

## PHOTO STORAGE AND RECORD-KEEPING

### INTRODUCTION

There are two main problems to consider when designing a system to store photos; how to physically store them, and how to find them after they are stored. These problems have other considerations such as cost, storage space required, and the effort needed to create and maintain a system. It is important that the storage system be cross-referenced to the photo record system so that a desired photo can be located quickly, and no matter what system you use, this is a lot of work. Also, prints should be cross-referenced to the original negative or slide so reprints can be made. This becomes more complicated when some photos are removed from the basic filing system for use elsewhere, such as in family albums or slide shows.

### PRINT STORAGE

SYSTEM	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Albums with photo corners or plastic "magnetic" pages	Easy to view.	Some cost. Not all are archival. Fairly bulky.
Plastic photo pages and binders	Archival. Easy to view.	Some cost. Fairly bulky.
Shoebox	Most compact. No cost.	Messy, hard to locate.

### NEGATIVE STORAGE

SYSTEM	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Glassine envelopes and boxes	Inexpensive, compact	Translucent. Not archival.
Plastic negative pages and binders	Archival. Can view up to 42 at a time depending on type of page. Can be stored with index sheets or contact sheets.	Some cost. Fairly bulky.
Shoebox	Can be stored with prints in the same box.	Messy, hard to locate.

### SLIDE STORAGE

SYSTEM	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Trays	Slide shows can be stored intact.	Very bulky and expensive. Need to remove slides to view them.
Plastic pages & albums or special drawers	Can view slides 20 at a time. Archival.	Some cost. Fairly bulky.
Original slide boxes	Most compact. No cost.	Need to remove slides to view them.

We should point out that no photograph will last forever and that storing photos in sunlight or fluorescent light, such as by hanging them on the wall, will make them fade much faster. Even filed in dark storage in the proper containers, most color photos will only last a generation or two. So, if you want to preserve your family history, take some black and white photos. Unfortunately, some of the new black and white films are nothing more than color film with the color removed, and they will fade as fast as color film. Therefore, avoid black and white film that requires C-41 processing (color chemicals). Also, note that digital data and prints also have a limited life.

## REFERENCE NUMBERS

Try to design a reference number that can be used for every part of your system. For example, if you shoot prints and plan to store both prints and negatives in plastic pages and binders as shown below, your number could be based on the single page where the negatives are stored, then cross-referenced to the multiple pages where the prints are stored. For example, in a roll of 24 photos the numbers for the first roll in your system could be AAA01 through AAA24, and if your second roll has 36 photos it would be numbered AAB01 through AAB36.

Negatives AAA01 through AAA24						Prints AAA01 through AAA04		Prints AAA05 through AAA08	
01	02	03	04	05	06	01	02	05	06
07	08	09	10	11	12				
13	14		16	17	18	03	04	07	08
19	20	21	22	23	24				

  

Prints AAA		Prints AAA		Prints AAA		Prints AAA	
09	10	13	14	17	18	21	22
11	12		16	19	20	23	24

Alternatively, your reference number could incorporate whatever information you feel is important, such as year. For example, the photos in your first roll in 2002 could be 0200101 through 0200124 (year, roll number, negative number).

Negatives and prints should be kept in separate binders or albums so negatives are not handled and damaged when looking through the print pages. Index sheets or contact sheets can be stored with the negatives or in a separate binder and numbered the same way.

With this system, let's say you look at print number AAA15 and want to find the negative. All you need to do is go to negative page number AAA and pull out the strip that has number 15 on it. It also helps if the reference number is written on the back of each print.

The “shoebox” system works the same way. For example, for slides stored in their original boxes you can label the first box AAA, the second AAB, etc. then keep the slide boxes in a larger container. If this “shoebox” holds 36 slide boxes, then the label on the big box would show that it contains slide boxes AAA through ABJ.

You can fit up to 40 slides in a box, so they could be numbered 01 through 40. For example, the slides in box number 36 could be numbered ABJ01 through ABJ40. This reference number should be written on every slide and the matching number used in your slide list.

<p>ABJ01</p>  <p><i>Lily Pads</i></p>	<p>ABJ02</p>  <p><i>Tractor</i></p>	<p>ABJ03</p>  <p><i>Victorian Building</i></p>	<p>ABJ04</p>  <p><i>Bison</i></p>
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BOX # ABJ stores 40 slides

<p>ABJ20</p>  <p><i>Horses &amp; Storm Clouds</i></p>	<p>ABJ40</p>  <p><i>Steam Engine "Jupiter"</i></p>
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“SHOEBOX” SLIDE STORAGE

AAA	AAB	AAC	AAD	AAE	AAF	AAG	AAH	AAI	AAJ	AAK	AAL
AAM	AAN	AAO	AAP	AAQ	AAR	AAS	AAT	AAU	AAV	AAW	AAX
AAZ	ABA	ABB	ABC	ABD	ABE	ABF	ABG	ABH	ABI	ABJ	

## MAINTAINING A PHOTO LIST

If you set up a written or computerized photo list, use the same reference numbers you used for labeling photos, negatives, or slides. There are at least three options for a photo list; handwritten, specialized computer photo software, or a computer database.

