

FIRST CLASS PHOTOGRAPHY: LESSON 24

Photography's Space Problem

by Willis T. Bird

In a galaxy
far, far, away there once was a Jedi
Photographer who didn't know what to do with all his photographs...



Photo albums are still a good way to show photos to one person at a time.

negatives. You could frame them, but soon your house would be plastered with photos. Photo albums presented a partial solution, plus they were and still are handy when you want to pass your work around for everyone to see. But, albums can also take up a lot of space. Besides, remembering which pictures are in what album is a challenge unless you thought to label the outside of each album when you filled it.

When color slides were introduced, they made image storage easier. More photos could be kept in smaller and smaller places. Boxes were and are made to hold slides. But, again, being able to tell what slide is where can still be a problem. I bought several slide carousels and sorted "Birds" into one, "Places" into another, "People" into a third, and so on. But the carousel boxes began piling up, and the number of slides I wanted to store exceeded my ability to pay for more carousels. I went searching for an answer to my problem in the hardware section of one of the large discount chain stores. I found some nice, clear-plastic, segmented boxes that would hold a large number of 35mm slides in a small space. These boxes are divided into fifteen little 2"X 2" cubes. Since you can see through them, you can place stickers on top of the cubes to indicate the subject matter within. Plastic boxes make excellent slide storage units as long as you keep them away from moisture and heat. Fungus can attack slides, especially in the humid South. It may be a good idea to buy some anti-moisture gel packs to place around the area where you're keeping your slides.

Oops, wrong *space* story. Ours is a story about the space photographers need in order to store the photographs they've taken. All photographers eventually run into this dilemma, so you might want to begin thinking about a solution now.

Back when photography was in its infancy, photo negatives were often in glass plates. Storage was a real hassle in those days. Contamination and breakage always posed threats to the images. Later, negative films were invented, and photographers had to worry about fading, fungus, fingerprints, and scratches. Finally, someone devised a paper negative sleeve that helped greatly. You can mark on these sleeves and then file them in some sort of order. There are boxes you can use to store both black-and-white and color negatives of all sizes.

However, the sleeves didn't help with the problem of the photographs created from the

If you're dealing with negatives or slides, be sure to keep them as safe as possible. Prevent people from touching them with their fingers, as the acid in human skin will ruin them. Also, keep them safe from humidity and heat. Place them in a dust-free environment and use cotton gloves to handle them. As with prints, keep them away from direct sunlight as much as possible.

Currently, I'm using digital cameras. I scan many of my slides and negatives to make digital images of them. This process requires storage just like the other forms of photography, but it's possible to keep more images in a smaller place.

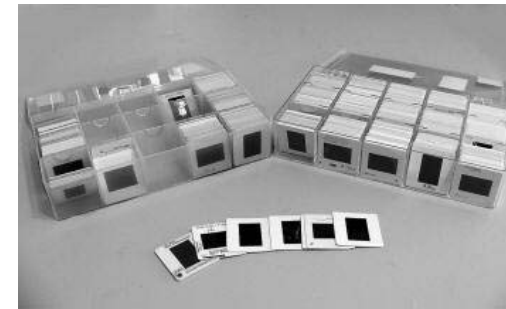
You can store some on your hard drive, if you have one large enough. However, there's always the possibility that you'll experience a computer crash and lose all your wonderful shots. Right now, I'm placing mine on a CD for safekeeping. I've heard questions about the length of time a CD will keep a shot without deterioration, but I don't know the answer. I'm not sure anyone does at this point. So, if your stored images are copies of slides you're keeping, you're okay. You can create a new CD later on, if need be. But if you're shooting digital images, then your CD is your only copy. My suggestion is to make more than one copy to be as safe as you can be. It is possible that a copy on a DVD would be more permanent, but again, I have not yet read any solid research to prove that's true.



CDs are a good choice for storing digital images, but make more than one copy to be safe.

television set using a DVD player, lending big screen status to your photos. With more sophisticated software, you can even add music to your production. You can also purchase digital projectors that work with laptop computers, but these are quite expensive. Eventually, the prices will come down to make this method more accessible to more people, but right now digital projectors are the high-end of show-and-tell.

So, you won't need the help of NASA to solve your photo *space problem*, but the answer may require thought and planning. If you get the jump on the problem early and decide the way you want to go as soon as possible, you'll be way ahead of the game. You'll either control the problem, or it will control you.



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Showing your pictures can take many forms. Slides may be projected on a screen, but you'll need a projector and screen as well as slide trays. (Up to 140 slides can be kept in trays, but 80 is the capacity of the smaller trays.) Photo albums are still a good way to show photos to one person at a time. However, lugging albums around becomes cumbersome, and they take up a lot of room. With the use of a computer, you can make slide shows that project the photos (either digital images or prints and slides that have been transferred to digital format) onto your monitor. You can even e-mail your creations to friends, so that they can just click on them and sit back to watch. You can also create a slide show on a CD that can be played on your