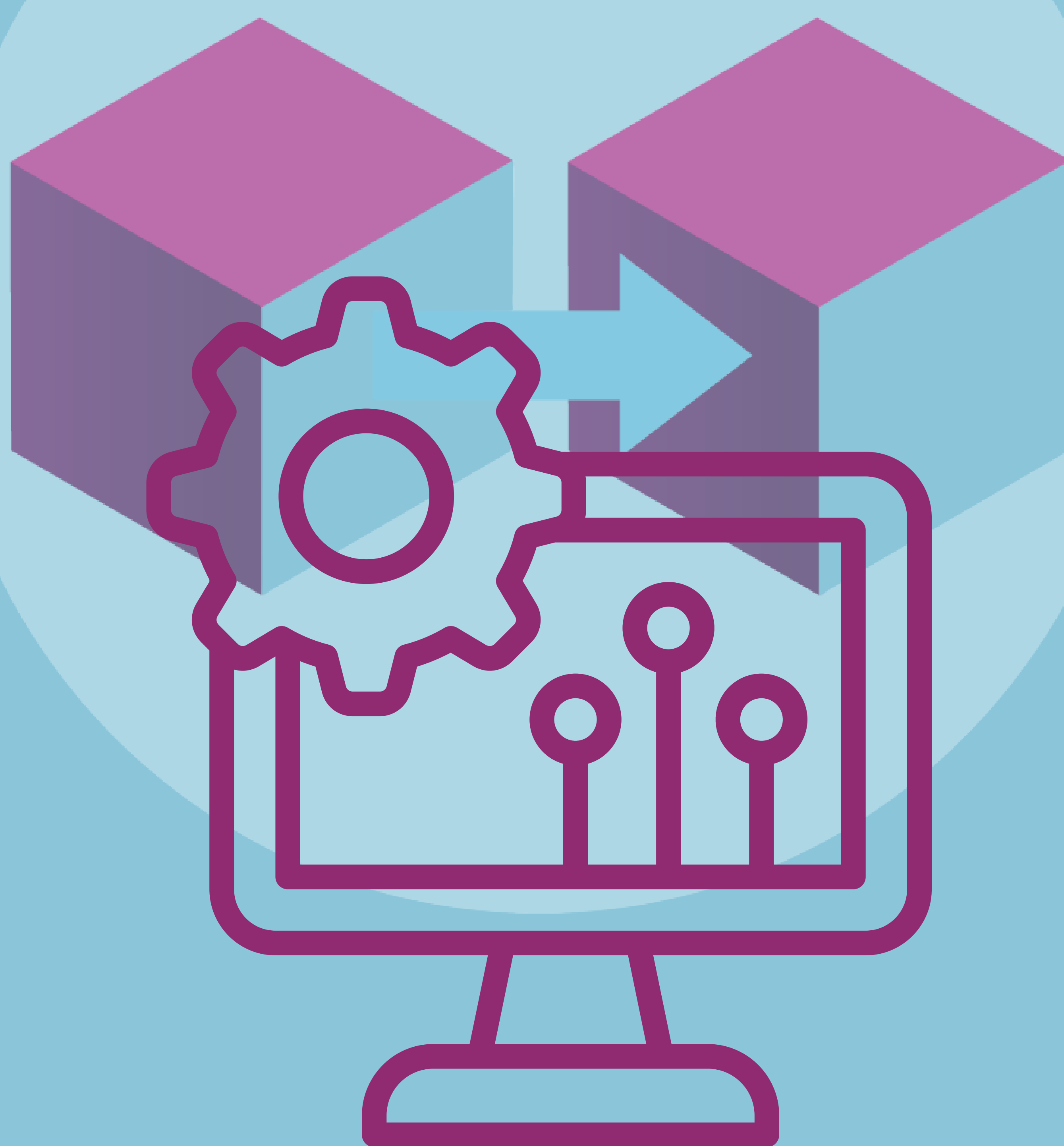


DIGITAL PRESERVATION FOR COMMUNITY ARCHIVES



A BASIC DIGITISATION GUIDE

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The digital age is in full swing, and more community archives than ever are digitising large amounts of their collections to preserve original items and make them available online. Digitization is a pre cursor to digital preservation (for more information see the ‘What is Digital Preservation’ document) and should not be undertaken without a plan to preserve the content you are digitising.

