Adding Descriptions to Digital Photographs:
Your Gift to the Future

Our photographs are valuable. They capture our memories and let others see where we've been and what we've done.

Digital photography helps us share, but now we create far more photos than we ever have before. As our personal collections become larger, it gets harder to find things. If your digital photos are difficult for you to manage, how will your loved ones be able to use them in the future?

Fortunately, you can add descriptions and tags to your digital photos, which makes it easier to organize and search your collection. This added information is called metadata.

Metadata is information about the digital photo file itself and the image it displays.

Your digital camera automatically embeds technical metadata, such as the date and time, to each photo as it is created.

You can also manually embed tags, or other descriptive metadata using photo editing software.

But be careful! Adding descriptions or tags to photos in social media or photo websites does not embed metadata into the photo files.

A description is a brief explaination of the photo content.

When adding a description think what you would write on the back of a printed photo.

Tags can help you find specific photos in your collection.

They can also help organize your photos by categories like people, places and events.

For tags, note the essential facts about the picture. Use clear, descriptive words and be consistent.

The tags for this photo, for example, identifiy the people, place, date and occasion pictured.

Embedding metadata in your photos adds adds meaning to your collection, and keeps it organized.

So, when making descriptions and tags remember to:
--Include relevant information
-- Note essential facts

-- Use clear, descriptive words
--be consistent

And get in the habit of embedding descriptive metadata in your photos.

Embedded metadata stays with your digital photo where ever it goes and provides important contextual information.

Think of it as a gift to the future.

For information and video tutorials on how to add descriptive metadata to your photos, visit photometadata.org

To learn more about personal archiving, please visit digitalpreservation.gov/you