

Beginners' Guide to

digital photography



Part 13: Keep Your Images Organised and Safe

Storing Files Online

The advantages and the dangers

Finding the Right Workflow

Making the archive process easier to manage.

part thirteen



Part 13: Keep Your Images Organised and Safe

Keeping Your Images Organised and Safe

If you're anything like I used to be, your photos are stored on a combination of different media and slipped into draws all over the house.

For years I had images stored haphazardly on my computer, on disks and even a few

on memory cards. Very few of the images were labelled – which made finding a particular image extremely frustrating, and none were backed up, so had a disk become corrupt or the computer crashed, I'd have lost everything.

Even though I was aware of all this at the time, the tedious work flow process that I'd created for myself was time-consuming and laborious, and it got to the stage where I couldn't be bothered with it.



Decide on a Work Flow

A 'work flow' is a process that you adopt to ensure a quick and no fuss approach to your image storing, filing and archiving. The trouble with technology is that whatever process you adopt today will likely have to be altered or updated in the future in order to keep up with new technology.

One of the most sensible work flow processes was developed by a man named Peter Krough. He named it the bucket system, and it works along the following lines:

1) Import:

Set your import program to transfer images from the camera or memory card, directly into a default folder on your computer. This folder is used to temporarily store your images for filing. You can call this folder anything you like but for the sake of this exercise we'll call it the 'To File' folder.

2) Storing:

Once your images are imported into this folder you can create a second folder. Take care when considering the name for this folder as there will eventually be subsequent folders, each sequenced numerically. Keep it simple and label it something like 'Disc001'. Subsequent

folders will be entitled 'Disc002', 'Disc003' and so on.

These folders will be stored on a series of discs, each with a maximum storage capacity. You now take images from the 'To File' folder and place them into 'Disc001' until the total size of this folder content matches (but does not exceed) the size of the discs you are using.

Once your folder has reached that capacity (as you would a bucket), you commence filling a new one ('Disc002'). Continue filling folders until all your images are out of the 'To File' folder.

3) Archive:

Burn each of your folders to disc and immediately label each with the same corresponding name. Both the folder stored on the computer and the disc should have identical labels so that if an image becomes corrupt on your computer you can quickly locate and replace it with the original on the archived discs, and should anything happen to the disc, you can quickly burn a new disc for archiving.

4) Organising:

Now that your original images are stored and safe you can start organising them into various categories using photo organising software... more on this later.





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Side Bar: Bucketeer

Anyone who has tried filling folders to an exact size for burning knows that it's a frustrating process. It's a process that Nick Rains also found frustrating, and thankfully he had the skills to develop a solution. He created a program called the 'Bucketeer 1.0' for PC. It works by taking files from a nominated folder – in this case the 'To File' folder – and fills a new folder using a nominated naming sequence until that folder is full to the capacity of your disc. Once a folder is full it automatically fills another folder, and another until all images in the 'To File' folder are copied into folders. The images in your "To file" folder can then be deleted as all your images are safely stored in new folders.

There is usually a half full folder at the end of the process. Rather than waste half a disc, I cut and paste these images back into the "to file" folder to be processed again once I have more images to process. This can be a dangerous exercise though as you don't have a back up copy, and if anything happens to your computer in the meantime you stand to lose them all together.

The Bucketeer program costs \$8.95 and is available from www.nickrains.com. There is also a trial version if you want to try it out first.



Image organising software

When I started looking around for a program that suited my needs I headed directly to the internet and discovered a number of wonderful, easy to use programs available at very little cost. I also became a bit wary of others. A couple of the free web-based programs on offer set alarm bells sounding.

Although some argue they are completely safe and private, web forums on the subject are full of others who have had the opposite experience. There are security settings and various programs that can be put in place to help you protect your privacy, however with a limited knowledge and capacity to keep up with ever-changing web technology I'd find it hard to feel at ease with these systems.

There is a lot going on quietly behind the scenes that I'd never thought much about before now that the average web user is probably not entirely aware of. One such example comes from trusted search engines such as Google, who continually

traverse the web using software programs called crawlers or 'Google bots'. These bots visit web pages, copying their content and linking to images via its image search engine. For anyone with a website, this is obviously beneficial, as it drives more traffic to their site. However, I did come across a number of concerned users who were complaining that photographs from their so-called 'private' folders had found their way into Google images, available for use by anyone and virtually impossible to track any misuse or breaches of copyright.

This doesn't occur in all cases, and as I've mentioned, I've certainly read a lot of arguments in defence of Web-based programs. However, I suggest if you're interested in using one of these that you look into it thoroughly for yourself and gain a detailed understanding before rushing into anything. You should also consider adding watermarks to your images to further protect yourself from copyright breaches.





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Adobe

Adobe, which provides many popular solutions for photography enthusiasts, offers a free program called 'Adobe Photoshop Album Starter Version 3.2', which serves as a filing system for image collections. Adobe no longer offers technical support for this product however, it is easy to use and comes with a 'Read Me' text file explaining the various functions. Once the system is downloaded you can create 'tags' which are keywords or 'categories' used to help you sort and locate images quickly. You

can add captions and do some very basic editing as well.

A more comprehensive version of this program is also available as part of Photoshop Elements 7 which is primarily used for editing. Your images are not actually stored within the Adobe system so if you move or delete an image from its original folder, Adobe will no longer have a link to its location.



Editing

For me, editing is the last step in the workflow process. Many will argue that editing should be done before archiving; however there are so many complex editing options available, and probably more still to come, that one day you may feel like starting from scratch and trying a different approach.

Start by making a copy of the original image and pasting it in a new folder so you can edit it rather than the original. You can

follow the workflow process again once you have a few edited images in your folders. You may like to label these folders and discs 'Edited001' and so on if it helps to keep them separated.

You can chop and change the work flow process to suit your individual needs. Initially, it may take a bit of time to organise your collection but after a while you'll find the process easy to maintain – and will only get easier each time.

