



Digital Doctor Scanning for Survival!

By
Stu Gershon

Many people have discovered scanners and use them as a viable means of getting older photographs into digital format, but here are some pointers on how to use your scanner and some other things to use it for, which you may not have considered.

Firstly, let me say that I had a heart attack during a trip to Alaska in 1993. When I returned home and visited my cardiologist, the receptionist said, "You and your wife travel a lot. You should have your medical facts documented!" I immediately set out to develop "My Medical History," which is simply an MS Word document. On it I included all the pertinent information: name, address, SSN and contact information. I also included all of my doctors, my insurance information, my stent information and my most recent blood work and EKG. Every time I visit the cardiologist, I ask for a copy and scan it into my computer as a JPEG (jpg) or PDF file (Adobe Reader is a free download and creates a PDF file). You can even insert it into the Word document you have created. If you leave it as a separate JPEG, make sure you label and date it. I also include all of my daily medications.

the ship and have a good time!" If I hadn't had a recent EKG (as a "baseline") they most assuredly would have kept me overnight for "observation" and I would have missed the ship.

In 2005, during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I developed the rest of the Scanning for Survival. As I watched the destruction caused by this natural disaster, I was amazed at the plight of the people, from all age groups and all walks of life, who had lost their "history." They had no records, no birth certificates, no Social Security cards, and no driver's licenses. For all practical matter, they didn't exist before August 31, 2005.

This event led me to begin scanning every important document, including important papers, receipts, retirement papers, family photos, etc. I had my entire life history scanned, digitized and saved in a folder on my hard drive called "Survival." I even copied the folder on a CD and sent it to my son in Chicago (which I update every three months). I wanted the disk in a place that was safe and far away from my home should any disaster strike my community. The disk does you no good in the safe-deposit box in the bank around the corner if the entire neighborhood is hit by a tidal wave!

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I have the file on all four of my computers, and hard copy prints in both of my cars and on a flash drive (the less-than-finger-length USB “thumb drives” that can be found at every office supply place, Radio Shack, etc. Buy the cheapest, since it will have more memory — hopefully — than your medical condition requires). When my wife and I travel, we carry hard copies of this document wherever we go.

In 2002, my wife and I returned to Alaska. For nine months prior to the cruise, my family all asked, “Are you sure you want to return to the ‘scene of the crime?’”

I said I felt fine. However, within hours of arriving in Vancouver, I began to have modest chest pains. My wife took me to a local hospital, where they tested for cardiac enzymes. We gave the doctor a copy of my medical history, and after three hours (to process the blood work), he said, “You didn’t have a heart attack and your EKG matches the one you gave me from a month ago, so I don’t see anything wrong. Go on

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You can also carry this file around on the aforementioned thumb drive, which costs less than \$20 and can be carried in your pocket or even around your neck.

This system came in handy about eighteen months ago when my wife’s father died. She needed her Power of Attorney and the bank was closed. I went to my computer, loaded the file, and printed out a copy of the Power of Attorney, and my wife was able to go to the hospital and complete the funeral arrangements.

Many folks I’ve spoken to have suggested I share this information. It’s *your* history and it’s not hard to do. All you have to do is scan all the documents into JPEG or PDF formats and save them into one folder. JPG and PDF files are used on both PCs and Macs so the file can be utilized in whichever system is available in an emergency.

Stuart Gershon is known as “The Digital Doctor.” He has given over 285 classes at 57 different libraries in Nassau and Suffolk. You can get more information and the schedule of his classes at: www.DigitalDocOnline.com.