This guide provides basic guidelines for converting physical materials into digital formats. It ensures consistency, quality, and proper handling of materials during the digitisation process. The guide assumes that you will be carrying out digitization within your community group. It is also possible to use external digitization companies, who will pick up your collections, digitize them to your requirements and return both the original items and digital copies to you. This can be an expensive option, but worth looking at if your group has a budget.

More detailed digitization guidelines are provided by a range of organisations online. This guide is intended as a starting point to give your group things to think about before embarking on a digitization project

GETTING STARTED

Before you start digitizing, you need to decide what digital versions you want to create. You can choose to create preservation (high quality) or access (lower quality) copies or both. The option you choose will depend on what you want to use the copies for, as well as the budget and the resources that you have. You need to make sure that you have the budget and resources to carry out the digitization work, process the created items, and preserve them for the future.

The table below gives some options and the reasons for choosing them.

Option	Outcome
1 high-quality digital copy	High-quality copies are used to produce physical prints, to be included in printed material like magazines or leaflets and for preservation purposes
1 lower quality copy	Lower quality copies are used online in a range of ways. They are not suitable for use in printed material, but can be used as access copies
1 high and one lower quality copy	This option means you’ll have a copy for all uses if you need this flexibility
2 or more copies of each quality level	This gives you multiple access and preservation copies.

A NOTE ON RESOLUTION –

Digital Image Resolution refers to the amount of detail captured, typically measured in DPI (Dots Per Inch). The higher the resolution, the higher the image quality of your digital content will be and in turn, the more storage space the file will use. The resolution you use to capture your objects is essential to the success of your digitisation project.

Suggested DPI for different item types is given below.

Text documents: 300 DPI minimum	Photographs: 600 DPI minimum	Fine art/detailed illustrations: 800-1200 DPI
Maps/architectural drawings: 600-800 DPI	Microfilm/microfiche: 300-400 DPI	

