

5 Minute Guide ...

Digital images

What is a digital image?

Digitization converts analog media (items like images, text or sound) into an electronic code that can be read by electronic devices. A digital image is a two dimensional image that has been converted for use in digital devices like computers, digital cameras or even cell phones. Digital images can be pictures taken with a digital camera, scanned from a print source, created with special software or downloaded from the internet.

Most digital images are called vector images. This means the image has a maximum number of picture elements or pixels. Each pixel is given a specific value (colour, black, white or shade of grey). Computers turn each value into electronic code (called binary code), which it interprets to display the image.

Who uses digital images?

Everyone! Most images we see these days are digital. Digital images can be embedded on a website or blog, or uploaded to a photo sharing website, such as Flickr®. Of course, you can also have them printed to use in photo albums or scrapbook projects. With few exceptions, most photographs are now taken with digital cameras and many people are even digitizing their old photos and videos.

Do digital images have drawbacks?

Ironically, one of the main drawbacks to digital images is also one of their biggest strengths. Because digital images can be edited so easily, they can be enhanced, or sometimes blatantly changed, to depict content that is not entirely real. We see this most often in print sources that use photo editing techniques, like airbrushing, to modify images. These types of changes are becoming so common that it is hard to be sure if the image we see is the same as the picture that was taken originally.

Why are digital images useful?

To use a cliché - a picture is worth a thousand words. As technology develops, the hardware used to create digital images is capturing details like never before. The amount of detail that is captured depends on the resolution of the device creating the picture. The higher the resolution, the better the image quality will be, this means you can enlarge pictures, or zoom in on a particular part of a picture, and still have the image remain crystal clear.

Digital images are much more versatile than their analog counterparts and can be used in many different ways. The same file can be used on a website, emailed (or photo messaged) to friends and family, or printed to be used in an album or for publication. Digital images are so adaptable - their use is limited only by your imagination!

How can libraries use digital images?

There are many ways that libraries can use digital images. Displaying images of book covers is now a common practice in many library catalogues; it offers another way to assist the patron. They can be used to advertise future events or commemorate past ones. You can even create visual pathfinders for patrons to find their way around library or the library catalogue.



alberta public library
electronic network

did you know?

Video games began
using digital images
in 1967

Digital images

Explore More

Digital images in public libraries

New York Public Library: Digital Gallery
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/index.cfm>

Denver Public Library: Western History and Genealogy
<http://history.denverlibrary.org/images/index.html>

Photo sharing

Common Craft: Online Photo Sharing in Plain English
www.commoncraft.com/photosharing

Do More

Tips for pics

Cornell University Library: Preservation: Digital Imaging Tutorial
www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/tutorial/contents.html

Kodak: Tips & Project Centre
www.kodak.com/eknec/PageQuerier.jhtml?pq-path=317&pq-locale=en_US&_requestid=12670

Basic Digital Photography
www.basic-digital-photography.com/shooting-photos.html

Manipulating digital images

University of California at Irvine: Electronic Educational Environment: Capturing and Manipulating Images for the Web
<https://eee.uci.edu/help/introimages/>

Photo sharing sites

Flickr
www.flickr.com

Photobucket
www.photobucket.com