaupload website on 19 January 2012 meant for many individuals and companies, since as well as allowing the illegal download of copyrighted materials, the site was also used as a platform for storage and file sharing. In cases where it was used as the only storage platform, despite them being paying users, meant their files were blocked for an indeterminate period of time.

Despite this, in the same way that it is not advisable to store everything in the cloud, nor should using it as an alternative storage medium be ruled out, as long as the information is not particularly sensitive for your privacy nor easily identifiable by third parties. It is also advisable to have a document on paper with all your passwords conveniently kept in a safe place. Finally, prudence also plays a major role in the sense of not venturing into unknown lands nor betting the preservation of our documents on a single card especially when our privacy can become vulnerable: it is necessary to keep references of where we store our documents.

**Privacy** is one of the aspects to be taken into account in our everyday interactions on the Internet. You have to be very aware that everything we do leaves traces on the net and we can't always be sure of who is on the other side and what they can do with our data. Certainly, "if *they* can do it... we can prevent it". That is why it is essential to be careful with the data we provide and take very simple measures, such as disassociating our professional profile from our personal profile, or not subscribing to online services or social networks if we are not certain that we will use them frequently. To put it another way, one should avoid what might be called "replicating syndrome", in which a person can have a multitude of profiles on the net and subscriptions to services that will be difficult to make use of, or that are used to display very different facets of their real lives, something especially prevalent among our teenagers. This type of action may seem safe at the start, but care must be taken to ensure these different profiles cannot be linked; otherwise our more personal profiles could become public and vulnerable.

What's more, in the long run it can also pose an added problem, both for the daily management of the information and by increasing the chances of us becoming

"virtually eternal" after our deaths, with a variety of open profiles containing more or less personal information, according to each case. In this regard, it is appropriate to reflect on what information we want to pass on to the people we love and what we don't, and consequently, take appropriate measures to remove information or have it removed, and at the same time arrange it so that certain people can have access to our photographs, videos or documents when we die.



Finally, how to ensure the **authenticity** of our documents? Does the ability to manipulate a digital document invalidate its reliability? Not necessarily. For a start we should note that the manipulation and alteration of documents has always existed, but it hasn't always been - nor is now - done with intent to defraud. A good example would be the post-mortem photographs of the second half of the 19th century. These pictures of the deceased, common in an era where the photograph was not yet a fact of everyday life, were very often retouched in order to "bring the loved one back to life", so that the family could remember them as they had known them. This makes us think that, logically, the risk of manipulation will always be higher the more recent a document is, while it is current. Instead, with the passage of time the interest in manipulating it will generally be much lower. Therefore, it is advisable keep access to devices and directories where we keep our personal documents under control, especially those that are current from an administrative point of view and, above all, if these devices are shared.

We should also identify which documents (usually administrative) we can obtain from third parties, mainly government departments, and download them and save them completely, with the information referenced to their digital signatures, as these can be embedded in the document or added as an attachment. You can also verify the authenticity with the corresponding certification agency, if you have the means, and keep the digital verification receipt. If you determine that the record is very important to you, as for example a contract with a financial institution, don't discount the possibility of requesting a signed, paper copy.

And also, be aware that the authenticity of a document is not only assessed on the basis of its signature, but also from its context, hence the importance of a good organisation of your archive and the correct identification of documents. These aspects allow us to see relationships between documents, as well as relationships with the context in which they were produced, and thus be able to assess the authenticity over time. This would be the case of documentation in historical archives where it is not always possible to verify the signature of a document. For example, in the Municipal Archive of Girona, this would be the case for medieval Royal privileges in relation to the Chancery records or the municipal Registers of Privileges, or also for sale contracts and wills in relation to notarial records.

## Conclusions?

What must we do, then, with our personal archives? Is it as complicated as it seems? No, for a start we shouldn't cause ourselves more trouble than is strictly necessary. We must be aware that these days we cannot avoid being 'connected', however it is true that we can simplify what we do through simple planning and being selective in how we do things, for example:

- We should clearly identify those documents we consider essential.
- We should make use of a variety of back-up media and not just one, and we should be systematic in their use.
- We should establish and apply habits for managing and safeguarding our passwords.
- We should choose the services and social networks that we will make use of.
- We should be clear about what data we don't want to share or want to become public.
- Periodically we should review what we want to keep and what to delete.
- We should select that which we want to preserve in the future, and even what we would like to bequeath to the people we love.

These are just a few principles that we should take into account when managing our personal documents, and which are complemented in a more developed and concrete

way with the recommendations presented in this document. However, we should bear in mind that while the democratization of tools to create, store and exchange documents has been an important milestone in the freedom of individuals, the exercise of this freedom inevitably involves the assumption of the responsibility for preserving the information tied to our personal and family memories. In the digital environment this responsibility entails devoting time to their organisation and selection, as well as making sure they remain confidential and secure from the technological point of view.

In a society in which the sum of individualities, by piecemeal growth, is easily confused with the crowd, we need to be aware of the importance of preserving our identity, linking it directly to the memory of the person, of the family, of the friendships. Never has it been so easy and, at the same time, so complex to be able to provide answers to the eternal questions of who I am, where I'm coming from and where I'm going. The challenge is certainly both individual and collective. That is why, faced with new generations accustomed from an early age to the voracity of communications, permanently "connected" and, needless to say, technologically much better prepared, the awareness of the need to select what, to their minds, they would like to preserve in the future becomes essential.

