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Artists' Studio Archives Managing Your Studio Practice & Building a Creative Legacy Revised Edition (2022): A Comprehensive Guide for Artists & Their Assistants

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Preface

Dear Artists,

Speaking for the curator, who will invite you to participate in an exhibition, introduce you to the art world, make your reputation, or honor you with a retrospective, I implore you to read the Artists' Studio Archives workbook and begin preserving your archive today. I can assure you that the instructions are vitally important to you and a curator who wants to find your work for that future exhibition.

The instructions promise to help you manage your personal collections and creative legacies, which may seem obscure and less important (certainly less fun) than making art. The good news is that this workbook guides you through collecting and recording in a step-by-step process, no matter where you are in your career or archive development. Of course, the easiest way to make a complete archive is to start recording the object's history as you produce it, at mid-career you may think that organizing your records is a distraction from your creative practice, and by the time you have worked for decades it may seem like an overwhelming task beyond your capability. Let me explain why your future curator wants your most complete archive at every stage in your career.

Artists often tell me that their work "speaks for itself," but trust me, curators, conservators, and researchers always want more information. Your photographs, records, and recollections are significant to understanding a work of art, its place in history, a movement, and even within your own body of work. The year a work is completed is great information, but what came before or right after are also important to a retrospective, catalogue raisonné, or biographer. I shudder when I hear "I can't remember," whether it is how the work was fabricated, who bought it, or where it is now. In each situation, a record organized within a database that is updated on a regular basis with information from you, your dealer, or collector may be the key to a researcher or curator's question. As I read the workbook, many lost opportunities came to mind as I considered the exhibitions I have organized without a key work of art. Good photography of your art is important for your archive and publications, but it is not a satisfying substitute for a work that cannot be located at the time of an exhibition. Consider your future curators; help us create the most complete exhibition and catalogue for your legacy.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Kastner, Curator Emerita, Georgia O'Keeffe Museum (Santa Fe, New Mexico)

Introduction

Welcome to the revised edition of Artists' Studio Archives: Managing Personal Collections & Creative Legacies, a guide for artists, their assistants, and others attempting to manage and preserve an artist's personal studio archives. This guide is based on real-life scenarios and best practices in archiving and preservation. It will aid artists in every career stage, from emerging artists to late-career artists; the yet-to- be-discovered and the well-established. With this edition, we have aimed to further simplify instructions, while still being comprehensive.

Artists' Studio Archives will be practical and realistic for most situations, but it will be up to you how much of your time and resources you will devote to documenting and archiving your artistic practice. Generally speaking, the "costs" of documentation and archiving mostly stem from time investment. However, the return on this investment is high, considering how much more productive you will be in your studio. Being more productive in your studio can help you better prepare to sell your work and secure grant funding, as well as manage better the legal aspects of your artistic practice.

Many of the exercises included in Artists' Studio Archives will take just a few minutes and the "Move Forward!" sections are designed to jumpstart your documentation and archiving process, through goal setting and establishing realistic timetables. All projects included here are intended to get you started on a regular practice that is within your means and works best with your schedule. Quotes and case studies from artists and their assistants, archivists, and researchers offer glimpses into "real life" scenarios managing and using artists' archives.

We, the authors of Artists' Studio Archives, are passionate about helping artists succeed. We hope that you find the process of archiving your artistic practice as rewarding as the researching and writing of this book was for us.

Let's get started!

Chapter 1
Reasons to Organize and Preserve Your Studio Archives

INTRODUCTION

This chapter defines what we mean by the phrase studio archives, what types of things comprise studio archives, and why it is important to think about keeping studio archives. We discuss reasons why organizing and preserving your studio archives will be of direct benefit to you as an artist. To help you successfully begin your archiving, we also provide goal setting activities that will help you begin to articulate your personal archiving goals.

GETTING STARTED

What is a studio archive and what does it include? Think about the materials that you have, in your studio or elsewhere, that document your work as an artist. Have you kept old sketchbooks or journals? Have you taken photographs or made videos of your work? Have you kept e-mail or other correspondence with gallery owners, museum staff, granting agencies, or collectors? What about financial records that document sales of your work? These are just some of the materials that make up parts of an artist's studio archives. By studio we mean both the physical and virtual spaces in which you create and document new works. Your studio archives are not limited to items in your workspace—they may be dispersed across several locations, including your home. Your studio archives comprise the work you create, the work you have sold, the documentation of your work, and, ultimately, the creation of your legacy.

> I use that word archive [for William Wegman's archive] . . . I consider it an "archive" because . . . Bill's career is so long and so prolific, dealing with work that he made in the '60s or '70s, and we treat it like it's an "archive." . . . I also use the word archive because if you don't think about the way you're storing the work, both physical work and digital, as "an archive," then you're not thinking about the lifespan of the work.
>
> -Jason Burch, William Wegman Studio Manager

Why Artists Organize Their Studio Archives Our interviews with artists and artists' assistants revealed that many have in place some kind of system for managing their studio archives, from quite rudimentary and low-tech solutions with no staff support, to studios with technical infrastructure and staffing, to staff hired specifically to document the artist's practice. What you will need to do is find a system that works for you at this point in your career, but with some fundamental best practices firmly in place. The time that you invest up-front in establishing a sustainable system of archiving will help you advance your career as an artist.

1. Make Your Work Accessible to Others and Increase Your Visibility as an Artist

For your work to sell or to be exhibited, you and people other than yourself or your assistant(s) may have reasons to use your archives. Your archives could be used to prepare an exhibition, create an exhibition catalogue or a catalogue raisonné, research your work for an article in a local arts newspaper, or determine a price for a particular work. In addition to the artwork, museum or gallery staff may request access to parts of your archives: your artwork inventory, early exhibition announcements and reviews, and/or other related documentation. Artists who work in ephemeral modes (e.g., performance art, digital media, and installation) know that documentation is critical to communicate about the work clearly and effectively. In these instances, good documentation can stand in place of the original ephemeral event, giving collectors related work that they can purchase (e.g., event posters, storyboards, related prints or drawings). When it comes time to meet with a potential collector, curator, or gallery owner, a well-organized archive makes it easier to find and present documentation.

> I only work on living artists, and I never work on them without looking at their archives.
>
> -Kristine Stiles, art historian

2. Provide Scholarly and Critical Access to Your Work

As you archive your documentation and your work, you are taking steps to ensure that your legacy may continue and that you are taking an active role in shaping the story of your career as an artist. It is not uncommon for artists to partner with curators and art historians to explore the artist's work and life, and to decide how to best communicate this story to the public and potential collectors. Curators and art historians who work with living artists face specific challenges. They will need to have access to your artwork inventory to better understand the evolution of your artistic practice. Researchers also benefit from something as simple as a website that makes key works publicly available, instead of having to provide access to your entire archive.

3.   Increase Your Productivity in the Studio

If you can more quickly access your artwork and documentation, you will spend less time sorting through piles in closets or remote storage facilities, and instead will be able to use that time to make new works, meet with a collector, spend time with friends and family, and do other things that are essential to leading an enriching life and a successful and, hopefully, profitable career. In the act of archiving, you may be able to decrease the amount of digital and/or physical storage you need for your archive. You can then use your newly available storage for additional workspace or to store other works or file your most important correspondence and financial records.

Artist/author Heather Gendron in her home studio

4.   Your Rights Are Retained

Managing your legal files is essential to maintaining legal control over your work, such as intellectual property rights associated with your work, image-reproduction rights, and contracts involving the sale, loan, and exhibition of your works. It is not enough to have maintained the rights to the images and other visual documentation of your work if you are unable to keep track of your legal documentation.

5.   Studio Archives Support and Inspire New Works

If you keep good documentation about how you create works, that information might be helpful in creating new works or to recreate a work (e.g., a performance or installation piece, a special printmaking process). The process of inventorying and reflecting on past works can also inspire ideas for new works.

6.   Shape Your Legacy

You know best the details of your career, and having an archive is a way to take an active part in shaping the way that your artwork and your legacy as an artist are perceived.

Move Forward! Top 3 Reasons for Organizing Your Studio Archive

Goal: Identify three reasons why you want to organize your archive. What benefits do you hope to achieve from this process?

What you need: You can refer to the list under "Why Artists Organize Their Studio Archives".

Time needed: 5 minutes

	Top 3 Reasons for Organizing Your Studio
	Increase available studio time
	Increase efficiency in the studio
	Save space – physical spaces and digital
	Easier access to older work so I can sell it, make it more visible and available to researchers
	Have the documentation I need at the ready to protect my legal rights
	Easier access older work, to inspire the creation of new work
	Take control of my image and legacy as an artist
	Other:

Start S.M.A.R.T. Each artist will find methods that are most suitable to that person's situation or personality. We have included a range of options for dealing with studio archives, knowing that not everyone's situations or preferences will be the same. For instance, if you are an early-career artist, you may be more transient and find it less practical to keep everything with you on the road that you have created. If you are a mid- to late-career artist, you may have accumulated a vast archive and knowing where to start organizing it could be challenging. Long-term archiving goals need to be set that also allow you to meet your short-term and immediate needs.

Our advice is to start by establishing goals for your studio archives that are SMART: Specific, Manageable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-based. For example, photographing and packing work for an exhibit can be a SMART studio archives goal. If you have planned well, you will not only have the artwork ready to ship and exhibit, it will also be documented for

insurance and archiving purposes. Tracking and documenting your sales records is another SMART goal. However, organizing and documenting everything in your studio all at once, from the beginning of your career to now, is not a SMART goal.

Plan an archiving project as you would a mural. When you paint a mural, you create a grid and work on one box at a time. Each box of the grid is related to other boxes, just as photographing and packing for an exhibit relates to creating an inventory of each work that will leave the studio. Approaching your studio one SMART goal at a time will help you more easily reach your goals.

Chapter 2 discusses working with an assistant. If you have someone to help you, be sure to include that person in your goals. Your assistant will learn a lot about your process, your priorities, and how best to work with you in your space.

Move Forward! Set Three S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Goal: Use this template to draft three S.M.A.R.T. studio archiving goals for yourself.

What you need: Your top three reasons for getting organized and a calendar.

Time needed: 20 minutes

S.M.A.R.T. Goal (briefly stated):

Specific = A clearly defined goal.

Measurable = How will I know that I've attained this goal?

Attainable = How will I fit this goal into my schedule? What resources will I need? Is there anything I will need to learn? Who else might need to be involved?

