Do Something with that Box!

Stacy Julian
RT4931

My objective is to **show you how** to make what's inside that box accessible, so that when you want to find something you can and when you have time to take acton, you know what to do.

So much of what we don't do is due to unrealistic expectations.

You will be able to create an incredible resource for family stories and know HOW to use it 📦

Here's what you need:
Box
Trash can
A corner where you can work!
File with hanging folders (4 colors is nice, but not necessary)
Sticky notes with lines
Clips (stainless steel bull-dog and paper clips)
Black pen (archival, fine point)
Camera (mobile device) and/or scanner

This class syllabus
Timeline worksheet

Universal Assumptions & Recommendations

• Boxes generally contain stuff primarily collected by one person.

• Stuff inside may have relevance for a broader group, ie. family, family line, community, time period or topic

• Purpose of the stuff in the box is to help you discover and strengthen connections across a generation of time.

• Some of the stuff in the box will be redundant and/or not useful.

• It's ok (and even necessary) to throw stuff away!

• Remember, you are curating a more inviting and accessible resource!

Step-by-Step Process

1 **SORT everything in one of 5 categories**

    1. Keep together what's already together (paper clip or bull dog clip)
    2. Keep it general (business letters vs. personal letters — just letters)
    3. Don't worry about dates—at this stage dates are not important and will just slow you down!

Picture stuff
loose photos, portraits, photo albums, slides, sketches, etc…

Written stuff
Dairies & Journals, Life sketch, Story, Notebooks, Letters, Post Cards & Correspondence, Telegrams, Personal poetry or composition, Notes, Newspaper clippings, Newsletters, Announcements, Invitations, etc …

Document Stuff
Official documents (military or government), Certificates, Land or Legal Records, Certificates, Achievements, Awards, etc…

Memorabilia Stuff
Greeting cards, postcards (w/o words) brochures, maps, tickets, playbills, programs, Instructions, Manuals, Magazines, Calendars, etc…

Dimensional Stuff
Anything that isn't flat: awards, jewelry, clothing, collections, books, etc…

2 **ASSESS value and usefulness based on 4 attributes (0 to 4)**

Essential (primary or secondary sources here)
Original (one of a kind, handwritten, handmade)
Detailed (contains specific information about a person, place or time)
Cool (has that "Wow!" factor)

4 Keep, Take Action, Archive and Share

3 Keep, Take Action, Archive

2 Take Action, Archive, Keep or Toss

1 Keep or Toss

0 Toss

Note: It is critical to assess the value of each item—however the specifics of this step are for those who have a tendency to believe that everything has value and to KEEP EVERYTHING. You are the curator of this collection. Remember, scarcity creates value—the better you do your job now, the more this family history will be used and enjoyed by the next person or generation!

3   **NOTE Action(s) on Sticky Note**

Write on a sticky note the one-word actions you will take with each item in your box. Doing so will prevent you from having to decide twice. The table below outlines ten actions.

Digitize Photograph or scan	**Transcribe** for legibility	**Mine** search for details	**Investigate** research interview	**Use** frame, story, project
Create add to collection	**Archive** upload & tag	**Share** email, blog, social media	**Keep** in file (folders)	**Toss**

Tips for digitizing: Scan photos at 600dpi and save as .TIIFF for highest quality. If file size is an issue for uploading or email, use .JPEG Documents can be scanned at 300dpi. Using a camera or smart phone to photograph a document or photo in natural light is an easy alternative to scanning!

4   **RECORD dates and abbreviated details on timeline (optional)**

A family generation is generally considered to be about thirty **years**, during which time children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have children of their own. A blank timeline is included with this syllabus. You can use it to map out major events (marriage, locations/moves, births & ages of children) for one generation. This may help you put other information in context.

5 FILE by category

Why categories:
When you want to find something again, I guarantee you WON'T say, "In 1967 …" You may remember the person or family name or place associated with whatever it is you're looking for, but you WILL most likely remember that it's a _____ (letter, photo, document, etc.)

Trust this process. For this initial organizational effort—to make the contents of a box more accessible—general categories work best!

Setting Up Your File Box:

1. Create 4 sections of hanging folders—different colors work well, but are not required—the first folders should be labeled as follow: **Photos, Written Stuff, Documents and Memorabilia**. Place 5 additional hanging folders behind each labeled folder.

2. In the front of your file box, place a hanging folder labeled "ACTION." This is the folder that you will carry back and forth from your file box to your work area where actions take place—computer or other work station. **File really valuable and exciting items in your action folder and when you have collected 10 items, begin immediately to take action.** When action is completed, file or toss items. Begin adding new items to your ACTION folder —this way, the most exciting and important discoveries are being documented/shared while you work your way through that box.

3. As you file items in each section, avoid the urge to do any kind of more advanced ordering—it's not necessary. Trust me and this process! Simply file noted items into hanging folders until each folder is full and then move backwards. **IF you come across something really exciting, place it in your ACTION folder.** When you have 10 items that require action, stop and take action. Work in batches like this until your box is empty!

4. If there's room, larger, dimensional items can be kept in folders at the back of your file box. Items too large for your file box can be stored elsewhere, once you've noted what the item is and where it can be found. For example, I found my Mother's young women bandalero (circa 1950s), so I took a photo, which I filed in the memorabilia section noting that this item is stored in a cedar chest with other family treasures. Be sure to label the actual item with the person's name and as much detailed information as you know!

Go to Work!

I recommend working in 15 to 30 minutes sessions. Start with a chunk of stuff and do an Initial sort into piles and then work with one type of stuff to assess and note actions. File as you go. When you discover something you're excited about, place it in your ACTION folder. When your ACTION folder has 10 items— you know what to do!

Helpful Tips & Ideas

1. Set up 8 cloud-based folders—one for each family name on your 4-generation pedigree—in a cloud-based location, like DropBox or Google Drive and share them with extended family members.

2. Create a FUN Facts document for each person represented in your box. Collect details and experiences as bullet points that can be easily digested and used to tell stories and strengthen family members. Save these documents to the appropriate shared folder.

3. Set up 8 family history binders—one for each family name on your 4 generation pedigree chart—keep these binders accessible in your home and collect particularly interesting details, stories and items discovered in your box. The binders can be a wonderful resource for family home evenings, reunions and other projects.

NOTES:

Connect with me:
stacyjulian.com
stacy@stacyjulian.com
@stacyjulian on Instagram

© stacy julian 2020

Family:

Years/Names							

This timeline shows years down the side and names across the top to help you map out major family events for one generation.