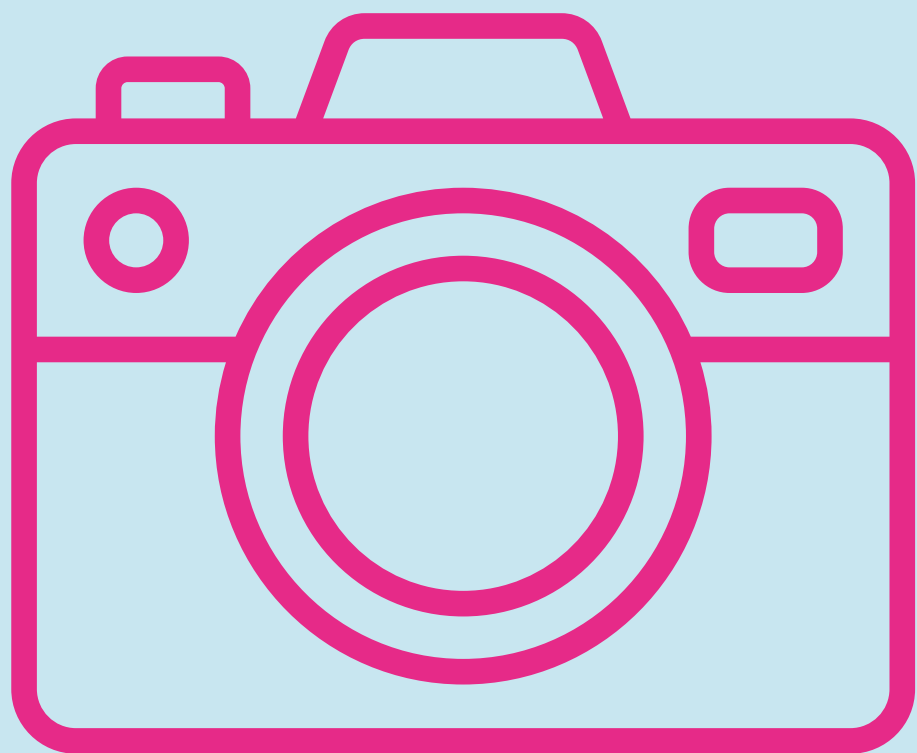
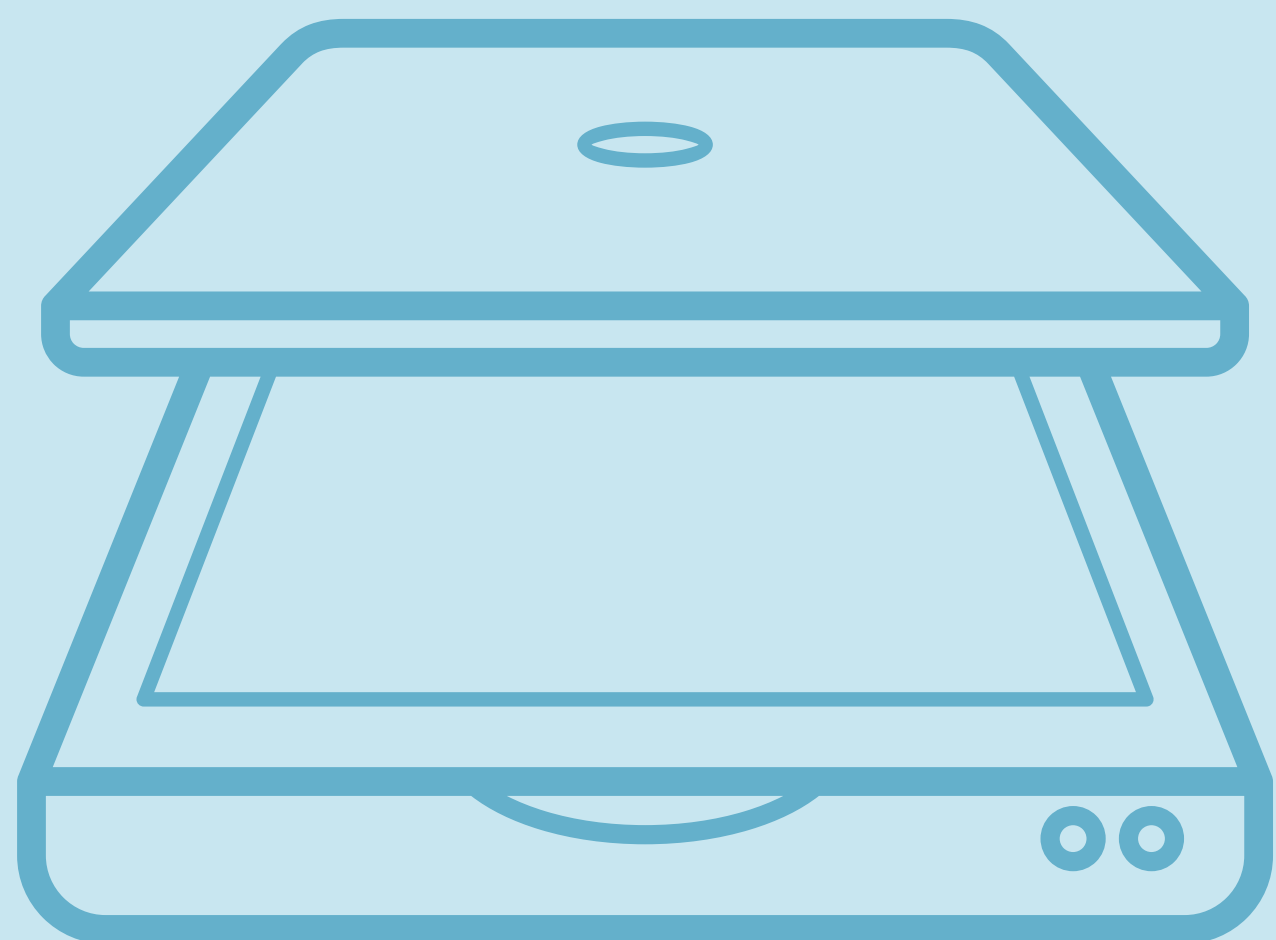
The next step is to select the equipment which will allow you to carry out your chosen digitization option.