It is not an eternal confrontation of technology against individuals. It is just being aware that we have created a technology that is fragile, and whose vulnerability, to the point of being entirely ephemeral, depends on us. So from now on, and for some years, our individual and collective memory will be dependent on us. We live in a society that is technologically tumultuous, with an uncertain and vulnerable future regarding the memory of individuals, even though it is no less true that, from a professional point of view, it is an exciting moment, one that turns archivists into General Practitioners for the preservation of personal archives, for everything, we are at your disposal: consult us!



Archivists as family doctors: ask us!!



## *1. The personal archive: where do I start?*

Anna Gironella, Sebastià Villalón

Although we are not aware of it, we all have an archive at home. That stack of papers piled inside a couple of drawers, some within folders, comprising academic titles, contracts, mortgages, guarantees, instructions booklets for appliances or furniture from Ikea, income statements, bills, invoices, receipts, etc. But also tourist maps picked up during the holidays, postcards and letters we have received from friends and acquaintances; and, in between, CDs and DVDs with work or CVs, photographs, and a long etcetera. To these we must add also all those digital documents we have stored on the computer.

The personal archive is therefore the set of documents accumulated by a person as a result of his or her activities throughout his or her life. These documents are not a simple set of papers: they include information recorded on paper, on a hard disk, CD or DVD, in digital format, in writing or in images, etc.

The habit of taking care and maintaining the personal archive doesn't exist -"we know where everything is", we say- and yet, when we need a particular document, often urgently, to request help from government departments, to write a curriculum vitae, etc, then we can't find them. The personal archive also needs some rules of organisation in order for us to be able to locate documents when we need to use them as evidence, testimony or to guarantee our rights.

And on the other hand, our archive and the documentation from our ancestors that we preserve are our personal and family memory.

### Recommendations

1. Select the documents you want to or need to conserve. Note that it is not necessary to save all documents and that some will lose their usefulness, for example, guarantees that have expired or invoices we can no longer claim.
2. Identify what types of documents you have. It is very important to know what they are for.
3. Group documents into categories, i.e. classify them according to their function. In the case of personal archives, the main groups would be:
  - Administrative Documents for personal identification: ID Card, passport, Family Book, etc.
  - Academic Documents: academic titles, certificates of grades, etc.
  - Professional Documents: work contracts, wage slips, CVs, etc.
  - Documents regarding assets: property deeds, contracts of sale or rental

agreements, etc.

- Financial Documents: current account contracts and bank books, invoices, receipts, etc.
  - Health Documents: medical insurance, medical reports, x-rays, etc.
  - Private Documents: correspondence, photographs, life insurance, personal diaries, etc.
4. Sort the documents into each category using the same criteria, which could be chronological, alphabetical or numeric.
  5. Store documents in folders or boxes according to the categories to which they belong.
  6. Keep large documents (property deeds, for example) in folders or containers of special sizes.
  7. Identify and write down the name of the category on each folder or box and, if necessary, number them.
  8. Periodically sort new documents according to these rules.
  9. When you remove a document from the folder, put it back in its place as soon as you no longer need it.
  10. These organisation rules also apply to electronic documents you store on your computer: the name of the folder that contains the various files must relate to the category to which they belong.

### What you should not do

1. Keep all documents you accumulate.
2. Group the documents together without any sorting criteria.
3. File the documents haphazardly.
4. Not identify or title folders containing documents.
5. Remove a document when required and not put it back in its place.
6. Use metal paper clips or staples: they can rust and mark the documents.
7. Use unsuitable adhesive tape or rubber bands to group documents.
8. Keep documents in metal boxes, as they have a tendency to rust and give off gases that can harm the documents.

## *2. Old Documents: how do we protect them?*

Anna Gironella, Sebastià Villalón

It is not uncommon to find documents from our grandparents or ancestors in our homes which for various reasons have been stored in drawers by the family and which have ended up becoming our documentary treasures. In old country houses or manors these treasures can be large archives that bear witness to the heritage and history of the family. In many cases these documents don't end up in an archive, because the owners didn't want to let them go or because there wasn't room, but they always have a great value for the family or the person who has preserved them, and therefore they deserve special care and attention.

The documents present a whole range of characteristics that need to be considered when protecting them or preserving them for as long as possible. First of all we must take account of the materials the documents are made of: organic and inorganic materials which can change over time and, depending on the environment, they can end up degrading or destroying the document. For example, the content of some ferruginous inks generates sulphuric acid that will eventually destroy the paper. The paper may also contain a lot of iron which, with the presence of fungi, can oxidise, causing foxing to appear; or simply the paper can be very acidic and over time become more fragile. We also have documents made of parchment from sick animals which is not as thick.

Secondly, it is very important to store the documents in suitable environmental conditions. These can alter the chemical components of the materials the documents are made of and also encourage the emergence of micro-organisms, fungi, insects and rodents that eat paper and parchment. For example, high temperature and humidity levels encourage the appearance of fungus, a continuous over-exposure to strong light can damage the paper and make it more fragile, and also certain contaminating elements of air can react with the components of the paper and ink and cause degradation.