Relevant = Refer to the three reasons you previously identified for getting organized. Is your goal relevant to your reasons for getting organized?

Time-based = When will I start? When would I like it completed? Do I need to break this into short-, medium-, and long-term goals?

Chapter 2
Getting Assistance

INTRODUCTION

If you can't afford to pay an archive assistant, don't despair! In this chapter, we discuss alternatives to hiring paid assistants. No matter the situation, there are certain skills, knowledge, and previous experience that you will want to look for in candidates. Ideally, the assistant will have had previous experience related to archives work, but in reality, most of the assistant's archival skills will be acquired on the job. A person prepared to help you with the overall organization of your archive will be someone who has an interest in and a commitment to developing, over time, an intimate knowledge of your history and working practices. Since every artist operates their studio differently, any assistant, regardless of present skills or previous experience, will need to learn your working practices—and you will need to be comfortable working with this person in your studio.

GETTING STARTED

Your main job as an artist is to create art. However, as we discussed in the previous chapter, there are several reasons why the management and documentation of your career are just as important. This is where the archive assistant comes in. If you are a prolific artist who exhibits regularly, the process of documenting your work, sales, correspondence, and contracts alone can be a full-time job. Tracking your artwork inventory, locating and sending slides and digital images to galleries and publishers, sorting and organizing your files, photographing your artwork, and managing a database of your work are just some of the tasks that an assistant can help you with. Your assistant could be anyone: a family member, a college intern, another artist just starting out, a technologist, a photographer—truly, anyone. The most important factors in any artist/assistant relationship are good communication, collaboration, planning, and organizational skills. A readiness to adapt to new types of workflows and technology are also necessary.

Regardless of a candidate's qualifications, it is imperative that you select someone with whom you can get along and build trust over time. The process of documenting and archiving takes place in the semiprivate settings of studio and home, where the lines between personal and private, and professional and public, are blurred. Pick someone who you think you can work with under these conditions. Keep in mind that the best assistant may

be some- one who thinks differently from you, and who may challenge you to do things in different and better ways—an "odd couple" relationship can actually be quite beneficial. In the case of one studio we visited, the artist's assistant was able to convince the artist he worked for to transfer his studio documentation from a paper-based workflow to one supported by a database, at a time—the early 1990s—when few artists had databases. Almost twenty years later, the benefits of this early change are clear to see: the studio runs efficiently, with a vast digital archive that spans the artist's entire career and life's work.

If you want to hire someone for a long-term position, try working with them for a few weeks on a trial basis to see if it is a good fit. If you can see that it is not working out, it is better to let someone go early on. We recommend interviewing several candidates and choosing one for a trial period or short-term project but maintaining a pool of backup candidates in case your first choice does not work out.

With so many priorities, it can be challenging for an artist to maintain a regular archiving practice. Even so, it is important not to let other priorities completely sweep this aside. Taking your archive assistant off-task because you need some last-minute help packing and crating artwork for an exhibit might be a temporary setback. Just remember that you have hired this person, who likely has specialized skills, to make your studio more efficient and, ultimately, to move your career forward. Stay on this path, and you will have a valuable archive of your career.

Many of the core skills that your assistant will need to develop over time fall under the following categories:

- Art appreciation skills: art history, art handling, materials knowledge, basic conservation skills
- Communication and interpersonal skills: good oral and written communication skills; the ability to work as part of a team
- Organizational and problem-solving skills: inventory assessment, sorting, and project management; creative problem solving; flexibility and adaptability
- Technology skills: computer literacy; experience with specific software and hardware

Mel Chin and his archive assistant, Rose Candela, discuss an upcoming installation at the New Orleans Museum of Art. Rose's position was supported with funds from the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

All of these skills are essential—it is your assistant who will be taking responsibility for the sorting, archiving, and documenting of your work, so that you can continue to create it.

Art Appreciation and an Appreciation of Your Work In most cases, the person you hire will be completely new to you and your work. If you are hiring someone to work long-term or on a more in-depth documentation project, it will be important for that person to learn as much as possible about your current and past activities as an artist, your artistic practice, and your upcoming schedule and deadlines. When someone begins working with you on any project related to organizing your archives, supply them with your most recent curriculum vitæ, or a list of exhibitions of and any publications about your work, so that he or she can start to piece together a timeline of your career. That will make it a lot easier, for instance, for your assistant to know how to organize your files and your work chronologically and by project.

While a background in art and art history is ideal, it is more important that your assistant have an appreciation for and develop a deeper understanding of your work. For instance, if you are a contemporary Native American artist and an assistant candidate has little or no knowledge of Native American history or culture, you might find that he or she will need additional exposure and training in this area. Your assistant's knowledge of your work, in the context of contemporary trends and history, can be developed over time and through the process of documenting your work. You might consider the following as a first task or goal: having your assistant record, with you, an oral history of your life and work, to help them develop this type of knowledge. This recorded oral-history interview can then be placed in your archive for researchers to later use, or for family members or other heirs to consult after your death.

"Art appreciation" also includes an appreciation of your work – knowing and understanding your own basic studio practices—your working methods, materials and tools, and basic safety protocols. In the beginning, your assistant might know how to efficiently and accurately enter data about your work into a database he or she has created, but not know how to safely carry a large painting across a room. No matter what prior experience your assistant has had, some degree of on-the-job training will be required—this is a job that requires many different skills and types of skills.

Move Forward! Getting to Know You – Recording an Artist Interview

Goal: Help your archive assistant learn about you, your artwork, and your processes.
What you need: digital audio recording set up
Time required: 30 minutes - 1 hour

It is important that your archive assistant develop a detailed knowledge of your life history, artwork, and processes. Having the archive assistant record an artist interview will make the archiving process a lot more efficient and accurate overall. Recording these interviews and placing them in the archive is a good idea too, so they can be used again in the future (by your archive assistant, future archive assistants, curators, writers, art historians, family members, etc.) to provide more accurate information and your own point of view about your life, career, and ideas about specific artworks. See this as an opportunity to get information and stories out that can only come from you.

Setting up to Record an Artist Interview Capturing an artist's recounting of an event is best done with a digital audio recording device. Digital recorders today are quite inexpensive, easy to operate, and deliver exceptional results. Computer laptops with built-in microphones, hand-held recorders, cell phones, field recorders and many other digital audio recording devices are available at consumer prices, and all do a remarkable job. Do some online research, ask friends, family, and other artists for advice about equipment.

It is advisable to first test out your recording device in the location where you plan to conduct your interview (indoors, outdoors, studio, kitchen, car, and so forth). You might try out a few different devices in different conditions, to draw comparisons and to determine the best tool for the job. Many recording devices are quite sensitive and pick up ambient and unwanted sounds. The hard surfaces of a kitchen, for instance, may reflect sound and cause spikes in the audio recording which make it difficult or impossible to hear what someone is saying. Sometimes, just holding the recording device in your hand will capture subtle movements of your hand and come across in the recording as loud scraping sounds. A light breeze outside or a microphone in direct proximity of a mouth will capture distracting breath and other environmental sounds that will be distracting and make voices hard to understand.

Minimize extraneous sounds and control your recordings with some testing beforehand. Record a test conversation and listen to the recording with headphones, which will isolate all outside sounds and deliver an accurate reproduction of what was recorded. You will be able

to hear if some- one is a "wet talker", if they swallow before they speak, if they move in and out of proximity (optimal recording distance from microphone), and if they boom when they talk.

If a person talks with animated head movements, place the microphone in a location that captures a consistent recording level. Sometimes a microphone three feet from the conversation will capture a consistent recording level, but this may increase room sounds. Microphone foam or even a sock on the mic can eliminate wind and breath sounds but may reduce clarity and muffle a voice.

Try to use a recorder that utilizes "AAA" or "AA" batteries. These are very common, inexpensive and have rechargeable options. If the recording device uses special memory cards be sure to have backups recordings and any necessary playback machines on hand. Label memory cards and back them up regularly onto a hard drive or computer and linked to your database (if you have one).

Sample Artist Oral History Interview Questions These questions can guide the creation of an oral history interview or artists' narrative. Pick the questions that you think are most appropriate to your situation.

- When did you realize that you were an artist?

- Where did you go to school?

- Who did you study with? Who are your mentors?

- When did you start making art and how long have you been producing?

- Describe some of your influences (e.g., education, relationships, reading habits, travel)?

- Can you show me a few key and important works that you think represent the range of your work?

- How has your work changed over time?

- What materials or processes are you currently working with? Talk about your favorite materials or processes.

- What materials or processes have you used in the past? How have you documented your work?

- Who has purchased and/or owned the work?

- How have you impacted or influenced your community as an artist? Can you describe a favorite moment in your career?

- What are some of your personal goals? Challenges?

- Describe a day in the studio. Are there rituals that must happen?

- Where are different parts of your archive located? (See exercise in chapter 3 - mapping your studio) You feel that your legacy as an artist is successful (if, when, because)?

- A question that deals with a value statement: i.e. What do you value most? (Free time? Creative spaces? Not having to deal with paperwork? etc.)

> The archives has to blend in with the working functions of the studio.
> – Bonnie Huie, Head of Archives, Cai Studio

Interpersonal Skills and Communication Skills It is important that you develop a symbiotic relationship with your assistant. Getting an archiving workflow in place will take some time and a lot of commitment, but this is how you will establish habits that you will directly benefit from for years to come. Creating and implementing SMART goals (see Chapter 1) is a cyclical and ongoing process. Goals are first identified, then achieved, and new goals are created. This process can move forward only when there is good communication between you and your assistant, and in partnership with your assistant.

Building a successful working relationship takes time. Clearly, it is important that your assistant work in harmony with your workflow, but what needs to be established is a mutual trust—you, in turn, must trust and respect how your assistant works. "Breaking bread" and taking the time to learn about each other's way of working is a good way to build such trust. Respect, listening, asking questions, and talking through ideas are essential parts of this process. Taking the time to do this will allow you to reach your goals together.

Look for an assistant who communicates well, both face-to-face and in writing, since they will likely represent you in different ways, from answering the phone to handling correspondence. Ideally, your assistant will also be able to work independently, without your direct oversight.

Organizational and Problem-Solving Skills Keep in mind that the first time your assistant is introduced to your workspace, she or he may not be able to immediately recognize your organizational methods. In fact, if there is a great deal of material to organize, the project might seem overwhelming. At different stages of your career, you may have created different methods for organizing your documentation, or perhaps you have had different people work on different projects over the years, each of whom came up with a slightly different solution for the situation at hand. If your assistant will be retrospectively organizing your life's work, it may take that person some time to inventory and assess the situation before any specific recommendations can be made.

