

Digital Storage and Preservation

Storage Devices

Multiple back ups of your digital materials is an easy and important preservation strategy that you can implement in your studio. Back up your materials three times in different storage locations.

EXTERNAL HARD DRIVES

External hard drives are relatively inexpensive (around \$100 for a good device with sufficient space), easy to use and interface with your computer, and fairly stable. Seagate and Western Digital are two trustworthy brands for external hard drives, but be sure to shop around and do some research to make sure that the product will work with your computer and operating system.

CLOUD STORAGE

Cloud storage is becoming an increasingly popular digital storage option. The biggest advantage for cloud storage is convenience: you can upload files at any time, access materials from most any device connected to the net, and easily share and send files to other people. Also, many cloud storage options are relatively inexpensive. There are tons of cloud storage providers out there, with varying price points and services offered. Do some research to see what will be the best for you, especially depending on how much space you need and what kind of security and sharing options you want. Google Drive, iDrive, CertainSafe, and Microsoft Onedrive are all good options.

REFRESH your storage media every year or so. All hard drives will eventually fail, so get ahead of the curve by replacing old external hard drives. You can also mitigate this risk by keeping multiple external hard drives.

CDs, DVDs, USB drives, SD cards, and other digital storage media are **NOT** stable options. Discs deteriorate quickly and small drives are easy to misplace. Extract files off of these media and move them onto your external hard drive and cloud storage.

Preserving Your Files

Digital preservation is an ongoing activity, encompassing many different activities. These are a few basics that will provide the foundation for the long term safety of your valuable digital materials.

ORGANIZATION AND NAMING

If your computer is totally disorganized, and you cannot find your files, your digital materials are seriously threatened. Preservation begins with implementing and maintaining a consistent, easy to understand, and relatively simple file naming and organization scheme. Come up with a structure that makes sense for you and stick with it! A good test for this scheme: someone with limited knowledge of you and your work should be able to readily navigate through your files. Maintain this structure across your external hard drives and cloud storage.

APPRAISAL

Not all digital files need to be kept for long term preservation in your digital archive. Many digital files are used for a brief time, and then have little or no value later on. Routinely clean up your computer and delete files that do not have long term value. Of course, you do not want to delete your files haphazardly—only delete files that you are sure do not have archival value.

INTEGRATE

It is much easier to sustain and manage your personal digital archive if these activities form a core part of your regular workflow. It is difficult to organize, name, and appraise your files en masse. Instead, make managing your digital materials a habit. Make a schedule of data management activities that you do daily, monthly, and yearly.

When possible, try to save your materials in open file formats. Files that depend on proprietary software to work can be difficult to preserve over time. Companies can quickly change this software or go out of business, leaving these file types unsupported.

MIGRATION is one preservation strategy you can apply when file formats become obsolete or unsupported. This involves moving the old files to the newest file type. Contact an archivist for help migrating your files.

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