Finally, it is necessary to bear in mind the damage that can result from poor storage or careless handling. The documents should be stored appropriately and in suitable containers that prevent deformation, or which for example, are very acidic and damage the paper. In the same way it is necessary to handle the documents carefully to prevent tears or so we don't drop them; do not eat or drink near the documents to avoid accidents. It would also be advisable, for more delicate or older documents, to wear gloves or, at least, have clean hands so that the documents aren't dirtied. It must be borne in mind that grease on your hands from, for example, a sandwich, can leave residues which are harmful to the preservation of the document.

We see then how all these factors, both internal (relating to the materials) and external (from the storage site and the conservation components) intervene at the same time to ensure the preservation and conservation of old documents. In some cases, when the damage is already irreversible, the only thing you can do is to avoid

damaging them further and restore them or even digitally reproduce them and keep them isolated if they can affect the rest of the documents.

## Recommendations

1. Remove paper clips and metal staples from amongst the documents.
2. Use special conservation grade glue or tape to repair tears.
3. Where annotations needs to be made on the documents, use a soft pencil, Indian ink or conservation-grade ink.
4. To clean documents, use powder eraser, soft or 'Nata' type erasers.
5. If you wish to flatten parchment, first slightly moisten the side without writing on using a solution of 50% water and 50% alcohol. Then flatten with a blotting paper and a weight.
6. Protect documents with folders or archival barrier paper separators. You can also use inert polyester covers. Put them in containers or boxes of neutral material or conservation-grade cardboard.
7. Store large format or damaged documents flat in drawers. They can also be placed rolled in tubes of neutral material.
8. Keep documents in a ventilated place where you can ensure stable temperatures. We recommend a temperature of about 18 °C and humidity levels of 50-60%.
9. Place the documents at least 10 cm above the ground level and 5 cm from the wall and try to not to allow them to come into contact with exterior walls. This will prevent the risk of damp or small floods.
10. Avoid exposing the documents to prolonged light.
11. Support books against each other and if necessary with bookends. Put books of similar dimensions side-by-side. Ensure that the books are not squashed or leaning over on the shelves. Avoid standing books on their fore-edge (the edge opposite to the spine).
12. Try to prevent paper and fabric bindings coming into direct contact with leather bindings.
13. Dust periodically and ensure that the documents are moved or books opened, as this keeps small insects and rodents away.
14. For cleaning use vacuum cleaners with filters, mops, dust-trapping chamois leather or dry cotton cloths.
15. Use cotton or latex gloves to touch old or fragile documents.

## What you should not do

1. Store documents with metal staples and paper clips.
2. Use liquid adhesives or adhesive tapes to repair documents.
3. Write with pens or ink on the old or delicate documents.
4. Protect documents with onion paper, packing paper or newsprint. These papers are very acidic.
5. Fold large documents or cut them.
6. Clean the furniture where the documents are stored with corrosive products, wet cloths, bleach, ammonia, etc.
7. Allow the documents to suffer prolonged exposed to strong light, such as sunlight or fluorescent light, or to a source of heat such as a radiator.
8. Keep documents in places with large humidity and temperature variations (more than 5 °C). Above all, you should prevent temperatures exceeding 26 °C and with a relative humidity of 70% for more than 15 days, as this could cause fungi to appear.
9. Touch the documents with dirty hands or hands which bear the residues of hand creams.
10. Eat and drink near the documents.
11. Keep documents in adhesive albums, laminated or plastic covers which are not of conservation-grade as they will retain moisture and prevent the documents breathing.
12. Laminate or frame documents for display. It is always preferable use facsimiles to display if the original has personal, family or even economic value.



### *3. Vital records: my life in documents*

Maria Reixach, Lluís-Esteve Casellas

The vital records of an organisation are those that allow the continuity or the re-establishment of operations, rights and obligations after a disaster, for example, a fire, a flood, a destruction without judgment, etc.

Moving this to the personal and domestic sphere we could say that the vital, essential records are those which assert our rights against third parties, and others which bear witness to our activities and personal experiences and which constitute our personal and family memory.

The records allow us to know who you are (ID card, Family Book, etc.), where you live (electoral roll, rental contract, deed of property), what you have (deed of property), what courses or training you have completed, how long you have worked, etc. Therefore, they define personal identity at an administrative level, but also at a personal and family level, for example, photograph albums, films, personal diaries etc.

In any society at any time preserving identity has been a constant. However, in the current context, much more complex in terms of personal and administrative relations, not only is it advisable to know how to manage our documents, but it is also very helpful to know from what institutions or public records we can obtain or prove our personal and family information.

#### Recommendations

1. Identify what your vital records are and locate them.
2. Group and classify all documents according to their typology, so that you will be able to find them quickly and completely.
3. Store your vital records separately from the rest of your documentation, especially those which only you have or which are kept by untrusted third-parties.
4. Keep your essential records properly identified so that they can be easily found among the other archive folders or boxes.
5. Create an updated list of all the vital records of your life, which will be useful in preventing losses.
6. Inform someone who you trust absolutely where you keep these records and, above all, of the existence of this list of documents.
7. Add information to the list of records that is necessary to be able to manage the rights deriving from the documents, which will not only serve to remind you but also those trusted people who will have access to the documents in the event that

you can't access them for whatever reason or force majeure.