### HANDWRITTEN OR TYPED LOG

A handwritten log can be as simple as the box or binder where each roll of film is filed, the reference (roll) number and key words to identify the contents of each roll. Don't try to list every photo in a handwritten list, or it would be too big to search through manually. The reference number would not include the photo number (last two digits) since individual photos are not listed. For example, if your reference number includes the year:

BOX	ROLL	CONTENTS
01	01001	Bear Lake, horses, family reunion
01	01002	Salt Lake City, mailboxes, ghost towns
02	01003	Snow, China
02	02001	China, flowers, fisherman

To find a photo of a ghost town you would go to shoebox # 01 and locate roll # 01002. Let's say the photo you want is # 0100214. When you are through with it you could go to the same box and you would know it should be filed between 0100213 and 0100215.

### SPECIALIZED COMPUTER PHOTO SOFTWARE

I have no experience with any of these specialized programs, but here are two that I found advertised in Outdoor Photographer magazine.

NSCS Pro2 – \$189.00 [www.nscspro.com](http://www.nscspro.com) or call 303 674 3009

Features include slide captioning and labeling, picture cataloging and filing, thumbnail imaging, and search features.

PROSLIDE II - \$139.00 [www.proslide.net](http://www.proslide.net) or call 505 281 8605

Features include fully customizable databases, slide labeling (for laser printer), sort and search, image viewing. Has an Image Workshop add-on for \$69.00 to add images to a database, read photo CD's, etc.

## DATABASE LOG

Any home database software should work. Ross' experience is with PC File (which is no longer made) and Microsoft Works. Others include Microsoft Access and Filemaker. The advantages of using this type of software include the flexibility to customize it for your own needs and the ability to search for specific photos. A computer database can be as simple as the handwritten log described above or can have many other fields. Here are two examples with actual data:

### ROSS' BLACK AND WHITE NEGATIVE DATABASE – 6 FIELDS

NEG	NMBRS	ST	RGN	PLACE	COMMENTS
252	01-10	CA	NMD	DEATH	Playa, dunes, Leadfield, old car, Racetrack, moving rocks
252	11-22	WY		PIEDM	Charcoal kilns, ghost town, cabins, fence
252	23-37	UT		GOLDN	Steam engines, train, wheels, handcart
253	01-09	ID	BLV	MONTP	Copies of Stephens family photos
253	10-29	ID	BLV	MONTP	Copies of Walker family photos
253	30-33	CA	EBA	ALAME	Ships, aircraft carried Hornet
253	34-36	CA	NCC	BRAGG	Harbor, boats, pampas grass

\* A separate database keeps track of the abbreviations for RGN and PLACE.

This uses a similar principle to the handwritten database, with location fields added. The reference number has been split into two parts, Negative (roll) and Numbers (frames on the negative). The computer can be used to search for keywords, or locations, or combinations of both. For example, let's say you want to locate all ships in the East Bay of California. The computer search would be State = CA, Region = EBA, and Comments include the word "ship". The result would be a list of all the matching negatives.

### ROSS' SLIDE DATABASE – 19 FIELDS (9 shown in this example)

SLIDE	ST	RGN	PLACE	DESCRIPTION	E	A	P	T
BHN29	WY		GRTNP	Grand Tetons and String Lake bottom	T	G		
BHP03	WY		GRTNP	Tetons and fall color, Gros Ventre area				
BHP28	UT	BLV	GARDC	Fall color on road to Logan Canyon		G	01	23
BHQ22	ID	BLV	STCHA	Hillside in canyon covered with fall color				
BHR21	ID	BLV	MONTP	Dirt road and cows near the reservoir			18	39
BHS24	ID	BLV	BENNG	Wide angle of aspens with fall color	N			
BHU28	UT	BLV	LAKET	Cowboys ear tagging a calf		J		

This uses a different principle. The database keeps track of every slide individually, although only the slides that are most likely to be used are included. Even so, there are 15,390 slides in the database. Obviously, it is a tremendous amount of work to keep this file updated. The reference number system is identical to the one described in the "shoebox" example above. The fields include slide number (reference), special merit indicator, state, region, place, description, two contest entry fields, two contest category fields, and nine fields to keep track of slides that have been filed somewhere else.

A database search can find all slides in Grand Teton National Park (BHN29 and BHP03)

All slides in Bear Lake Valley (BHP28, BHQ22, BHR21, BHS24, and BHU28).

All slides with "fall color" in Idaho (BHQ22, and BHS24).

All slides that have been entered in a Nature competition (BHS24).

All slides good enough for a Journalism competition (BHU28).

If slide BHR21 is missing from its box, the database tells me it is in slide tray 18, slot 39.