Additionally, it is important that you work with your assistant to create a process that works for you. What may appear to others at first glance to be complete disorder could actually have an underlying order that makes sense only to you. It is essential that you take the time to discuss with your assistant your organizational habits, your workflow, and where things are located in your studio. Your assistant might have ideas for how to better organize your archive; carefully listen to those suggestions, but keep in mind that any system you create together needs to work for you. Additionally, you will want to work with someone who can manage both short- and long-term projects. That person will need to demonstrate an ability to finish tasks on time, and to communicate and/ or troubleshoot problems as they arise.

Technology Skills When hiring an assistant to work on technology-related projects (e.g., digitizing a large collection of slides, set- ting up a database, etc.), you will want to identify the specific skills necessary to do the job, particularly if you will not have much time to train the assistant in more complex projects, or if you lack those skills yourself. When interviewing candidates, for instance, ask them to talk about projects they completed that required learning a new piece of technology, or ask them to describe projects they completed that required the technology skills you will need them to have. For instance, do they have experience developing databases? Have they ever scanned slides or original artwork before? Do they have experience with Adobe Photoshop? A candidate's age will not necessarily indicate that person's depth of experience with technology, which advances so quickly that it is difficult for artists and archive assistants of any age to keep up. Additionally, you might find a candidate who has had a lot of experience with digital technology, but no experience determining the proper resolution for scanning transparencies, or how to use

color-correction bars in photographing artwork. Technology skills can be the most difficult to learn and keep current while working in the studio. Fortunately, the Internet can answer many, if not all, basic technology-related questions.

Finding and Hiring an Archive Assistant When looking for an assistant, draw on your existing network of contacts to identify potential candidates. Many of the artists' assistants and

> Nothing is thrown away unless Mel looks at it. I'm not making that [final] decision…I'm putting things in place so that someone else can decide where it goes in the history.
>
> —Rose Candela, archive assistant, Mel Chin Studio

archivists we have met were found through networking and word of mouth. To find candidates, talk with your fellow artists, friends, and family members. You might also contact archivists, curators, or gallery owners in your area about the work you need done, and which potential candidates they can recommend. If you cannot afford to pay someone to do this work, consider setting up a bartering arrangement, or seek an intern who can gain course credit while working on a project with you. Faculty in graduate programs in library and information science can often recommend students who have had related training and who seek real-world experience in archives and records management, database creation, and preservation. Some students enrolled in these programs have undergraduate and/or additional graduate degrees in art or art history, and previous experience working with art collections and/or artists, which can be a bonus. You might also find suitable candidates in studio art programs.

Paid vs. Unpaid Archive Assistants If you can afford to pay an assistant, it is best to invest your money in this way. Paying an assistant is the best way to ensure the quality and longevity of the project or long-term work that you need accomplished. The simple fact is that people generally work harder, and are more efficient and reliable, when they are paid for the work they do. That said, not everyone will have the financial resources to pay an assistant. The next best thing is to set up a situation in which the assistant receives some other kind of benefit: course credit, artwork in exchange for services, or some other kind of barter. Family members or friends may be able to donate some or quite a lot of their time because they may personally benefit from being your assistant. For instance, in some studios we visited, spouses and children of artists served in such formal, permanent roles as accountant, general studio manager, photographer, etc. However, when someone is volunteering as an assistant but receiving no tangible benefits, the situation can be difficult to manage, and quality control can become a real problem.

You may be on a tight budget, but the return on such an investment can be great and paying someone to work for you helps you retain control of the project. Consider paying someone to work on a smaller, more discrete project, or have an assistant set up a workflow for you that you can take over and follow on your own. Hopefully, these smaller projects will help you in very tangible ways to create new revenue.

Contract Labor vs. Employee If you decide to pay an assistant, you will first need to be aware of the laws in your state regarding hiring "employees" vs. hiring "contract labor." Generally speaking, hiring an employee is more expensive than hiring a contractor, since the former requires deducting from the employee's paycheck sums for Social Security, state and federal taxes, unemployment wages, and possibly health benefits. Contract labor requires the independent contractor (i.e., the assistant) to pay their own Social Security and state and Federal taxes. Before hiring someone, consult with an accountant or lawyer about the terms of employment you should establish.

Move Forward! Writing a Simple Job Description & Interview Questions for an Archive Assistant Position

Goal: Prepare to advertise and conduct interviews for an archive assistant position.
What you need: A definition of the projects and goals that you'll need an assistant for.
Time needed: 30 minutes – 1 hour

1. Outline the Position:

Describe the project(s) you'll want your archive assistant to help you with. What projects are most urgent? What's your top priority? What will be the individual tasks involved? If you did the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) goals exercise in the first chapter, use the goals you listed there to start crafting a job description and interview questions.

What specific skills or qualifications do you think they'll need to work in your studio? What types of experience, certifications, education level and references are you looking for? Try using these heading to guide you:

> **Art appreciation skills:** art history, art handling, materials knowledge, basic conservation skills.
> Communication and interpersonal skills: good oral and written communication skills, the ability to work
> together as a team.
> **Organizational and problem-solving skills:** inventory assessment, sorting, and project management; creative problem solving, flexibility and adaptability.
> **Technology skills:** computer literacy, experience with specific software and hardware.

For how long will you want this person to work with you? Is this a short- or long-term position?

What would the typical schedule be (hours per day, days per week)? Do you anticipate training for the assistant? If so, how much time will you dedicate towards the training? For example: 3 months of weekly one-hour meetings.

What will the job pay? If you plan to pay someone, then you'll want to research current wages for similar types of jobs in your region. Be clear what type of position this is (contract, employee, internship, or volunteer).

What will be the key responsibilities of the position?

Where will the work take place? Will it all be conducted on-site in your studio? Will some or all of the work be conducted online? Will travel be involved?

An overview of you and the studio to give potential applicants a description at hand.
Your contact information and clear instructions on how to apply.

2. Write a job title and summary of the position (300-500 words):

3. Sample Interview Questions:

Try using questions that require introspective, instead of yes/no answer questions. Questions to avoid have to do with: race, color, or national origin; religion; sex, gender identity, sexual orientation; pregnancy status; disability (in some cases, according to the U. S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission website, certain questions may be asked about accommodations); age or genetic information; citizenship. In the United States, it is illegal to ask questions on these topics. For more specific guidance, check the website of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts may also a good resource.

General Questions:
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why do you believe you are qualified for this position?
- (Describe the work schedule, location, etc.) Would you be able to work this schedule and in these locations?
- What do you feel has been your most important professional achievement?
- What was your worst professional mistake and how was it resolved?

Social Skills:
- Tell me about a time when you had to use creative problem-solving skills to get something important done.
- Describe a project in which you had to be flexible and adapt to a change at work.
- Which types of supervisors have you found easy to work with or difficult to work with?
- How do you typically handle interruptions or last-minute changes?

Organizational Skills:
- Tell me about a project that you planned and saw through to completion.
- How do you typically prioritize projects?

- Give me an example when you've had to handle a work situation that included tight deadlines and limited resources.

Art Appreciation:
- Describe any background, education, or training you've had in art.
- What type of artist are you?
- Have you done any shipping or handling of art? (This should be specific to your work. For instance, if you produce large heavy sculpture, include something about this in the job description and interview.)

Technology Skills:
- What has your experience been with_____ (software or tool required for the job)?
- Describe a time when you had to interact with a new piece of software or technology in order to get something done.
- What types of resources do you use when you run into technical problems?

Internships, Practica, and Field Experiences Job preparedness is a major goal for college students today. Most universities will welcome opportunities to establish programs with community members who can help students better prepare for a career in their field. Through programs in internship, practica, and field experience, students are exposed to working with artists, gain real-world training, and receive course credit for their work. Such programs are typically overseen by a faculty advisor, and a project or projects are defined before the internship begins. Interns and often the person(s) they are working for, are asked to write brief reports of their internship experience. Clearly, this type of arrangement will work best for very short-term projects. Keep in mind that you will also need to build in time to prepare and train your intern.

Another benefit to hiring a student is that interns may have access to equipment that you do not currently have or cannot afford. Audio and video recording equipment may be available through the university for the student to record an artist interview with you. The intern may have access to equipment he or she can use for scanning slides, transparencies, letters, magazine reviews, and other documents; or to better A/V equipment for shooting your work; or to other equipment that would be useful for discrete projects but that you do not want to invest in at the time.

Managing the Archive Assistant's Time As we have discussed, the specialized skills of the archive assistant are many, and are mostly learned on the job, alongside the artist. The investment of time required to develop a good assistant will pay off in the long run, but it is important to set a schedule and clear goals. Start by setting aside a regular and specific amount of time that you will spend working with your assistant. Assess your needs, your studio schedule, the budget you have set aside for an assistant (if appropriate), and then decide what makes sense for your situation.

You will often find yourself in situations in which you need an assistant for pressing matters other than archiving. For example, an upcoming show may temporarily take priority over normal archiving duties—you might need the assistant to stop entering images into your database from a past exhibition, and instead help you label artwork for the upcoming exhibit. Some artists have had their archive assistants do a lot more errands and general studio chores instead of the original planned work of documentation and archiving. However, we strongly advise against pulling archive assistants away from the work they have been trained and are being paid to do, and which is likely what they do best. Keep in mind that the benefits of archiving include finding lost artworks, updated artwork and project files, and organizing and maintaining studio workflow, all of which allow you to be more productive in the studio. And if you are more productive, there may be increases in exhibitions and

requests to publish images of your work, more successful grant applications and residencies, and, finally, wider recognition of you and your work. Help your archive assistant manage his or her time wisely.

Move Forward! Creating a Schedule with Your Archive Assistant

Goal: Apply job duties and goals to a working schedule for you and your archive assistant.
What you need: Calendar, list of projects and goals.
Time needed: 30 minutes - 1 hour.

Review your goals and project ideas with your archive assistant. Remember to keep these within the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) criteria. In starting to define a schedule for projects, consider the following:

- What are the tasks that an archive assistant can do, versus the tasks that you can or should do on your own?
- What are the tasks that you will need to work on together or with others?
- What orientation and training will your archive assistant need? You'll need to include time for these activities in your schedule.
- What are the recurring tasks that you'll need help with?