8. Keep and protect your vital records in a safe place in terms of temperature and humidity conditions, of security of access and of theft, fire or flood.
9. Choose those that are current, i.e. those that are still valid, and discard the remainder if you decide they don't have any additional value.
10. Make back-up copies of digital records and digital family albums. If the documents are on paper, it is advisable to have a complete copy preserved in a different and secure place.

### What you should not do

1. Leave the records scattered about and not knowing which ones to keep.
2. Trust that the government bodies and, especially private companies, will retain all documentation referring to you and trust that, in case of loss, you can always ask for a copy: it may be that this won't always be the case or that it won't always be free of charge.
3. Not make back-up copies of electronic documents and digital family albums, or if these are digital, store them exclusively on free Internet services, such as e-mail accounts. Think that only you know the passwords.
4. Handle documents clumsily and fail to replace them after use.
5. Leave vital records behind, in case of forced or unexpected eviction from your home for a long or possibly unknown period.

## What are my vital/essential records?

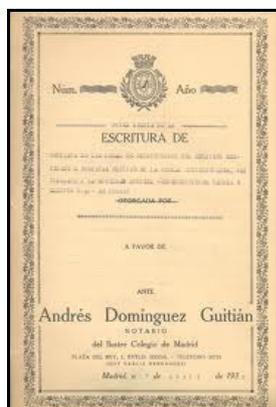
The potentially critical documents are in bold and underlined.

IN THE SPHERE OF MY IDENTITY	
Who you are	<p><b><u>National Identity Card, passport</u></b> → Ministerial Department for Home Affairs.</p> <p><b><u>Health card</u></b> → Ministerial Department of Health.</p> <p><b><u>Official Family Book</u></b> → Civil Registry.</p> <p>Marriage Certificate → City Council, Parish registry.</p>
Where you live and where you vote	<p>Registration Certificates → City Council.</p> <p>Census card → National Statistics Institute.</p> <p>Minutes of residents group meetings → Property administrators.</p>



IN THE FIELD OF MY PRIVACY
<p>X-rays, medical reports, etc. → Ministerial Department of Health.</p> <p><b><u>Albums of family photographs and videos.</u></b></p> <p>Personal correspondence, diaries, etc.</p> <p>Will → Notary.</p> <p><b><u>CVs and certifying documentation.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Summary document of the essential documents of your life.</u></b></p>

<b>IN THE FIELD OF MY RIGHTS</b>	
<b>What do you have</b>	<p><b><u>Property deeds, contracts of sale</u></b> → <i>Notaries, Land Registry.</i></p> <p><b><u>Rental contracts</u></b> → <i>Landlord.</i></p> <p><b><u>Contracts for current accounts, credit cards, pension plans, etc.</u></b> → <i>Financial bodies.</i></p> <p><b><u>Insurance</u></b> → <i>Insurance companies.</i></p> <p><b><u>Academic qualifications and training</u></b> → <i>Ministerial Department for Education, universities, schools.</i></p> <p><b><u>Provision of grants from the Administration</u></b> → <i>Ministerial Department for Social services.</i></p>
<b>What do you do</b>	<p><b><u>Job contracts</u></b> → <i>Companies and public administrations.</i></p> <p><b><u>Freelance certificate, income and quotations</u></b> → <i>National Institute for Social Security.</i></p>
<b>Proof of legality:</b>	<p><b><u>Taxes and fees</u></b> → <i>Ministerial Department of Finance and local governments.</i></p> <p><b><u>Planning or economic activity licenses</u></b> → <i>City councils.</i></p> <p>Certificate of habitability of the property and related certificates (water, gas, etc.) → <i>Official Departments (housing) and authorised bodies.</i></p> <p><b><u>Judicial lawsuits</u></b> → <i>Courts.</i></p>
<b>Supplies and services</b>	<p>Contracts for water, gas, electricity, phone, etc. → <i>Authorised companies.</i></p> <p>Purchase invoices, product guarantees, etc.</p> <p>Receipts from residents groups, associations, etc.</p>



## *4. My privacy and technology: what do I need to know?*

Lluís-Esteve Casellas, Sònia Oliveras

If any special feature distinguishes us from the rest of living beings, it is our ability to establish complex relations between ourselves. To a greater or lesser extent our sociability forces us to communicate with other people. Today's technology has exponentially multiplied our possibilities for establishing and maintaining a number of personal and professional relationships, unprecedented in the history of humanity, through multiple and various devices (computers, mobile phones and tablets) that can send voice, images and data. These same devices also allow us to make many transactions with government departments, companies and organisations from all over the world.

However, this '24 hours a day and from anywhere in the world' availability also has another side: the inappropriate and unwitting use of the information which pours from these devices can also make us more vulnerable. Therefore, our ability to interact with the communications and information sharing services over the Internet can present a risk to the preservation of our privacy. Below, therefore, we propose some considerations to bear in mind.

