An introduction to scanners

With a scanner you can make copies of photos, paper documents, books, magazines, maps, letters, or even objects with a relatively flat surface like coins, leaves or fabric. The great advantage of using a scanner is the ability to edit the scanned image, attach it to an email, place it on a website, or print copies of it.

Once the scanned image is created and stored on your computer's memory, you can use it in the same way you would use a photo taken with a digital camera.

The scanner uses software called a TWAIN driver which translates the information that comes from it into an image. This allows image programmes to work with any scanner. The scanner is connected to the computer and passes electronic data from the device to the computer to create your image.

Using a scanner

1.   Open the lid of the scanner and place the object on top of the glass facing down
2.   Open your image programme to import an image from the scanner
3.   Use a preview option to view your scanned object
4.   Check that you are using an appropriate resolution setting
5.   Press the 'SCAN' button to continue and the scanner will move slowly over the glass bed to read the image

Just like the photos taken by a digital camera, the image is stored as a data file, so you can alter the image and make any adjustments you want.

Tips

- **Using thumbnails** - to adjust a portion of the image or the document you are producing eg when scanning in an image from a newspaper, you can mark out the area of the image you need rather than scan in the whole sheet.

- **Keep it still -** ensure that the object is kept stable and doesn't move during the scan in order to avoid blurring or broken images.

- **Resolution** - of a scanned image is measured in DPI (dots per inch) which measures how many pixels are used in scanning in one inch of your source

object. The larger the resolution you use, the larger the image will appear, and the larger the image file will be.

- **Screen images** – to display an image on a computer screen only, you don't need to use a high resolution setting -up to 100 DPI should be enough to ensure that the image is faithfully reproduced. Any more than that and your image may appear huge and occupy much more memory than necessary.

- **Image size** - if you are scanning in a very small object and want to enlarge it, use a larger DPI setting to increase the resolution. If you are scanning something you want to appear smaller than life size on the computer screen, reduce the DPI setting.

- **Websites** - when you are uploading images to a website it is best to ensure that your image is not too large so it can be displayed easily on a normal sized computer screen. This will mean using a relatively small image, so a smaller DPI setting would be more appropriate.

- **Printing** - If you want to print the image off, it is a good idea to use a larger DPI resolution setting. To print an image of a photo, it would be best to use a setting of say 300 DPI. This is because the printer is capable of printing much higher resolution than the computer screen is capable of displaying.