Create a Schedule and Define Goals Work with your archive assistant to establish long-term and short-term goals, put those goals into a schedule, and to track progress in manageable and realistic segments. Apply the S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) template to these goals to help keep your priorities on track.

For example, you might agree to meet with your archive assistant once a week for two months to sort one flat file drawer of drawings. The sorting project could include numbering the drawings, photographing the drawings, and entering the images and information about the drawings into a database. The schedule you might work out together for this project could detail each of the eight, two-hour days your archive assistant works on the project. This example might seem like a small goal in the larger scheme of things, but it is important to break down larger goals into smaller and manageable projects.

The results of twenty years of an artist's career, if not managed with smaller projects and tasks, can quickly overwhelm you and your archive assistant. The schedule you set with your archive assistant will put both of you at ease. Flexibility is key between in considering schedules for projects. When more urgent tasks arise, such as an upcoming show or the sale of works that need to be wrapped and shipped, the schedule you've created will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Keep in mind that your schedule should also include other ongoing tasks and recurring events. For instance, tracking materials that need to be ordered, backing up data, signing unsigned works, and regular update meetings between you and your archive assistant. It's best to be clear with your archive assistant what your expectations are for ongoing tasks. There is always something for an archive assistant to do and it should be listed in the timeline.

Remember that your primary job is making work and managing your business, so ideally the archiving process should not interfere. Managing an archive assistant as well as everything else might be a change for you, especially if you've never had anyone else working with you in your studio. Expect an adjustment period and remember that the benefits will pay off in a better managed career and the time to make more art. Taking the time to work out a schedule of defined goals and tasks will ensure a smoother transition and a better fit with your archive assistant and your studio.

Tips
- Create S.M.A.R.T goals.
- Don't get overwhelmed and stick to your S.M.A.R.T. goals.
- Break large projects down into smaller and more manageable tasks.
- Remember that having a flexible schedule keeps your archive assistant on track.
- Make some coffee ☺

Chapter 3
Finding Out What You Have, What to Keep, and Why

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we outline in more detail the materials artists typically keep in their studio archives and introduce basic records management concepts such as "active," "semi-active," and "archival" records. This will help you prioritize what to keep and what to discard.

The process of deciding what to keep and what not to keep can be overwhelming. If you are faced with a large amount of materials, we advise taking small steps. Begin with goals that are realistic for your own situation. If you are working with an archive assistant, this type of project might be a good one to work on together. You can walk through the process together and start making decisions about keeping, rehousing, copying, and discarding your records.

Artist Susan Harbage Page sorting and storing documentation of an art project.

The good news is that you have probably already developed some good archiving habits. For instance, if you are already in the habit of creating a new folder for a new category of e-mail correspondence (such as when you start planning a show with a new gallery, and create a folder with that gallery's name), you have already begun to archive your records. If you have boxed up older files together by project or date range, that too, is a good start. Whether you do it daily, weekly, monthly, or annually, be consistent in how and where you store your records and your artwork.

> That's one of [my] problems. I save stuff...Some of it is work, some of it is the stuff I make work out of, some of it is historical, from family.
>
> -Susan Harbage Page, artist

GETTING STARTED

Specific Materials Comprising Artists' Archives Here is a list, by no means comprehensive of the types of materials we have seen, both in studio archives and as featured in institutional and organizational artists' archives, such as the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art and The Getty.

Your studio archives may include, in both digital and print:

- Your **artwork inventory,** which tracks works that you have created and still have in your possession, as well as works that have gone out of the studio
- Your professional **curriculum vitae**, including a list of publications about you or that mention you
- **Visual documentation** of your work, performances, and exhibitions, including still images, moving images, audio recordings, and other similar materials
- **Process documentation** (e.g., photos or videos of you creating works, your notes, instructions, etc.)
- **Sketchbooks**, including loose sketches and studies
- **Digital files of artworks**, both realized and unrealized
- **Collections of objects and materials** used in the creation of artworks, including objects that you used to create a performance, as well as installation art "kits"
- **News features and articles**, announcements, scrapbooks, and exhibition leaflets related to your career
- **Recordings** and other documentation of public speeches, presentations, interviews, etc.
- **Evidence of your teaching**, including lecture notes, descriptions of assignments, and documentation of student work
- **Personal and studio libraries** that have inspired your work or that feature your work (e.g., exhibition catalogues, self-published works, magazines). Your handwritten notes and marginalia, alterations, and inscriptions by you or influential people in your circle, add research value to library collections.
- **Legal documents** (e.g., contracts, agreements, wills, etc.)
- **Financial papers** and documentation of artwork sales, including contracts, invoices, receipts, lists, and ledgers
- **Correspondence** between you and gallery and museum staff, art dealers and collectors, art critics and historians, or other researchers (e.g., e-mails, letters, greeting cards, postcards, etc.)
- **Biographical documentation**, including personal correspondence with colleagues, family members, and friends, including e-mail and handwritten correspondence;

birth, death, and marriage certificates, visa, passports and wills; visual documentation of your personal life, including of your family, friends, mentors, and others in your social circles

- **Personal writings**, including your diaries, journals, memoirs, manuscripts, creative writing, blogs, text messages, etc.

Types of Materials As a practicing artist, you will have materials that you are currently using ("active"), materials that you may have a use for in the near future ("semi-active"), and things that you may want to keep for the long term ("archival"). There is also a fourth category of materials: those you may decide to discard permanently ("disposition"). Sellen and Harper, authors of *The Myth of the Paperless Office*[1], have created a useful shorthand for the first three categories of records: Hot, Warm, and Cold:

Hot information is in active use right now - "active."
Warm information is held on to so that it can be used for a task or project that is active or needs to be completed in the near future - "semi-active."
Cold information is no longer in use. Also called "archival," these are the types of materials that you want to keep for posterity.

Here are a few examples of Hot, Cold, and Warm materials that you may already have in your studio:

Hot	Warm	Cold
Notes made by you or questions sent to you for an upcoming article by a journalist or reporter	Video recording of a recent interview that a curator is considering using to publicize an upcoming exhibition	Recorded interviews with you from several years ago
Negotiations and current potential sales information about particular works in your collection	Recent records of sales of your artwork	Financial records of past sales with contact information about owner
Contracts currently being negotiated between you and a gallery or museum	Contracts from galleries for artworks currently being shown	Contracts with a gallery that is now closed

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[1] Sellen, Abigail J. and Richard H. R. Harper. The Myth of the Paperless Office (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).

Objects used to inspire or guide a current artwork in progress	Sketches used to inspire artworks that may be featured in an upcoming exhibition	Sketches for artworks created while in college

Disposition Records This fourth category of records includes materials that you might consider discarding. This could include duplicate records or outdated records, or other materials that provide little context to your life as an artist.

Considerations for Deciding Which Cold Materials to Keep Once you know what your studio contains, you can start to think about what you would like to keep and where it should be stored. Hot and warm records are easy to identify—you are using or referring to them frequently, if not daily. Cold records are more perplexing, as they have often been stored away, perhaps out of sight, and have not been referenced in years, or perhaps even decades. How do you decide what to keep? How will you know if it will be important in the future? How much time do you have to look through these materials?

Your Legacy When considering materials for archiving, one way to make selections is to ask whether or not the materials provide meaningful context in describing your legacy as an artist. In order to do this, you might use your résumé or curriculum vitæ to help you identify milestones and important events (e.g., gallery and museum exhibitions, travel to places that influenced your work). Chapter 2 offers tips on working with an archive assistant to record a history of your experiences as an artist, who and what have been your greatest influences, and your goals or working methods as an artist (such as an artist statement). The timeline you create from this type of interview can help you decide what is most important in documenting your legacy as an artist, and to prioritize what to keep and what you can discard.

Confidential and Sensitive Records The records you keep can be personal, financial, or legal in nature. Historians often find some of these records to be the most illuminating about an artist's life and career. Keep in mind that records you now consider too personal or perhaps irrelevant might hold great research value in the long run. Consider keeping these records. If you plan to eventually deposit your records with an institutional archive, you can work with that institution's archivist to restrict access to sensitive or confidential pieces of your archive for defined periods of time. Are any of the records in your studio archive sensitive in this way? A diary or journal, perhaps? Personal correspondence? In managing sensitive documents, consider whether or not there are legal reasons for keeping any of it in a more secure and private place.

Move Forward! Mapping Your Studio Archives & Prioritizing Projects

Goal: Create a studio archives map and identify hot, warm, and cold materials in your archives.

What you need: Piece of paper large enough to map your archives.

Time needed: 30 minutes

Part 1: Map Your Studio Archives

The idea of this exercise is to quickly identify any obvious issues in your studio. Begin by mapping out the general areas of your studio and make brief notes about what types of materials you are keeping and where. These can be broad categories (e.g., artwork, computers, AV equipment, frames, art supplies and related source materials, paper files and records, libraries, etc.). Try referring to the list we provide in this chapter of the types of things often found in artists' archives. If your archive is distributed in more than one location, it would be useful to make separate maps for those locations.

Once you've sketched out a map, make notes on it about items in the studio which are:

- at risk because of their environment (e.g., bugs, critters, water, etc.)
- sensitive or confidential
- needing to be moved to another location (due to lack of storage, for instance)

> It's hard for me to apply that [word] to myself, archive. You know, I have my computer and my hard drives, and I guess that's my archive. But then I also have — well, it depends on if it's my work or other things that led up to the work…I like to include a lot of that [personal] stuff because that…early life and autobiographical stuff gets incorporated into my work…it's hard to separate…
>
> -Shana Moulton, artist

Part 2: Prioritize Your Projects

Has this changed your ideas about what materials you'll want to address as priorities? Identify hot, warm, and cold materials using your studio archives map. List here three discrete projects you'll want to get started with soon and a start date for each project. There are a number of ways to tackle this. You can work across a group of similar records, such as

all of your contracts, and identify them as hot, warm, or cold categories. You can work across all cold records first (e.g., old emails). Identify and store them first, and then work through warm records and down to your current hot records.

Project (brief description)	Hot, Warm, or Cold?	Goal(s)	Project Start Date
1.			
2.			
3.			

Chapter 4
Organizing and Maintaining Your Physical Materials and Media

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the physical materials that document your art practice. These materials may include paper-based materials such as legal contracts and exhibition floor plans; physical media such as video/audio tapes and slides that document interviews, performances, art installations, and exhibitions; as well as older hardware on which your digital records are kept, such as external hard drives and laptop computers. We offer suggestions for keeping these materials long-term and scenarios in which you might need to discard certain materials. The examples we offer encompass a range of situations and include low-cost to high-end storage and preservation options.