### Recommendations

1. If you give your details on any online form, assure yourself of the purpose for which the data is required, who is responsible for it and what their privacy and, above all, cancellation of data policies are.
2. On forms and social networks profiles, only fill in the compulsory data, which is usually clearly identified.
3. Restrict public access to your profile on social networks and allow access only to those people who you decide.
4. Create a professional profile on social networks independent of your personal profile. This allows you to separate your contacts better, which if necessary can be duplicated on both, and also allows you to distinguish better the information you upload or distribute. Act in the same way in the management of your e-mail account.
5. Only accept invitations to social networks or to participate in online surveys from people who know or from senders you trust.
6. Subscribe only to those social networks or Internet services that you will really use.
7. If you use services on the Internet for uploading and sharing personal content, such as photographs, videos and personal comments or sensitive information, make

sure that, before you do so, you will be able to exercise control over and, if necessary, remove the information.

8. Read and download the privacy policies of Internet services that you use and stay abreast of updates that maybe made so that you can exercise your rights or decide if you wish to stop using the service.
9. Consider if you really want to accept invitations from institutions or associations, often you may not be sure what they will do with your information to which they have access.
10. Preferably use e-mail servers unconnected to social networks; it will be easier for you to manage your mail and delete messages you don't want to keep.
11. Do not include sensitive data in your e-mails such as passwords or identification codes, bank account numbers, bank cards numbers, etc, especially combined with data that can identify you such as your full name, ID Number, or even include your scanned handwritten signature. If your e-mail account is the victim of a computer attack, third parties may have access to the data and make fraudulent transactions.
12. Use the option "BCC: Blind copy" for delivery of e-mail to groups of people, which helps preserve the privacy of third parties. Likewise, ask your contacts to do the same if you see that they are not doing so.
13. Demand that you are unsubscribed from unwanted distribution lists and if they don't take any notice, inform the competent authority for data protection and, if necessary, report them, it is your right.
14. Delete messages from unknown or anonymous senders or messages with strange characters straightaway, and mark them as spam so they are removed immediately they arrive.

### What you should not do

1. Give more data than is necessary when creating profiles on social networks or filling a form out online.
2. Not take account of whether there is privacy policy or not, or if the contact details of the person responsible are incomplete or imprecise when completing online forms, or not checking if certain companies and postal addresses physically exist and are correct.
3. Open many different profiles on various social networks if you're not convinced you will actually make use of them, or not unsubscribing and forgetting the information that you have given.
4. Accept invitations from people or entities you are not familiar with.
5. Always use mail servers that are integrated into social networks.

6. Open e-mail messages that do not offer sufficient guarantees and click on web links about which you do not have enough information.
7. Provide access to your e-mail accounts or to your social networking profiles to third parties, even if it is to solve technical problems of your computers. In exceptional cases where this is necessary, change your password before and then change again after, it is used by the third party sorting out the technical problems.
8. Upload photographs, videos or your information without checking the destination and without assessing your vulnerability.
9. Leave passwords or access keys to e-mail accounts, social network profiles or platforms on which you normally carry out transactions on view, whether they are government departments or private bodies, such as financial institutions. The best practice is not to have any password or access key written down anywhere that is easily accessible to anyone else.





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## *5. Computer security: am I doing it right?*

Sònia Oliveras i Artau

Currently we are in the midst of technological revolution. We are experiencing the integration of our social life with technology through telephony and social networks 2.0. Accordingly, the constant interaction with technology can make us feel comfortable and confident with this environment and often we don't think about what we are going through: the evolution of technology at a frenetic pace. If you don't put into practice some simple basic security measures, in a matter of a few years we will have lost all digital traces, either by random incidents or a result of obsolescence of software and hardware. As an example we have text documents created with programs such as WordStart or Wordperfect that even today are difficult to read.

In less than a century the media of digital documents have changed greatly. The fact of needing specific reading devices becomes a trap where our documents can get caught. We can illustrate the evolution in a brief selection: in the 1970s floppy discs of various sizes appeared, in the 1990s optical discs, with the CD and DVD variants and, later, the Blu-Ray discs with their own evolution, each with greater capacity. The aim has always been to evolve to achieve more capacity and faster access.

Computer security is a very broad concept that can range from the physical security of access to devices that contain the data, to the authentication mechanisms of systems and services. Thus, in addition to taking care of how we protect and where we keep our computers, hard drives, memory sticks, tablets, mobile phones and digital certificates, you also need to take care of the access keys we have and open and close sessions correctly on shared access devices, i.e. whenever we are working on a network. In terms of the physical security, the attack on the twin towers in New York on 11 September 2001, was a clear example of the importance of having a good back-up system. It is important to keep back-up copies, more than one, even, and in different locations so as to be able to save them and put them to use in times of disaster.

### Recommendations

1. Use short file names with no special characters.
2. Identify the folders on your computer and the media where you keep the files.
3. Use those file formats that are widely used and accepted as a standard, and preferably those not dependent of specific programmes.
4. Identify the different file formats that you have and reduce the number of types.
5. Make PDFs of text documents which can be used as a reference copy and for preservation in the medium term.

6. Verify that the documents can be read after you change your computer or upgrade the word processing or other software you commonly use.
7. Identify all media that carries information: external hard drives, optical discs (CD, DVD, etc.), memory sticks etc. and reduce the number of types.
8. Ensure that you have devices to read each different type of media with the cables to connect them, and regularly check they are working.
9. Transfer the information to new media when you change your computer if the new computer doesn't have the same reading devices the previous one had.
10. Keep memory devices away from sources of heat and magnetic fields. Magnets are the main enemies of memory cards.
11. Make annotations on optical discs with water-based ink markers.
12. Keep at least one back-up copy. Ideally two and in different and physically separated places. Some of these can also be stored on online Internet services, but make sure it is not your only copy.

