When creating digital objects, be sure to use a consistent, machine-readable file naming convention. Document your best practice policy for naming digital files and save that documentation with your project files.

Characters

The characters in the file name should only be as follows:
- alphanumeric characters (a-z, 0-9)
- underscores and hyphens (no spaces, periods, ampersands, slashes, commas, etc.).
- lower case lettering or camel case capitalization (e.g. camelCase, fileName, etc.)
- no more than 32 characters long (not including file type extension)

Structure

The structure of the file name should be easy to interpret for any user. Include the following:
- contributing organizational ID (optional)
- collection name (optional)
- file creation date
- file number

Organization ID / Collection ID

If one organization is digitizing only its own collection, it will suffice to identify the collection in the file name; if multiple organizations are contributing to a collection, the organizational ID will be a crucial component of the file name. If it is deemed necessary, both can be included in the file name (being cautious about the 32 character limit)

Organization ID

Use acronyms to identify the contributing organization name:
- Hazelwood Community Museum & Archives = HCMA

If two organizations have a similar name, define them by expanding one the two main organizational names, e.g.:
- Hazelwood Community Museum & Archives = HCMA
- Halliday Community Museum & Archives = HalCMA

Collection ID

Express the Collection ID in such a way that it reflects the original collection name used by the organization, keeping brevity and disambiguity in mind. E.g.:
- Lombard Postcard Collection = LCC or LomPC or LomPost

File Creation Date

Including the file creation date in its name is useful for identifying file versions and invaluable during implementation of storage renewal practices.
For multipart objects, use the first date of creation throughout the object (i.e. for every page, even if they are digitized on different dates). This is particularly important when uploading multipart objects to VITA when file name stripping requires consistent file name components.
Be consistent in the dating convention used in the organization for easy sorting and finding, e.g. a file created on January 3, 2010 could be identified as:
- 20100103
- 2010-01-03

Remember: do not use slashes!

File Number

Identify an approximate number for each collection at the beginning of the project or program in order to ensure the file name convention is expansible enough to accommodate the whole collection once it is digitized. E.g. If the Lombard postcard collection contains approximately1000 objects, allow at least 5 zeros for the file name

Putting it all together:

Example 1.

The Hazelwood Community Museum & Archives is digitizing 40 of its collections. The collections tend to contain anywhere from 50-600 objects each. The date of the first digital file is January 3rd, 2010 and is an object from the Lombard Postcard Collection. The archival copy (master) is saved in TIFF format.

The first file name is:
LomPost_2010-01-03_0001.tif

Example 2.

Two Museums, the Hazelwood and the Halliday, are digitizing their collections in a collaborative project. The digital files will be stored separately but displayed

together online. Their collections contain anywhere from 250-2000 objects each. The date of the first digital file is March 31st, 2010 and is an object from the Lombard Postcard Collection contributed by the Halliday Community Museum & Archives. Later, on 23 April 2010, a file is created from the Lochness Clippings Collection at the Halliday Community Museum & Archives. The archival copies (masters) are saved in TIFF format.

The first file name is:
HCMA_LPC_20100103_00001.tif (25 characters)

The second file name is:
HalCMA_LCC_20100423_00001.tif (25 characters)