GETTING STARTED

Your Existing Patterns If you already have a system in place for organizing your materials, and if it works for you, then build on what you've already done. For instance, have you stored older slides in binders, for the most part? If so, and if that works for you, then organize the rest of your materials that way. The cases in which you should consider changing your method, are those in which your materials are not well protected and are in danger of being damaged through exposure to the elements or other environmental considerations. For instance, are you keeping your materials in a damp environment that is causing mold-growth on the banker boxes you've used to store materials over the years?

Assessing, Goal setting, and Planning In cases where you have a very large number of materials with little organization, it is easy to get overwhelmed. Our advice is to start with small, bite-sized projects. If you can start small and get a manageable plan in place, you (along with an archive assistant, if you have one) can attack studio organization gradually over time. Getting a better handle on what materials you have will ensure that you, and others working with you (including researchers, gallery owners and curators), can track down important documentation about your art practice now and into the future.

Some Advice on Paper Records and Filing Paper records can be stored in a variety of ways, depending on your preference. For instance, some people like to have their documents easily at hand and visible, so filing them away in a cabinet would not be a good option. Putting these papers in a binder might be a good option in this case, allowing easy access and

visibility without having paper cluttering your workspace. Binders like these can be clearly labelled and stored on open shelves for easy access. For others, clear folders or clear boxes offer another a great storage option.

If visibility is not a preference, banker boxes or filing cabinets will work. Large plastic bins and metal filing cabinets may be more expensive, but they can also protect your records from dust and moisture better than banker boxes made of cardboard. Check your local thrift store for old filing cabinets. However you decide to store your records, be sure to not store them directly on the floor. If there is a flood, having items stored off the floor may protect them from water damage.

Whatever method you decide to go with, be sure to label your binders, boxes, or filing cabinets with notes about their contents. There are easy options available for labeling, from using magic markers and pens, to using labeling equipment or computer-printed labels. You decide what works best according to your budget and personal preferences.

An example of "cold" records of past projects and exhibits being kept by the artist Mel Chin in banker boxes and stored in a room above his studio. While it's best to keep these materials away from the heat and sunlight emitted from windows, the boxes have been kept off the floor to protect them from dust and possible flooding.

Organizing by Media Type Many artists organize their archives by media type, then by project, and chronologically by year when projects or artworks were created. "Media" includes anything documents are recorded on, from paper, to VHS tapes and DVDs, film reels, computer hard drives, and slides.

Benefits:
- Media of the same type will usually come in similar shapes and sizes (e.g., VHS tapes) and are therefore easily grouped together physically. Like materials will naturally have the same requirements for the type of environment they need to be stored in for long-term security and preservation.
- Storing like media together may help you, at a glance, recognize when certain media is at risk of degradation. For instance, if you know that CDs have a typical lifespan of 7-10 years, and all of your CDs are stored together chronologically, you can at-a-

glance inventory which areas of your collection need to be re-format- ted for preservation purposes.

- Storing like media together alongside compatible playback equipment makes accessing the contents of the media more convenient. Keeping original playback equipment is important if you need to access the original contents.

> I have three-quarter inch tapes that most of the work was done on and for the period of about 15 years and I didn't want to throw those out, but there's hardly a machine around that can play them. Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) only has the digital references, and so it was important for me to keep the analog forms of the tapes.
>
> - Dara Birnbaum, artist

Example of a project organized and stored by media type:

Paper Files:	Media:
Contracts	VHS tapes and DVDS
River Installation: Version 1(2005)	River Installation: Version 1 (2005)
River Installation: Version 2 (2007)	River Installation: Version 2 (2007)
River Installation: Final Version	River Installation: Final Version
(2008) Park Installation (2010)	(2008) Park Installation (2010)
Drawings	Film Reels
River Installation: Version 1 River	River Installation: Version 1 (2005)
Installation: Version 2 River	River Installation: Version 2 (2007)
Installation: Final Version Park	River Installation: Final Version
Installation	(2008) Park Installation (2010)
Reviews	Slides
River Installation: Version 1 River	River Installation: Version 1 (2005
Installation: Version 2 River	
Installation: Final Version Park	
Installation	

Original playback equipment and computers stored in the artist Vito Acconci's studio archives.

Organizing by Project and Chronologically Another method of organizing that is useful when you want to get a hold of all of the materials that are associated with a particular project, is to organize them by project and chronologically. If you choose this method, you may want to subdivide the project by media types (e.g., tapes) or type of file (e.g., gallery floorplans).

Benefits:
- Arranging files and media by project instead of by format, makes it easier to retrieve information about a specific project. Arrange all projects together chronologically.

Examples

2005: River Installation: Version 1
Files: contracts, drawings, reviews VHS tapes and DVDs
Film Reels Slides

2007: River Installation: Version 2
Files: contracts, drawings, reviews VHS tapes and DVDs
Film Reels

2008: River Installation: Version 3
Files: contracts, drawings, reviews DVDs
Film Reels

2010: Park Installation
Files: contracts, drawings, reviews DVDs
Film Reels

Storing Your Records Safely Some materials will need your immediate attention because they are more fragile or at risk of deteriorating faster than other materials in your archive. Think about the condition of both your artworks and your documents and where these are stored. Are your records stored in a stable environment that is pest-free and away from moisture? These considerations are important for both paper-based materials and the digital files you have on physical storage media. Have you moved your digital files to more current physical

media that are not obsolete? (See Chapter 6: Digital Preservation Basics for more information about storing and preserving your digital files).

Duplicating and Re-formatting Files for Preservation Purposes Some files will be so important to you that you will want to keep copies of them in different locations. Keeping copies of files in different locations helps ensure that, in the event of a disaster, such as a fire, flood, or hard-drive crash, you will have at least one other copy elsewhere. For instance, if you were working on editing a video, keep a copy of the original files along with your most recent edited version in two different physical locations. For instance, perhaps you keep copy 1 saved to an external hard drive in your studio, and copy 2 saved on an external drive that you keep at home across town.

Or consider a case in which you have older paper files - such as printed articles from older art journals. In those cases, you might decide the content is important enough to warrant scanning and uploading digital copies of those materials to cloud storage. Reformatting, as in the case we just presented, is also an important consideration for older audio-visual tape media (e.g., VHS and film reels) and digital media (e.g., DVDs and CDROMs). These media can degrade very quickly and are particularly vulnerable to the elements. The average lifespan for DVDs and CDs, for instance, is 5-7 years. In many cases, it's best to make digital copies of these materials and then store the files on an external hard-drive or in cloud storage.

Obsolescence is another factor to consider when it comes to audiovisual records. These physical media (VHS, CDs, DVDs, etc.) need specific types of machines to access their content. Once those machines become obsolete, it can be nearly impossible to access their content. This is another case in which you might consider reformatting for preservation purposes. Another option is to keep the original machines that will play the files, but obviously those too will age, degrade, and ultimately become obsolete.

Environmental Considerations Just like real estate, studio archives preservation and safekeeping is all about "location, location, location!" You'll want to store your materials away from areas where there is a potential for water leaks such as near pipes or under a leaky roof. Get your materials up off the floor with a minimum of 4" floor clearance to hopefully avoid or minimize damage in the event of flooding. In addition, avoid storing your records in rooms with sharply fluctuating high and low temperatures. Keeping your materials away from heat sources such as radiators and air vents is also wise. For practical reasons, basements oftentimes end up being converted into artists' studios. Even so, try to avoid storing your important documents and artwork in basement areas. There is a tendency for

basements to flood, and it's a common place for moisture and mold to accumulate. Try not to overcrowd your studio, as this can be a fire hazard.

For long-term storage of "cold" materials that you no longer use on a daily basis, store them in neutral pH or "acid free" enclosures such as acid-free file folders inside acid-free bankers boxes. Use a pH testing pen to be sure that these materials are truly acid-free.

Fragile Materials Older paper materials that have started to deteriorate may be good candidates for making digital copies for ease of access and to preserve the content. If you are considering passing along your archive to a research institution, you should keep the originals as researchers appreciate having original source materials on hand in addition to their digital copies.

Move Forward! Organize Your Paper Files

Goal: Select a group of paper files laying around your studio or at home that you want to organize.

What you need: Containers for your files, labels, something to write with on your containers or labels.

Time needed: It depends on the number of items you have to file. We suggest starting small, with a project that will take under an hour.

Step 1: Find a workspace and gather the containers you'll need for this task. Give yourself enough space to read, process, and label your paperwork, folders, and boxes. Pick a secure location where the materials you are currently moving through won't be disturbed or moved by someone else.

Step 2: Quickly review your papers and decide whether or not they are hot, warm, or cold (see below).

Step 3: Decide on an organizational scheme for your papers by project or media, and chronologically as appropriate. If you have a pre-existing system that works well for you, then build on it. Label your containers, folders, etc.

Step 4: Choose a secure location for your files.

Tips for Labelling

- When labelling and organizing filing cabinets, boxes, and files, your labels should be understandable at a glance. You should know what's inside without having to open the container.

- Consider how your labelling and organization might be understood by others. Studio assistants, curators, heirs, and researchers will at some point need to make sense of your system. Go with a system that works for you first, but also think about little things you can do to make your system understandable to people who are looking at your records for the first time.

Vito Acconci's slide boxes organized chronologically on open shelves and labelled by project title.

Is your project ongoing and current? Do you use certain documents on a daily basis? For instance, do you need to have within arms-reach correspondence with a gallery or sponsor, receipts for art supplies, grant application materials, etc.? These are hot records that you need to consult frequently. Since you need to consult these materials frequently, you will want them to be readily available and should store them near your work area in containers such as a binder, filing tray, bin, or box. Decide if you want to keep piles of this type of record on a shelf near your work area, for instance, or if you want to store them more securely.

Is there a project that you recently completed? Do you have printouts or clippings from newspaper and magazine reviews of your artwork? How about contracts from a museum or vendor? Do you think you'll be referring to these materials over the next few months on an occasional basis? If so, these are warm records. Warm records are the type of things you'll want to keep nearby so that you can access them when needed, but that you'll have filed away and stored. These are ideal records to be labeled clearly and filed away into a filing cabinet, storage box, or binder in your workspace.