### **What you should not do**

1. Trust that media will last forever. It is necessary to renew media periodically and update optical discs every 5 years, as a minimum.
2. Not renew your computer's hardware. Hard drives are not everlasting. You should renew them before they stop functioning, and bear in mind the length of the guarantee.
3. Trust solely to preserving information in the cloud. You must keep a copy of the online documents on another device.
4. Keep documents with personal data in the cloud; you do not know the owners.
5. Share passwords with anyone, even with colleagues, or with friends or with family.
6. Install a digital certificate for signing documents on shared computers where several people work.
7. Ask the browser to remember passwords to websites on shared-use computers.
8. Not be wary of non-secure web pages on which lots of pop-ups appear while you are looking at them, as they can often be virus nests.

### **Webliography**

<http://www.zamzar.com> Website where you can convert files online.

<http://www.freepdfconvert.com/> Website to convert documents to PDF online.

## *6. Photographs and family albums: how do I protect them?*

Fina Navarrete

In every home we have photograph albums, these are our family photographs. The oldest, most often inherited, keep the memory of our ancestors, even those we never knew. Those which we made ourselves are a collection of unique and unrepeatable lived moments that remain in the memory. The high sentimental and testimonial value that these photographs have, makes it necessary to think about what we can do to preserve them.

The photograph, by its very nature, is highly unstable. We must, however, bear in mind that not all photographs are the same. Over the years the photographers have used different processes and materials and this variety also influences their degradation. The most serious deterioration of photographs occurs when we handle them, because these very fragile materials are not always treated with the care they require. And in addition, they are usually kept in places with large fluctuations in temperature and humidity and in inappropriate storage materials: magnetic albums, plastic, newspaper, etc.

However, to protect and preserve the family album, it is possible for you to take some measures that everyone can do at home. We make some suggestions.

### Recommendations

1. Handle the photographs carefully to avoid them being scratched, breaking, or getting creased.
2. Avoid touching them with your fingers, better hold them by the corners. You can use cotton gloves to avoid fingerprints and grease deposits.
3. Try to store the originals in a cool, dry and well ventilated place where there are no large fluctuations in temperature and humidity. We recommend a relative humidity of between 30% and 40% (avoiding fluctuations greater than 5%) and a temperature between 16 °C and 18 °C.
4. Take more care of old photographs and those which have a sentimental value.
5. Protect the photographs from dust and light. They are better kept in a closed box or in an album.
6. Store loose photographs inside boxes to prevent dust entering. It is better to group together those that have a similar format.
7. Not all materials are suitable for conservation. Avoid poor quality paper and plastics and paper with ink on, such as newspaper.

8. If you are using plastic envelopes, avoid those that contain PVC. The best options are those in polyester, polypropylene and polyethylene.
9. If you are using paper to store the photographs in, it is best to use that which is acid, lignin and sulphide free.
10. Save the old or fragile albums in a horizontal position to avoid unnecessary stress.
11. Colour photographs are more sensitive to deterioration than black and white. Maximise the conservation measures with these materials.
12. Do not write on the back of photographs whenever possible, it is better to do it on the envelope in which they are kept. If you have to do, it is better to use a soft, chinograph pencil, which is inert, and using minimal pressure.
13. Write on the reverse in a discreet corner, not in the middle of the photograph.
14. When it comes to choosing an album, choose a good quality plastic (such as polyester) or put photographs in a paper album using paper or plastic corners. Avoid those which have magnetic and adhesive leaves.
15. If the album had compromised the conservation of the photographs, consider if it needs changing.
16. Keep in mind that light destroys photographs. Make copies of the photographs that you want to frame and save the originals, thereby stopping them from deteriorating in the light.
17. In cases where photographs with great sentimental value have deteriorated, consider employing the services of a professional.

### What you should not do

1. Store photographs in the loft, where there may be significant variations in temperature and humidity. Nor in garages, with a very high humidity and air polluted by vehicles.
2. Keep the photographs in places where they can be easily exposed to damage from insects, floods, pets, children, etc.
3. Eat or drink while you look at the family album, thereby avoiding unwanted accidents.
4. Stick photographs down using glue, adhesive tape, staples, paper clips, etc.
5. Put stickers on the back to identify them.
6. Identify them on the back using a pen or felt pen.

7. Keep the photographs mixed up and piled up inside boxes.
8. Use glycine or materials containing PVC. Nor use paper with ink such as newsprint.
9. Get rid of the originals after you've scanned them.
10. Individually cut the negatives.





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## *7. My family photos: how do I digitise them?*

Cristina Feixas

Nowadays almost all families have access to a digital camera. Due to the proliferation of new communication technologies, images are sent through different channels, using different devices, making them accessible and sharing them with a larger number of people. Before the emergence of digital photography we had to develop our rolls of film at the laboratory and collect the developed images on paper. These photographs on paper were kept in albums, envelopes, boxes, etc., which were often unsuitable. Each time we touch these photographs with our hands or move them about, over time they deteriorate and lose their colour, and it can even fade the image completely.

