

Librarian's Shelf by Karen Connell

A Time to Remember

The start of a new year can be a time to look forward to the year ahead, to learn something new, or tackle a new challenge. It can also be a time to look back and reflect on the past. Perhaps for you that means learning about your ancestors or digitizing family photos and home videos. Either way, the Columbus Public Library has the tools you need!

You can research your family history using Ancestry Library Edition in our computer lab, or bring your own laptop or tablet to the library and connect to our wifi. While Ancestry does have to be used in the building, MyHeritage can be accessed anywhere with your Nebraska ID number. You can also contact the library for a NebraskaAccess password. Both of these websites offer records in categories such as U.S. Census; Birth, Marriage, & Death; Military Service; Immigration & Travel; and more. From the library's website, www.columbusne.us/library, click on the Digital Library link to find these sites and other genealogy resources.

You may remember a time before the days of smartphones and even digital cameras; back when there were separate devices for taking photographs and capturing video. Home movies were dubbed to VHS and reels of film negatives were developed into photographs. It was only 15 or 20 years ago after all. But how many of you have a VCR to play those home movies or a projector to view slides and negatives?

As technologies become obsolete, content often has to be converted to a more accessible format. You can do this in the Columbus Public Library's Makerspace! Bring in your family movies on VHS and copy the footage to DVD or capture it in a digital video file. Gather your slides, film negatives, photo albums, and scrapbooks to scan and save as digital image files.

The simplest conversion equipment we offer performs a direct VHS to DVD transfer. All you need is your home movies on VHS and a few blank DVDs. If you want a digital file of your video, you would use our Elgato Video Capture device. This device connects to a computer at one end of the cable, and an analog video player (like a VCR or camcorder) at the other. Any device with composite "RCA" (the red, white, and yellow plugs) or S-Video outputs will work.

You can use this two ways: either use our laptop & your own portable storage device, or use your own laptop after installing the free Elgato software. Video files can take up quite a bit of storage space depending on the file type and quality of conversion. Plan on 90 minutes of video creating a 4.5GB file. So you may need to purchase a flash drive or an external hard drive with a larger memory. It is also a good idea to back up your files on another device stored somewhere else. For example, I use two duplicate 1TB hard drives for my family videos and photos, keeping one at home and the other at work.

Use the Epson flatbed scanner to digitize photos, scrapbook pages, film negatives, and slides. Be sure to bring a flash drive or external hard drive to save these files. Scan multiple items at once to save time and let the software separate them into individual files.

Don't despair if this sounds too complicated, just use our Book-A-Librarian service to schedule a training session. Choose an item you'd like to start with and we will teach you how to use the corresponding equipment for digitizing that type of item. For more information, call or stop by the library and ask for Rachelle or Karen.