Are papers from a few years ago in the way of your current project? Are there slides and contracts on your desk from a project that you completed a few years ago? Perhaps you have notes scattered around your desk that are no longer necessary. These are cold records. With these records, since they are no longer being consulted, you can decide if you want to discard them or store them. If kept, they can be moved into long-term storage and perhaps kept in a storage closet, room, or off-site location.

Chapter 5
Organizing Your Artwork

INTRODUCTION

A major benefit of having a streamlined archiving process that works for you is greater productivity. An important step in organizing any studio archive, and the one that is perhaps most challenging, is creating and managing an inventory of your completed artworks. While this chapter focuses on handling physical artwork, many of the same principles and workflows also apply to digital artworks. The examples provided in this chapter will show you how to start small and develop a process that can easily become part of your regular practice.

GETTING STARTED

You will first need to consider what space you will use, as you will need enough room to effectively prepare, handle, pack, and store the artwork you want to save. At this point, you probably know that these activities require investments of time and money, but what many artists aren't prepared for is what happens when they start digging through their history. Once you start going through older artwork, you may recall stories about people you met or experiences you had that inspired that work. If possible, have an archive assistant on hand to help you document the information and stories you think are valuable to the understanding of the artwork.

In organizing their artwork, artists typically use a process of five revolving stages:

Stage 1: Assessing, setting goals, and planning
Stage 2: Sorting artwork and creating an inventory numbering system
Stage 3: Creating inventory records about the artwork
Stage 4: Updating and connecting inventory records
Stage 5: Using the information in the inventory

Stage 1: Assessing, Setting Goals, and Planning This stage involves assessing your collection of artworks, setting some SMART goals, and planning a workflow for projects. If there is a large amount of work to assess, walk through your studio and map where artwork is located. Identify and locate artwork, as well as any ephemera related to your work. You might also use this time to identify any artwork that requires conservation treatment. Minor

conservation treatments could be built into your workflow. Prioritize tasks while keeping in mind your upcoming schedule. For instance, work back from a deadline (e.g., the date your next exhibition opens) and build-in some time daily for documenting your back file of artwork, in addition to other tasks you need to complete for your next exhibition, such as photographing artwork and packing it for the upcoming exhibition. Plan and set up a space in your studio specifically for sorting and inventorying your artwork. Give yourself enough room to do this effectively.

Stage 2: Sorting and Creating an Inventory Numbering System Once you have laid out some goals, priorities, and a space to work in, you can begin the process of sorting, numbering, cleaning, or whatever you've established as your goal. For example, one of your goals could be to inventory a single flat-file drawer of drawings. In this scenario, you might have to sort through a pile of drawings to pull out artwork by other artists that made their way into your files. Perhaps the drawings you've stored are not in chronological order, or are from several different years. You could take a few minutes to sort and organize the work chronologically. If you don't know the exact dates of the works, you might start numbering from the top of a stack of drawings, rather than sorting everything into date ranges or other categories. If you must sort artwork into stacks first, that's okay. You may decide that sorting the works in each stack by year of creation and by the type of work will make it easier for you to number the work later. (We discuss numbering artwork in more detail below.)

After sorting and numbering a few works, you will start to get an idea of how long the entire numbering project will take. You can then set realistic goals for the completion of the project. For instance, you might find that a drawer full of prints can be physically numbered in a four-hour workday, and that entering those numbers in your database will take an hour the following day. On the third day, you could photograph all of the works. Once you have established a workflow, you can set up an assembly line in your studio for each of these tasks. Remember that your time is money—efficiently completing these projects will eventually result in more time to make art.

If you are working with an assistant on this project, this is a good time for the two of you to sit down, have coffee, and discuss any inventory numbering systems you may already be using and that have meaning for you, or to plan a new system. If you don't yet have a system in place, start now. Without a good numbering system, it's difficult to "shoot and pack." The numbering system you use should be a general location code that connects each artwork to its record in your database, notebook, or spreadsheet. Having your artwork identified and inventoried in a database or catalogue list gives you the freedom to physically and digitally sort the artworks any way you like.

A screen shot of the artist Cai Guo-Qiang's multilingual art inventory database.

If you are working with a database, it is important to know that some programs' field lengths for inventory numbers are quite short. Generally, they will not be able to accept or print numbers larger than 20 characters per record. Simplify your inventory numbering system by limiting the length of your inventory numbers to nine characters, and do not use any periods or symbols. Using simple alphanumeric characters will help you to very quickly identify artworks in storage, wrapped in boxes, and in different locations. If you need more information about an individual work, you can type its inventory number into your database and retrieve full records that give you background information on the work, such as to whom you sold it and for how much, where it has been exhibited, what publications it has appeared in, notes on conservation treatments, and any other important information you have decided to track. If you are using a written method of record keeping or a Word document, you can visually scan the inventory numbers to find more information about individual works.

As is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10, one of the major benefits of developing a database for your work is that you can use it to sort records on multiple criteria such as title, year, work type, and inventory number. It can be more difficult to search paper records, however, if keeping written records is your only option then a three-ring binder does allow you to sort and move pages around. Separate the records you keep in your notebooks by decade, along with sections organized by type of artwork (e.g., paintings, drawings, public art projects, etc.). If your inventory numbers get out of order, at least they are separated by artwork type and year.
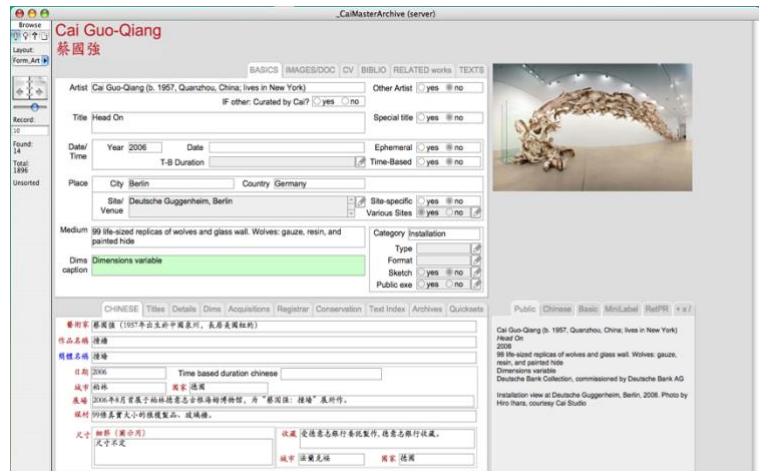
Many museums and galleries have their own inventory systems; however, these numbers generally have no meaning for individual artists. Gallery or museum inventory numbers can be added to your records, whether in a database or on paper, but if you do this then be sure to preference your own numbering system by listing it first.

Developing your own inventory numbering system can be as easy as combining your initials, the year of creation, category of item, and a three-digit number in a simple alphanumeric code that alternates combinations of letters and digits. For instance, the inventory number NS07PG003 tells us that: Neal Smith (NS) in 2007 (07) made painting (PG) number three (003). Such a code is easy to read at a glance:

> NS stands for artist name: **NS**07PG003
> This inventory number is connected to you, your computer, your database, your work, and no one else's. Use the initials of your first and last name.

> 07 stands for the year of creation (2007): NS**07**PG003
> Because the inventory numbers you create are about only your artwork, you need only two digits to indicate the year in which the artwork was created. Unless you are able to create work for over 100 years, two digits are all you will need.

> PG stands for painting: NS07**PG**003
> Two-digit codes for the artwork type are easily identifiable and easy to write; for example, PG for painting, DW for drawing, SC for sculpture, and so on.

> 003 for which artwork: NS07PG**003**
> The last three digits of the code are for the number of the work; in this case, painting number three. It isn't necessary to number any of your works in chronological order. Whether you created 003 before 004 is irrelevant. What is important is that each artwork will have its own unique number. Three digits will be plenty, unless you are truly prolific and produce more than 999 paintings in one year; then you will need four digits: NS07PG1004.

A unique inventory number should be written on, labeled, or somehow attached to each artwork. In addition to marking each artwork, write the inventory number on boxes, flat file drawers, or packaging materials to describe its contents, but never use the same number for more than one artwork. It may not be possible to write the inventory number on some fragile or delicate artworks, so marking their housing becomes important. Avoid using codes that describe an artwork as "framed" or "unframed," or "crated" or "uncrated"—this

condition may change, and having to change artwork inventory numbers after the fact is a nightmare. While numbering several works, you might come across related works after the fact. Rather than renumbering every piece, simply use the next available number for the year the works were created.

Collecting a group of works from the same time period to be inventoried.
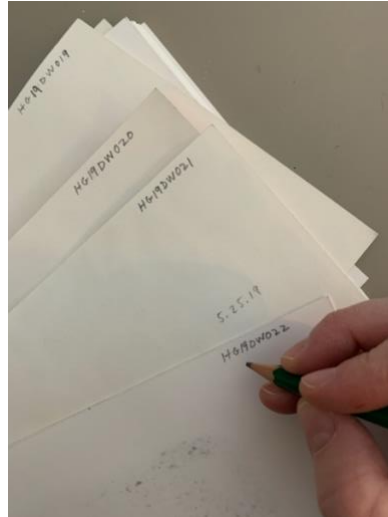
Writing inventory numbers on a group of works on paper.

Stage 3: Creating Inventory Records About the Artwork Now that you are working toward your goals, have decided on an inventory numbering system, and perhaps have photographed some artwork, it's time to enter this information into your database. A database is the best choice, but spreadsheets and even Word documents will work. Use whatever you have available. (See Chapter 10 for more information about choosing databases.)

The more comprehensive the database, the better, but filling in all those fields of information can be daunting. Remember that the more information you are able to enter about each work, the more informed about it people accessing your collection will be. The important thing is to always include the most basic information about each artwork, such as its title, size, date, and media, and the price it sold for.

Always be sure to back up your database and make copies of your paper records.

Stage 4: Updating and Connecting Inventory Records in Your Database Often, you won't have time to create a full record of each artwork. For instance, you might have had to label, shoot, and pack a series of works in a hurry to ship them off to a show. Later, you or your assistant

would then be able to add more information about each work; e.g., images of the work, the price it sold for (or that you would like to sell it for), where it was just exhibited, and so on.

This is the stage at which you can connect all of the archiving you've already done. You can enter additional data, photos, videos, digital copies of relevant correspondence, ephemera, etc., into your database, and organize your studio and storage to match the inventory numbers you have put on all of your works. Stage 4 is also when your assistant can spend a lot of time enhancing your records. Since there won't be many visual indicators of progress in this ongoing work, make time to meet with your assistant to talk about his or her progress, or have your assistant keep you up to date with regular e-mails.