EQUIPMENT

The equipment you use will be in essential in obtaining a usable result. Some suggestions of basic equipment to get you started and optional equipment for a more detailed set up are below.

Basic Equipment

- Flatbed scanner (minimum 300 DPI capability)
should be used for:
 - Flat documents like letters, manuscripts, and papers
 - Small photographs and postcards
 - Magazine pages and newspaper clippings
 - Detailed documents where text clarity is crucial
 - Items that can lay completely flat
 - Materials where consistent lighting and scale are important
 - Documents where you need precise OCR (Optical Character Recognition)
- Digital camera (minimum 12 megapixels)
should be used for:
 - Bound materials like books that can't lay flat
 - Fragile documents that shouldn't be pressed against scanner glass
 - Large format items that exceed scanner size (maps, posters)
 - 3D objects and artifacts
 - Materials with texture or dimensionality
 - Items that need to be digitized without direct contact
 - Materials where speed is more important than perfect flatness
 - When you need to work in the field or at other institutions
- Computer with sufficient storage
- Back up options, such as cloud storage or an external hard drive
- Basic image editing software that is compatible with your computer



Optional Equipment

- Document feed scanner – useful for bulk scanning
- Book cradle for bound materials
- Colour calibration tools
- Light box for transparencies



FILE SPECIFICATION SUGGESTIONS.

Here are some suggested file formats and resolutions for digitized documents based on what they will be used for.

Preservation Files

- Format: TIFF for images,
- Resolution: Minimum 300 DPI for documents, 600 DPI for photographs
- Colour depth: 24-bit colour or 8-bit grayscale

Access Copies

- Format: PDF for documents, JPEG for images, MP3 for audio
- Resolution: 150 DPI for online use