Fortunately, the industry has a series of domestic scanners on the market that allow us to digitise home documents and personal photographs. At a relatively affordable price you can perform a job that until now was unthinkable domestically, and which was previously only available to professionals. With some basic idea of how to use a scanner and an organised system of folders to save them in, we can digitise our traditional photographs and convert them into digital, with all the advantages that digital imaging brings.

### Recommendations

1. Locate all the photos that you want to scan.
2. Remove staples, paper clips, adhesive tape or any other articles from the photographs: they can scratch or dirty the glass of the scanner.
3. Clean the photographs of any dust using a soft brush.
4. Use cotton or latex gloves to handle the photographs and to avoid leaving fingerprints.
5. Clean the scanner glass, and make sure that it is free of dust and other particles.
6. Read the manual of the scanner in order to obtain more specific information.
7. Choose JPEG, the archive standard format, to scan photographs and save them in high quality.
8. Scan the photographs at 200 or 300 dpi/ppi resolution.
9. Capture colour images in 8-bit RGB.
10. Capture black and white images in 8-bit RGB or greyscale.
11. Capture images with an output size of 18x24 cm, this being a minimum quality

parameter sufficient for domestic photographs.

12. Choose to locate the output folder in one place for easy access.
13. Give short and descriptive names to the files to help identify them.
14. Enter information about the content (metadata) such as the author, the place and the year of creation.
15. Create and organise a structure of folders within the folder on your computer where you have stored these files.
16. Create at least two copies of your collection. Save them on your computer, and then also other copies on CD, external hard disk, or online storage services.

### What you should not do

1. Scan photographs with staples, paper clips, adhesive tape or any other article attached.
2. Handle the photographs without gloves.
3. Not use standard formats for saving the photographs.
4. Scan the photographs at resolutions above 300 dpi if it is not strictly necessary.
5. Give very long names to files and which follow entirely different guidelines.
6. Save the files in folders without following a structure.
7. Not keep any back-up copy.

## *8. Photographs on my computer, how do I organise them?*

David Iglésias

In 1888 the Kodak company launched an advertising campaign with the slogan "You press the button, we do the rest", which limited the responsibility of the photographer to just taking the shot. In contrast to how it had been throughout the 19th century, from this moment on we would never have to think about the preparation of materials or the developing and copying of photographs; the photographer could just take the photograph. And photography has been like this throughout the 20th century, up until the appearance of digital.

With digital photography you don't even have to take them to be developed. Taking photos is easier than ever and so is losing them. Hence the need to organise images in order to profit from all the advantages and conveniences of digital and avoid simple accumulation. It is just a matter of being clear that after taking them, one must organise the images so that they are easy to find and will last. We suggest some ideas.

### Recommendations

1. Identify where you have all your images: PC, CD, camera cards, etc.
2. Select those that you want to keep and delete the rest.
3. Save the selected photographs in one place and in one folder (e.g.: PHOTOGRAPHS)
4. Create new folders with names that have meaning and/or dates. The structures of folders should be simple and logical.
5. Keep the original file names, or change them to short and unique names, without repeating any.
6. Use the tags (metadata) that different programmes display to identify places, people, etc. The tags are the key to retrieving and locating the images, they work perfectly well.
7. If you have different versions of an image, save the best and delete the remainder.
8. To know which is the best, you need to check the essential technical parameters: camera settings (resolution, format, etc.).
9. Making back-up copies onto an external hard drive is the best option, though not the only one.
10. Store the copies in different places. If possible, make three copies.
11. Remember that the discs become obsolete in no time at all. It is advisable to

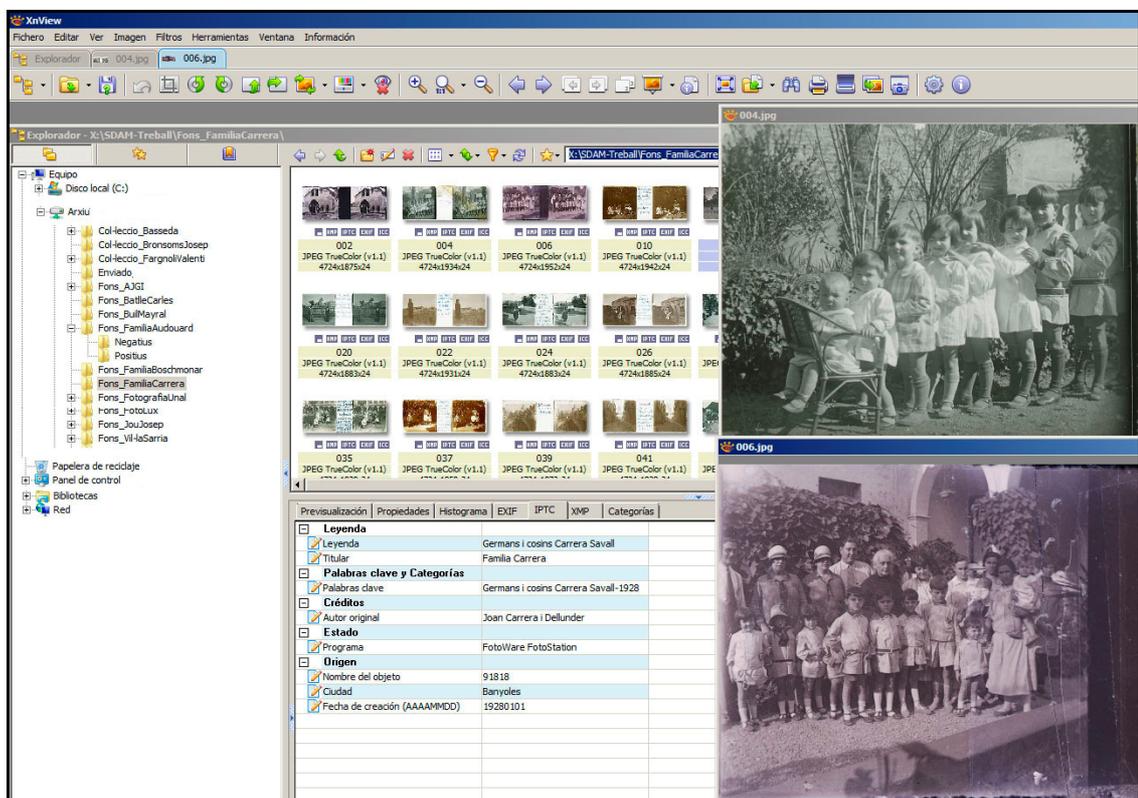
change them every five years.

