



Digitisation Toolkit

Selecting a digital camera

It is possible to digitise your Queensland heritage collections using a simple digital camera. Do consider the following recommended specifications that will allow you to digitise to [SLQ standards](#) (refer to Additional Resources at end of document for more information), to ensure access into the future.

The purpose of this information guide is not to recommend a specific brand, camera or device since the range of options, as with any technology, is constantly changing. Rather, the information is a guide to the types of equipment that may be available within specific budgets and minimum specifications that should be considered for best possible outcomes.

Digital cameras – under \$500

While limited, there are still some reasonable cameras that can be purchased in the \$500 category. Specifically, all-in-one 'compact' cameras sit within this range with some very good and well-featured examples coming from companies such as Panasonic, Canon, Nikon and Sony. The minimum specifications to look for with compact cameras should be:

- Picture sensor: 12 Megapixels (MP)
- Lens Aperture: f2.8
- Lens Optical Zoom Range: 10x

The lens should also cover the 35mm equivalent range of 55mm to 60mm to give the least amount of lens distortion when used for copy photography and should also include a macro option for photographing very small originals. A desirable feature would be the ability to capture the files in either TIFF or RAW format so that there is no compression taking place. However this feature is rarely offered on cameras within this range.

Digital cameras – \$500 to \$1000

There are certainly more options available within this price range, from 'Compact System' cameras through to some entry level Digital Single-Lens Reflex cameras (DSLRs).

What is a DSLR camera?

A DSLR camera is a digital camera combining the optics and the mechanisms of a single-lens reflex camera with a digital imaging sensor, as opposed to photographic film. The reflex design scheme is the primary difference between a DSLR and other digital cameras.

There is an increasing range of DSLR cameras on the market, some coming with one or two lenses as a kit. These are generally the best option with the most number of features and a bigger picture sensor. However, the large number of camera options available can be overwhelming depending on what photography is required and level of experience with similar cameras. That being said, most DSLRs in this price category are intended for general use so have a number of auto features to make them easier to use. The minimum specifications for a DSLR would be:

- Picture Sensor: 16MP
- Lens Aperture: f2.8 to f4
- Standard Lens: 50mm to 60mm

What is a Compact System camera?

These are relative newcomers but provide similar quality and functionality to DSLRs but at a lower price. They are effectively a blend of a compact camera with its light weight and smaller size with the benefit of interchangeable lenses and more customisable features that are usually only found on more expensive DSLRs.

Olympus has led the field in developing this technology but other manufacturers such as Panasonic, Canon, Nikon and Pentax have started to introduce their own versions. The minimum specifications for these cameras would be:

- Picture Sensor: 14 to 16MP
- Lens Aperture: f2.8
- Standard to short telephoto lens (35mm equivalent of a 50 to 70mm lens).

Additional equipment for copy work

Specifically for copy photography, a copy stand with in-built lights would be best; however the cost of these can be prohibitive (\$1000+). A cheaper alternative would be to purchase a tripod that allows the camera head to be mounted horizontally. Several types are available from companies such as Manfrotto or Vanguard and will provide the equivalent capability for around \$200 to \$500. Lighting for such a setup could be as simple as two desk lamps set at 45° angles to the original or even diffused daylight.

Additional resources

- *SLQ Capture Standards*
www.slq.qld.gov.au/about-us/corporate/policies/protocols-and-standards

Need further information?

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