Preserving Your Digital Treasures: video transcript

[voiceover]

> Personal photos, papers, music and videos are important to us. They record the details of our lives and help define us.

> But increasingly our possessions and our communications are no longer material: they're digital.

> Digital files are encoded to represent text, images, audio, video and more. They are fragile and completely dependent on software and machines to make them accessible.

[Interview with Brian Randall, Queensland Places Coordinator, State Library of Queensland]

> We CAN preserve our digital possessions and keep them accessible for years to come, but we have to archive them and actively manage them.

> No matter what type of file you want to save – audio, video, text and so on – they all require the same essential preservation strategy:

> • Identify what you want to save

> • Decide what is most important to you

> • Organise the content

> • Save copies in different locations

[Interview with Gavin Bannerman, Acting Manager, Original Content, State Library of Queensland]

> Keep photos of the events, people and places that are important to you.

> Images that are shaky, out of focus or poorly lit should not be kept, unless they are the only image of an important person or event. Don't keep multiple versions of documents, unless they greatly differ.

[Interview with Margie Barram, Senior Librarian, Digital Applications, State Library of Queensland]

> Once you've organised what to keep, you need to gather everything into one place.

> Transfer your files from wherever they are – your camera, mobile phone, tablet, CDs and so on. Create a main archive folder and title it something like, 'My Archive'. Then, if you want to organise your files further, create other folders inside the master folder and name them with simple descriptive titles such as 'video', 'audio', 'photos' and 'documents'.

> It may help to include the date and subject in the folder titles. And try to keep your title scheme consistent.

> If you have several copies or versions of a file, always save the highest-quality, larger-size master version. You can always make additional copies from the master version, as you need them.

> Some people like to give their files a descriptive name to make them easily identifiable. Others prefer to use dates and running numbers, so that the files can

be sorted and stored numerically. It doesn't matter what system you use, as long as you are consistent, and that you are able to find the files you want in the future.

Once you've transferred all of your files to the main 'Archive' folder, it's time to make backup copies.

[Interview with Dave Allen, Manager, Operations, ICT, State Library of Queensland]

Saving your files onto CDs, DVDs and flash drives may seem to be the easiest and cheapest option. However, these options can be easily corrupted, and may be obsolete within a few years.

An external hard drive makes a good central repository as it can hold a lot of content. And it's portable.

Make a copy of the hard drive and store that copy in a different geographic location. This is simply good insurance. If something happens to the content in one place, it's safe in another.

Drives can decay or become outdated in time, so check your files for decay or corruption once a year. To ensure ongoing access to your archives, transfer the content from the old drive to a newer storage technology every two to five years.

In addition, you can also backup your personal digital collections with online services, or 'cloud' storage. But don't use an online service as your only backup. Diversify.

Print is still a good backup option. Print out copies of important documents and photographs, so that you can have the document in an alternative and durable format: paper.

[Interview with Grant Collins, Manager, Collection Preservation, State Library of Queensland]

So, to recap, there is no easy way to ensure that your digital files will last. But it is possible to reduce the risk if you:

- Identify what you want to save
- Decide what is most important to you
- Organise the content
- Save copies in different places

…and manage your archive.

Following these guidelines will help protect your personal digital files for years to come.

Author: National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA), led by the State Library of Queensland, 2013