

Naming Guidelines from the Maine State Archives

Most computer systems allow up to 255 characters in a file name. This means that you can provide a lot of information about the document in the file name, and you don't need a special search tool to find digital images. File names rich in detail are searchable through the simple search feature on your computer.

We have a standard naming procedure for everything that we digitally image at the Archives. Each of the following items are included in the same order for each digital scan:

What the item is—this describes the type of item.

For example: map, document, photograph, artwork...

Agency—this describes where the item came from, which is important at the Archives because we receive items from a variety of state agencies. This may not be necessary for your organization.

For example: Legislature, Conservation, Judiciary, Executive Office, Inland Fish and Wildlife...

Complete description—this part provides a detailed description of the item. This is the part of the naming where you can include as much information as possible to make it easy to find your image in a search.

For example: If the digital image is from a book, include the title, author, volume, and page number. Or, if the image is more than just text, include a list of people, places, or things in the image. It can also be helpful to include information about the creator of the original item like the artist or the date the item was created.

Container number—include a description of where the original item is found.

For example: Shelf 52, Box 12, Folder 6. If the original item is not housed at your organization, make note of where it can be found.

Complete example:

Photograph, Conservation, three hikers, Mount Katahdin, snow, March 1964, photographer unknown, Shelf 52, Box 12, Folder 6

This example only has 122 characters, including spaces. Your file name can be *twice* as long as this one. Take advantage of the number of characters you can use to describe your digital image with as much specificity as possible.