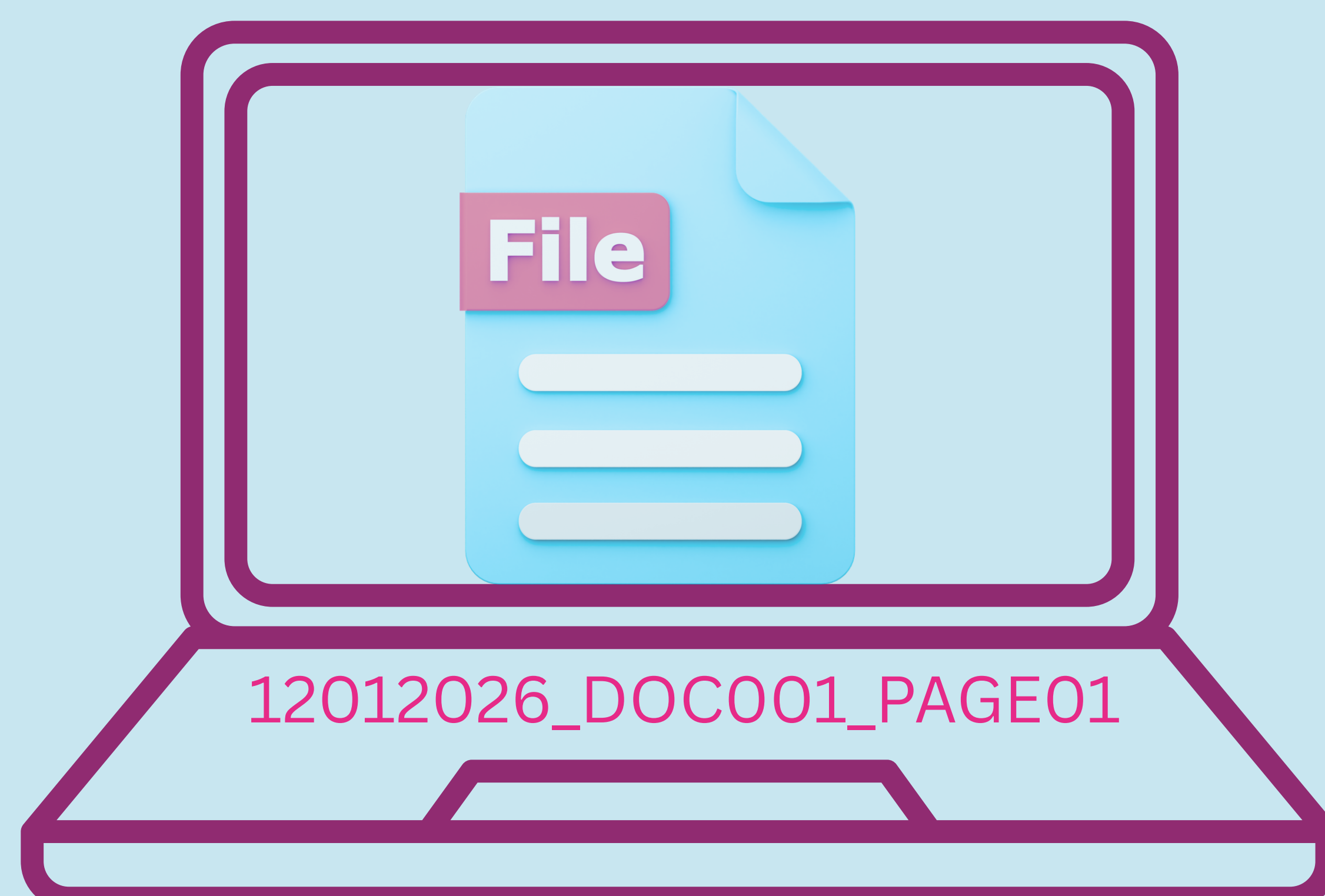
NAMING CONVENTIONS

Whether you are creating preservation or access copies, naming conventions are important as they will help you keep track of and easily find files.

Here are some suggestions to help you create naming conventions to suit your files and group context.

- Use a consistent file naming structure
- Include the digitisation date (DDMMYYYY is a useful format to use where possible)
- Include the item references used in your catalogue
- Do not use spaces or special characters

An example file name is: 12012026_DOC001_PAGE01



QUALITY CONTROL

Once your items have been digitized, it is important to carry out quality checks to ensure that the process has been carried out correctly and nothing has gone wrong.

Basic Checks should include,

- That the image is straight and properly cropped
- The text is legible
- The colours match the original
- There are no visible dirt or marks
- The file names used follow the specified conventions
- All pages are present and in the correct order

Regular Monitoring should ,

- Check that files open correctly
- Verify that copies open and are not corrupt
- Review samples of digitization work weekly to ensure good quality

STORAGE AND BACKUP

It is important to be sure that you have enough resources and space to store and back up the files you are creating.

Here are some suggested ways to manage this,

- Create two backup copies
- Store one backup copy offsite
- Check backups quarterly to make sure they are still accessible
- Look at topic 5 (Keep Your Content) of the toolkit matrix for more information



METADATA AND DOCUMENTATION

Making sure you have recorded the correct information about your files and the processes used to identify them is one of the most important steps in the process. This ensures that you have enough information about your files to keep track of them, train volunteers on the processes you use and fix any issues that may arise in the future.

Here is some important information you may want to record,

Basic Metadata

- Title of item
- Date of creation
- Creator/author
- Physical description
- Date of digitization
- Person who digitized
- Equipment used
- Copyright status

Documentation

Keep records of:

- Items digitized
- Date of digitization
- Any problems encountered
- Special handling requirements
- Time taken
- Equipment settings used

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN HANDLING ORIGINAL MATERIALS