12. You can use online services for additional copies, but not as your only copy.

13. Print copies at high quality; we know how to preserve paper.

## What you should not do

1. Have the images spread out in different formats and external devices: USB sticks and memory cards, CDs and DVDs, external drives, the cloud, etc.
2. Organise the images reproducing a physical order: folders and more folders with names and signs of all kinds.
3. Use long file name descriptions.
4. Use only the file and folder names for image retrieval.
5. Ignore the tags (metadata): these are the key to content retrieval.
6. Not keep any back-up copies.
7. Make printed copies using unbranded inks and papers



## 9. Videos and films: what should I do?

Pau Saavedra

The history of cinema began on 28th December 1895 with the famous public projection by the Lumière brothers at the Salon Indienne in Paris. Since then, humans have been able to capture reality in movement, in black and white or in colour, with or without sound accompaniment, and we have learned how to record it onto physical media and to transmit it over a distance, either to reach the public-at-large or the smaller nuclear family.

A few years after the invention of cinema, the first film formats designed for the amateur appeared, such as 9.5 mm (1923), 8 mm (1932) and Super 8 (1965), which opened up the possibility of making films beyond the realms of the film industry. During the 1950s, video technology began to be developed, consisting of recording moving images using electronic means rather than light-sensitive chemicals. Video would further facilitate the creation of works with moving images and sounds.

During the 1970s and 1980s a variety of formats appeared, such as VHS, Betamax or Video8 among others, designed for the domestic sphere and becoming more and more accessible and easier to use. At the turn of the century, analogue video was replaced by digital video and video cameras coexisted with new devices that had the same integrated function such as mobile phones, tablets, etc.

This technological evolution has favoured the creation of films and videos, but it has also meant that many older machines have become obsolete. Both cinematographic films and analogue video can only be seen by means of reproduction equipment that very often no longer works properly and which is difficult to repair and maintain. For this reason it is necessary to take care of both the original material and the playback devices, but it also becomes necessary to make copies onto digital format to ensure their preservation.

### Recommendations

1. Store films and video tapes in a cool, dry and dark place.
2. Store cinematographic films in their original plastic boxes in a horizontal position.
3. If the cinematographic films are stored in metal canisters which can rust, replace the canisters with neutral plastic boxes.
4. Do not touch the film surface with your fingers. If you need to handle the film, use cotton or latex gloves.
5. Carefully remove everything that may have stuck to the films such as paper clips, labels, adhesive tape, etc.

6. Don't project any film if you are not sure that the projector is in perfect condition, as this could break the tape or even burn it.
7. Store the video tapes upright, in their original plastic sleeves and completely rewound.
8. Before you play the video tape check the state of the reproduction device or videocassette recorder and if necessary clean the heads.
9. Take films to be digitised to companies who have professional telecine equipment (avoid companies which project the film onto a screen and capture images using a video camera).
10. Digitising video requires a corresponding format videocassette recorder and a video capture card. There are internal capture cards (inside the computer) and external.
11. Use standard capture parameters (resolution, bit depth, aspect ratio, bit rate, frames per second, etc.).
12. Use video formats that are of widely used and accepted as a standard (avi, mov, mpEg-2, mpEG-4, etc.).
13. Keep the video files on hard disk and keep at least one copy on another storage device.

### What you should not do

1. Store cinematographic films and video tapes in humid places or where they are exposed to moisture, where the sun can get to them or where they could reach high temperatures.
2. Project cinematographic films if you don't have the necessary knowledge or if you don't know the state of the projector.
3. Leave the tapes badly wound after use.
4. Digitise to video formats that apply a lot of compression such as the streaming formats intended for distribution over the Internet (WMV, FLV, RM, etc.).
5. Take cinematographic films to be digitised to companies whose quality of work is unknown.
6. Only keep a copy of our cinematographic films and video tapes on DVD.



**What will be remembered about us? And its protagonists.**



Above montage of photographs by André Ancona Lopez



**Ajuntament de Girona**  
**Department of Records Management,  
Archives and Publications**  
Municipal Archive of Girona (AMGi)  
Centre for Research and Dissemination of the  
Image (CRDI)  
<http://www.girona.cat/sgdap>



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