Stage 5: Using the Information in the Inventory Simply put, this is where you can reap the benefits of creating an inventory system for your artwork that makes sense to you and other people accessing your collection. If this part of the process seems difficult, then it's time to revise your system so that it works for you. How you use your inventory will depend on your individual needs. At some point your database will include enough information for you to use it for research and to generate condition reports about specific artworks. Creating reports from your database will come in handy when a local collector takes interest in your work and requests images of your new work, or when a publisher needs photographs of artworks you exhibited ten years ago. You or your assistant will be able to easily locate and deliver images and artwork information to the people requesting information from you. Your database can help make selecting images for a website or publication less overwhelming. A database can also help you automate some of the process to compile and update your résumé. All told, a database can be your central location for the information documenting artwork and career.

Starting Again Once you've completed the organization and inventorying of one group of artwork, you can begin on the next, starting with Stage 1 again: Assessing, Setting Goals, and Planning. As you learn how each stage functions, you and your assistant will be able to glide from one stage to another and complete these projects around a typical day in the studio. For instance, a typical day in your studio might include meeting for morning coffee with your assistant to discuss your goals for the day. Even as you discuss new project goals, others are already in progress. Lunchtime arrives, and a dealer calls you looking for an image of an artwork she wants to feature in an upcoming exhibit (Stage 5). After lunch, your assistant has noted a scheduling conflict, so the paintings you sorted and numbered during the previous week (Stage 2) and that you planned to enter into the database and pack tomorrow (Stage 3) will suddenly need to be dealt with today. When the artwork is returned back to your studio, you and your assistant are then able to finish updating inventory records (Stage 4). The point

is, by having a good system in place that works for you, working effectively and efficiently around unexpected challenges is easier.

inventory number	image	title	year completed	media	substrate	size	buyer	price sold				
HG19DW001		in the clouds		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW002		blob		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW003		untitled		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW004		sorry		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW005		dancer		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW006		future we		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW007		i fucked up			paper							
HG19DW008		reveal			paper							
HG19DW009		black panties			paper							
HG19DW010		untitled		goache and ink	paper							
HG19DW011		untitled		goache and ink	paper							
HG19DW012		leaf		goache	paper	6x6						
HG19DW013		yarnball		goache and ink	paper	6x6						
HG19DW014		untitled		goache and ink	paper	6x6						
HG19DW015		dog walker		goache and mar	paper	6x8						
HG19DW016		vase lady		ink	paper	6x8						
HG19DW017		olympian		goache and ink	paper	6x8						
HG19DW018												
HG19DW019		sauna ladies		goache	paper	6x8						
HG19DW020		dream bug		watercolor, ink, c	paper	6x8						
HG19DW021		blue group		goache and ink	paper	6x8						

The start of an artwork inventory using Google Docs.

Move Forward! Inventory Some Artwork

Goal: Inventory 10 works of art.

What you need: 10 works of art, something to write the inventory number with

Time needed: 15 minutes (in a test-run, 50 works on paper were numbered and inventoried into a spreadsheet within 45 minutes)

Step 1: Pick a manageable number of artworks to inventory. Let's start with ten items.

Step 2: Assemble the group of works in chronological order.

Step 3: Begin to assign each piece an inventory number.

Your initials (2 digits):

Year the work was created (2 digits):

Artwork type (2 digits):

Number for this work: (3 digits):

Inventory numbers for items 1-10:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Step 4: Mark each item with its new inventory number. If you are set up to photograph the work, this is a good time to do it.

Step 5: If you have an artwork inventory spreadsheet or database started, add this

information along with a digital image of the work if you were able to include that activity in your inventory process.

Chapter 6
Digital Preservation Basics

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces you to the basic issues surrounding the preservation of digital content (e.g., word-processed texts, e-mail, spreadsheets, digital images, web pages, etc.). As more and more of the work we perform has migrated to a digital format, an understanding of the various issues and techniques for dealing with this content is important. While the best-case scenario for the preservation of your digital content is a systematic management of your digital items, beginning with their creation, this chapter approaches the topic from the perspective of a retrospective management of digital content. See Chapter 4: "Organizing and Maintaining Your Physical Materials and Media"; the directions found there about regularly organizing your records also apply to digital content.

Before we explain why you would want to have a plan concerning your digital content, it is critical for you to first understand that the very intangibility of digital materials puts them at risk. They live and die on devices and storage media that are temporary, even ephemeral, and are prone to loss through technical failure and human error. As anyone whose hard drive has failed can tell you, if the data are able to be recovered from the device, retrieval of that "lost" data can be shockingly expensive. A little forethought and effort on your part will help minimize a catastrophic loss of data caused by the failure of a device or drive.

Motivations for Preserving Your Digital Content

Preserving the digital content associated with your artwork is important for a number of reasons. On a personal level, digital content can represent basic characteristics of your identity—a wealth of information that can paint a rich picture of you as a person and as an artist. Biographical, financial, legal, and intellectual property-rights information is recorded in your digital items, as are additional aspects of your life, such as your leisure activities or your network of friends, family, and colleagues. Your creative work produces digital content that adds more layers of information to your identity. Documentation of art sales, contracts, installation instructions, project creation, exhibition history, reviews, purchases of tools and supplies, and correspondence with galleries, museums, collectors, associations, and other artists—all provide richly descriptive information about you and your professional life. As noted in Chapter 1, the benefits of organizing and preserving this information are many: They will save you time, space, and money, allow you to be better prepared for opportunities, provide increased access to your artwork, and offer support and inspiration

for new artwork. Maintaining documentation of your digital items for the long term will help you control your image as an artist and could be needed to support legal claims made by you and/or your heirs.

Finally, and perhaps most important, digital information can be highly sensitive in nature. This, alone, is an important motivation for properly managing your digital content. Ensuring a safe and permanent digital archive of your items generally doesn't require complicated procedures or expensive technologies. However, determining the best options for your unique needs does require an understanding of some basic principles and practices.

Preservation Basics

In conversations about preserving digital content, one basic issue that comes up is the tenuous nature of digital preservation. Because storage media and hard drives are as fragile as the digital files they are intended to preserve—for example, the average shelf life of CDs used for storage ranges from two to five years—some people question the use of the word preservation in this context. Sufficiently stable and reliable long-term solutions for preserving your digital content have yet to be achieved, although there are several methods that you can use to help ensure the continued maintenance and accessibility of your files.

Methods that you can use for digital preservation consist of refreshing media, file migration, and hardware emulation.

Refreshing Media: Because storage media are fragile, we recommend a regularly scheduled process of recopying your digital content from older to newer media. This can mean a direct copy to the same kind of media you used previously, or a copy made to a newer media technology.

File Migration: This is the process of updating files from an older to a newer version of a given software, or to a different software. Regular file migration ensures your continued access to your digital content by using currently available software. However, updating files can have unintended consequences. The original look and feel of a file can be lost with changes in software versions. Any file you have migrated to a later software version should be examined in detail to identify undesired alterations.

Emulation: This is the best solution for continued long-term access to your digital content when the migration of files creates problems, or when the software used to create or modify the content is no longer updated, sup- ported, or available. Emulation is the process of running an older version of software on a virtual machine. These virtual machines run

software to replicate the look and feel of older technologies, and closely mimic the original experience of users interacting with the digital content. Saving the original hardware and software to access and interact with the digital files and the programs used to create or modify their content, while useful in theory, may not be a viable option—the fragility of the original hardware and software make them impractical for the purposes of long-term preservation.

Media Files Digital media—e.g., still images, and time-based media such as sound, video, and combinations of these—are among some of the most difficult file formats to work with using computers. The main difficulties with digital media are related to the immense size many of these files can attain, and the software processing load placed on your system when working with them. Your media files can quickly evolve so that you need multiple terabytes of storage space to handle them. This can mean that preserving a sizable collection is a cost- and time-intensive undertaking. While you may have adequate disk storage for saving your media files, working with these files (e.g., transferring, opening, closing, manipulating, saving, etc.) requires random-access memory (RAM) sufficient to the task. If you find that working with media files causes your machine to work very slowly, increasing the machine's RAM is likely to help eliminate such problems.

<div align="center">

To find out how much RAM your machine has:

</div>

- On a PC, go to Start, find the computer menu item, select it, and right-click on Properties.
- On a Mac, click on the Apple icon in the upper-left corner of the desktop, click on it to activate the menu; then, click on About This Mac.

The amount of RAM you need will vary based on the types of files you create and the software you run when working with digital media. Digital media files (and their modifications) are temporarily stored in your computer's RAM, as are any programs you have opened. Current software used to create and manipulate still image files typically requires 2 gigabytes (2GB) of RAM or more; software used for audio and video files typically requires at least 4GB of RAM.

Unit	Abbr.	Conversion
bit	b	A basic unit of information within a computer. A bit can hold only one of two values, 0 or 1. The term is a combination from the phrase binary digit.
byte	B	= 8 bits

kilobyte	KB	= 1024 bytes
megabyte	MB	= 1024 kilobytes or 1,048,576 bytes
gigabyte	GB	= 1024 megabytes or 1,073,741,824 bytes
terabyte	TB	= 1024 gigabytes or 1,099,511,627,776 bytes
petabyte	PB	= 1024 terabytes or 1,125,899,906,842,624 bytes
exabyte	EP	= 1024 petabytes or 1,152,921,504,606,846,976 bytes
zettabyte	ZB	= 1024 exabytes or 1,180,591,620,717,411,303,424 bytes
yottabyte	YB	= 1024 zettabytes or 1,208,925,819,614,629,174,706,176 bytes

Table of unit conversions for computer storage

While hardware constraints are important, another issue that can lower the performance of your machine is working with files stored on external drives. With smaller files stored on an external drive, the time lag experienced when transferring, opening, modifying, and saving them may be imperceptible. However, working with large media files will likely create noticeable problems in system performance. When you work with files stored on an external drive or other storage media, the files and their modifications must travel between the two separate machines, devices, or media, be stored in your machine's RAM, and be saved by having the data travel back to the device to overwrite the original file (or be saved as a new file). The speed of the device and the connection method will also affect the system's performance. To avoid such problems, make a copy of the file to be manipulated on the hard drive of the computer you are working on and use the copy. Be aware that, when you are finished, you will need to copy the changed file back to the external drive or storage media. This is likely to be a small inconvenience compared to the decreased performance you can experience while working with files stored elsewhere.

