

Hands On— Photography



by Sue Sykes

PHOTO STORAGE AND ORGANIZATION: PART I

"Actually, I'm not all that interested in the subject of photography. Once the picture is in the box, I'm not all that interested in what happens next. Hunters, after all, aren't cooks."

~Henri Cartier-Bresson

As both photographers and scrapbookers, our point of view differs from Monsieur Cartier-Bresson. We have a vested interest in preserving these images, not only for our scrapbooks but for future generations.

So you've taken your photos; now what?

In previous issues, we discussed the technical side of your cameras. Now I want to talk about another part of digital photography—photo storage and organization.

Because of the ease of use and economical factor of digital photography (compared to film photography), we are taking more and



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more photos these days. Not only are we using it to preserve our family's memories; we are also photographing our layouts for submissions, our jewelry for insurance purposes, and so on. I will even admit to using my camera phone to send photos to my husband from Home Depot to confirm before making a purchase!

So what do we do with these photos? The first thing we have to discuss is storage for these precious memories, after you have uploaded them to your computer. Proper storage can ensure that these photos will endure for generations. There are various ways to store your digital files. Your choice depends largely on how you will need to access these files.

Internal hard drives

The advantage to storing your photos onto your computer's internal hard drive is that the photos will be readily accessible—just a mouse click away! How easy it will be to find a specific photo will depend on the software you are using to upload and organize your photos. We will discuss photo organization tips in our next issue.

The disadvantages of storing your photos on your computer far outweigh the benefits. Not only will your photos

accumulate and begin to take up a lot of your hard drive space, but they will also bog down your computer when trying to access a photo, as it tries to load all of the images for browsing. Add to this the horrific tales of people who have lost all of their photos due to viruses or failed hard drives.

If you like to keep your photos accessible on your hard drive for easy printing, by all means, do so! Just be sure to regularly back up your photos via one of the alternate methods that we will discuss now. Once they are safely stored elsewhere, you can periodically delete the photos from your hard drive when they are no longer needed.

External hard drives

While computer hard drives generally last for several years or more, they do not have an unlimited lifespan. They have been known to fail without





warning, leaving you with a sick feeling in your stomach when you realize that all of your computer files may not be recoverable. A good precaution is to back up your files (photos, as well as other important files) on an external hard drive. Thanks to the beauty of ever-changing technology, they are fairly inexpensive, but worth their weight in gold. At the time of printing, a 2TB external hard drive could be found for under \$100. Check out Best Buy or your local computer store, or an online retail giant like www.tiger.ca for the best deals.

Because these hard drives are not accessed daily by your computer, they tend to have a longer lifespan, however, they are not without fault. Treat them carefully, as they are susceptible to shock. If you change computers, remember to try to access the external hard drive to make sure that it can be read, before you remove your old computer! As a precaution, it is also a good idea to make a back up of your photos onto some sort of digital media.

Digital Media

Digital media has changed so quickly throughout the years. At the risk of dating myself, I can remember when 5 ¼" floppy disks were the only storage media available! Since then, we have seen the arrival (and sometimes, departure) of 3 ½" disks, Zip drives,

CDs and DVDs, along with the more current USB flash drives.

It is always a good idea to make a copy of your photos onto a CD or DVD for safekeeping, but it should not be your only back up. Due to their relative fragility, CDs/DVDs are susceptible to scratches and other damage. Also, digital media is always changing, so you want to make sure that the images will still be accessible in a few years. Another tip is to avoid using re-writable CDs and DVDs, which tend to be less reliable when re-accessing the information from different computers.

A new product on the market is PictureKeeper (www.picturekeeper.com). It looks deceptively like a simple USB flash drive, but it has built-in software that automatically searches for all .jpgs on your computer and copies them onto the drive! It comes in four different capacities and makes backing up your images easy!

Store your backup disks or drives at an off-site location. You can swap them with your siblings, store them in your parents' home, or keep them in a safety deposit box. Both locations are unlikely to suffer some sort of unfortunate accident at the same time, so you will be able to make backups from the remaining files.

Online back-up services

A more modern-day solution utilizes the latest "cloud" computing. One of

the best examples of cloud computing is an online remote backup service (RBS). Most online backup systems use a software program that automatically accesses specified files, downloads any new ones, and stores them on their server. SOS Online Backup (www.sosonlinebackup.com) and CrashPlan (www.crashplan.com) are two examples of online or remote backup service. For as little as \$3 per month, you can back up your files with unlimited online storage. As an added bonus, most online backup services allow you to access your files from any computer, so your photos are always accessible.

Because an online remote backup service is automated, it eliminates the need to remember to back up your files. If you are using one of the other methods, you should schedule regular backups in your planner, to ensure that it becomes habitual. The frequency will depend on the amount of photos that you take, and their importance to you. Some people may choose to backup their files each time they upload; others schedule a monthly backup plan. The important thing to remember is that your backup system is only as effective as your commitment to do it on a regular basis.

So, review your photo storage options and decide which system will work best for you. In our next issue, we'll discuss various options for organizing the thousands of photos that we take each year. 🍪