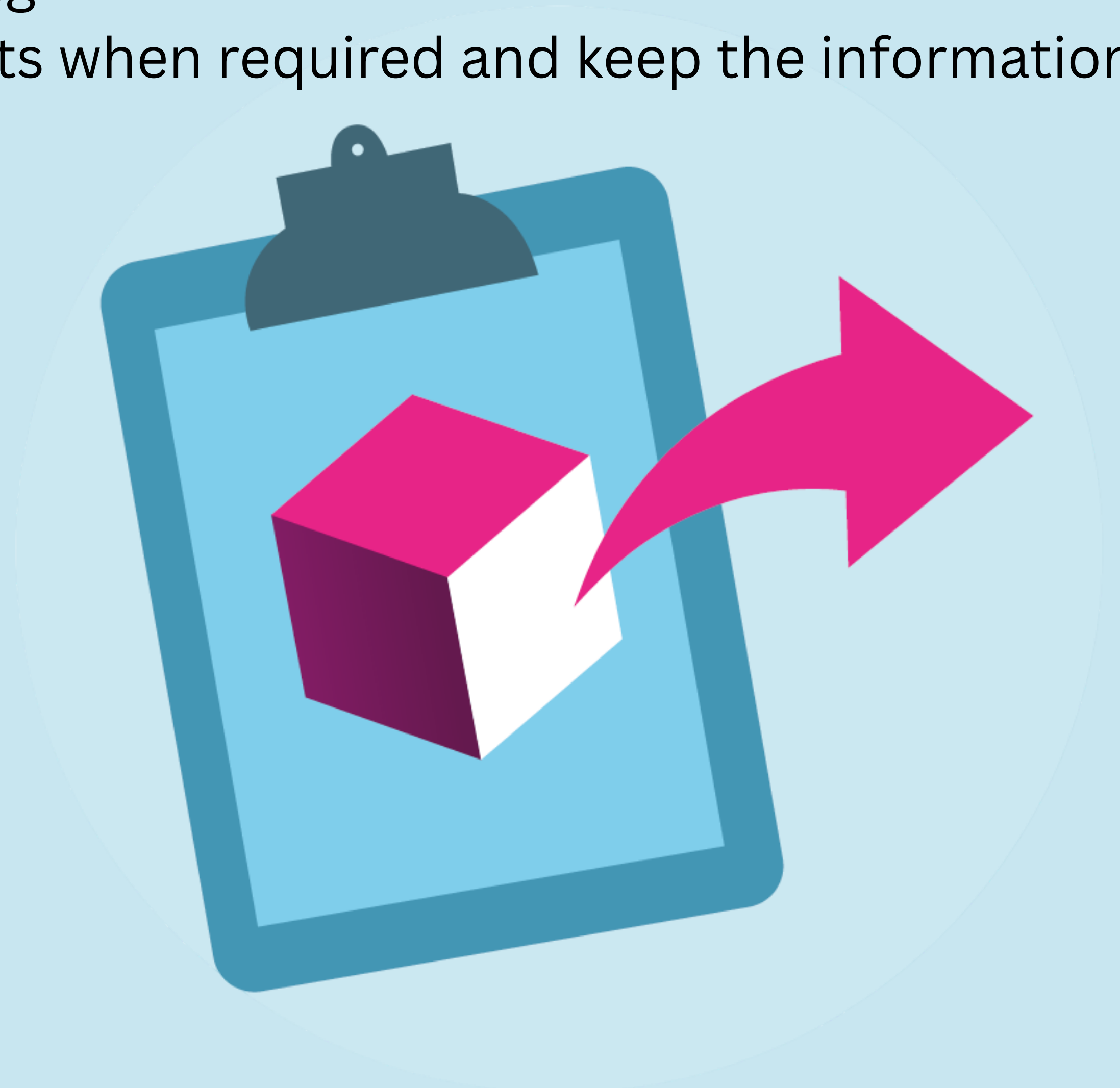
- Make sure your hands are clean and wear gloves for images only
- Use supports for fragile items
- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight
- Handle items by the edges only where possible
- Return items to proper storage after digitization

COPYRIGHT AND ACCESS

- Check copyright status before digitising
- Document permissions and usage rights when required and keep the information accessible

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- Know the location of power switches
- Back up work in progress daily
- Keep equipment manuals accessible
- Maintain a list of emergency contacts



GETTING STARTED CHECKLIST

1. Read through entire guide before starting work

2. Set up basic equipment

3. Practice with non-critical items

4. Start with simple, flat documents

5. Establish a folder structure for the digital files created

6. Create a backup routine

7. Begin documentation process