Chapter 7
Managing Digital Content

INTRODUCTION

The most critical factor in making all of your future digital processes—storing, archiving, finding, etc.—easier to accomplish is the organization of your digital content. Because a number of different organizational schemes can work (e.g., arrangement by date, project name, file type, purpose, status, etc.), you will need to determine which arrangement is most useful to you and the way you operate digitally. Few artists devote much time to organizing their items until their need to do so is greater than the inconvenience they experience in trying to find the items they need. If you find yourself spending a lot of time and effort trying to find files, a few hours set aside for some digital housekeeping will help resolve this irksome situation and allow you to find things more quickly and easily.

Motivations for Digital Preservation There are a variety of motivations for saving your digital content; in addition to your own needs, you should consider the reasons future users might have to use your files. This list should help you think about the various reasons for preserving digital content:

- o productivity (providing more time for creating artwork)
- o value (save space, save money, increase the significance of your artwork)
- o visibility (documents your artwork/achievements)
- o communication (readily available documentation)
- o preservation (minimizes the handling of actual objects and original documents)
- o future use and access (for you and others)
- o legal (for purposes of establishing copyright or to write grant applications; or to document, for you or your heirs, the existence of artworks lost to theft or destruction)
- o social (connects you to others)
- o emotional (psychological connections to artworks and events)

You will find preserving your digital content easier to do if you separate your digital files into different groups (or series, in archivespeak). You will want to work through your digital content to determine which documents or files fit into the record-keeping categories of Hot, Warm, Cold, and Toss (disposition). Each of these groups is likely to have been selected according to different criteria. For example, all of the Hot files (e.g., your current works in

progress) will need to be saved to an easily accessible place, whereas your Cold files (e.g., no-longer-used files of legal, social, and/or emotional importance) can be saved in a location

that is not as handy. For now, you will want to take a look at how you have been saving and arranging your digital content.

Your Organizational Patterns The first step in organizing your digital content is to determine the organizational tendencies you already have and use. Have you organized the top-level folders on your computer by date, event, function, media, and project, or have you organized them in a variety of ways over the years? How do you deal with subfolders within your top-level folders? Do you see any patterns in the way you have named your files? Are there multiple copies of files in several different places? How have you been managing multiple versions of files? These are all important issues.

Think about which arrangement of files works best for you, as well as those arrangements that seem to create problems. You should also think about how readily your arrangement of files can be understood by others. Incomprehensible folder organization will make your content inaccessible to people interested in you and your artwork in the future. Think about organizing your digital content so that those looking at your records for the first time will be able to easily find what they need.
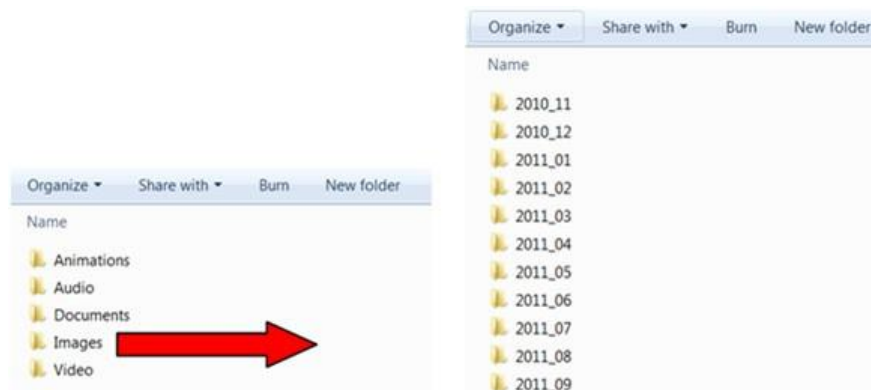
Example of folder and subfolder arrangement

Organizational Schemes There is no prescribed, universal way to organize digital content—each person collects, creates, and orders items according to their unique needs. In your analysis of your own documents, you may find that you have two dominant organizational schemes working together, e.g., folders organized by date and by topic, as in "2012_01_AtlantaArts," "2012_01_BethlehemSummerArts," etc. It is important that you recognize the organizational patterns you already use to decide whether or not to expand, streamline, or otherwise change those patterns, and to then use the approach you have settled on as consistently as you can. Having to cope with multiple organizational and naming schemes is confusing, so try to stick with a single form of arrangement. The key is to name and organize folders and files so that you will be able to understand what they contain at a glance, without having to open them.

Example of subfolder numbering and naming for meaningful arrangement.

In determining your arrangement, you will want to choose something broad comprehensive enough that it will work for all or at least a majority of your top-level folders. If your topmost level folders contain files based on media, you might have subfolders titled Documents, Images, Video, Audio, and Animations. Sub-subfolders within each of these folders might be arranged by year, or year and month, by type of file, by functional purpose, and so on. Another useful tip is to number subfolders so that they sort in a way that is meaningful to you. The important thing to aim for is simple and straightforward organization—cryptic names and convoluted folder structures will thwart your and others' ability to find things in the future.

Move Forward! Determining Your Organizational Patterns

Goal: Determine what organizational patterns you have used in the past.
What you need: Print outs of the folder structure for the various kinds of files stored on your computer and devices.
Time required: 1-2 hours.

In this exercise you will examine the various ways you have organized and named your folders and files. This will help you determine what organizational rules work most naturally for you so that you can begin to make more conscious decisions about the way you order and name your digital content.

Looking at the arrangement and naming of your folders and files determine what patterns exist in your digital content. The separately arranged groups of files are called a series. Below you will identify the various ways you have organized your content by describing separate series you have used.

Series Set
    Series name:
    Series description:

Main organizational pattern: Secondary organizational pattern:

File naming convention(s) used: Strengths / weaknesses of pattern:

Example
Series name: Exhibition documents

Series description: all document files associated with exhibiting my work (contracts, work documentation, proof of insurance, item checklists, travel preparations, exhibition images, artist statements, and biographical handouts)
Main organizational pattern: Top-most folders by year, within these folders named by exhibition title Secondary organizational pattern: when there are many items within an named exhibition folder these items are arranged in separate folders by document type (e.g., 1_administrative, 2_images, 3_artist's information, 4_transportation).

File naming conventions used: By year, exhibition name, then file function (e.g., 2001_HenPecked_Insurance, 2001_HenPecked_Sales, 2001_HenPecked_Bio)

Strengths/weaknesses of pattern: The main strength is that the system is uniform across different folders of exhibition content and fairly easy to understand. A weakness is that there might be multiple subfolders with the same names but with different content.

Questions
What patterns do you see in the top-most folder names?
What patterns do you see in the subfolder names?

What patterns do you see in the file names?

What are the strengths and weaknesses that you noted?

Will the predominant patterns you see work for all of your digital content?

Getting a Handle on What You Have

After you have determined which organizational principles you commonly use, you should examine the digital content currently in your possession. Inventory, in a general way, the digital items you have created and collected in terms of file types and the items' broad function.

This information, together with the organizational structures you have already identified, should now be used to develop a plan for the management of your digital content. In this plan you will document how folders and files will be arranged; the selection criteria you will use for determining the status of files; the conventions you will use in naming folders, subfolders, and files; and your decisions about how to handle different versions of files.

Move Forward! Inventory of Digital Files

Goal: Determine what digital content you have.

What you need: Access to your computer and storage media.

Time required: Depends on the amount of digital content and number of devices.

This worksheet has you examine and note the various types of files you have stored on your computer and devices and note the basic function of the files and their current status (hot, warm, cold, or disposition). Working through your folders determine the following:

What file types (e.g., TIFF, WAV, PDF, docx, etc.) do you have?

What are the broad functions of the items (e.g., biographical, creative, financial, legal, personal, pleasure, reference, etc.?

What is the status of the files (e.g., hot, warm, cold, disposition)

Folder Name	File Types	Function	Status
Example: Budget	doc, docx, xlsx, pdf	Financial	Mainly cold, a few files of other types

Move Forward! Worksheet Management Plan for Digital Content

Goal: Create a management plan which documents decisions about your digital content.
What you need: Access to your computer and storage media.
Time required: 1 hour

This worksheet will help clarify decisions that need to be made about your digital content. It identifies decisions you make about how your digital things are arranged, your file selection criteria, your folder/file naming conventions, and how the versioning of files will be handled. To do this answer the following questions:

What general organizational patterns are to be followed?

How will you determine which files (all, some, none?) are preserved? What will your selection criteria consist of? List these.

How will you choose the names for your files?

What will you do when you have multiple versions of the same file? (Will you append the original file name? Will you erase all but the latest version? Will you put all of the earlier files in a separate folder named Earlier_Versions?

Scheduling Preservation Activities

To ensure that your digital content is managed in a useful way, it is best to develop some regular routines of preservation that work for you. Here are some basic suggestions:

Daily: Make sure that you save multiple copies of any files that are important now, or will be in the future, and delete any useless files.
Weekly: Create backup copies of any content that has been added or modified since your last backup.
Monthly or Quarterly: Perform some digital housekeeping by examining the folders that you use most frequently. Check to make sure that useless content is deleted, and that important materials are being archived in multiple locations.

Yearly: Assess your storage media and devices and create full backups to be stored in several locations. Spot-check archived files of different types to ensure that your stored files are still accessible, readable, and usable.

If you are pressed for time, save all your digital content to multiple storage media, at least as a temporary measure. This is the best option if you haven't been regularly or systematically separating useful and important digital content from the useless and unimportant. You can weed out your digital content one folder at a time, merely by spending a few minutes each day. Work this into your daily routine—say, as you drink your morning coffee.

Examine each folder, and determine which category fits each file in that folder: Hot, Warm, Cold, or Toss. First, delete files that have no useful purpose. Folders that contain only one category of file (Hot, Warm, or Cold) can be handled as a group. While you will create your own rules in your data-management plan, here are some suggested routines for dealing with single-category folders:

Hot file folders stay on your computer's hard drive and are backed up to multiple storage media.
Warm file folders can stay on your computer, and/or be backed up to multiple storage media.
Cold file folders are first backed up to multiple storage media, then removed from your computer's hard drive.

If you find a folder filled with a mix of Hot, Warm, and Cold files, you need to make some decisions. If a folder contains only Warm and Cold files, you will want to back them up to multiple storage media, then remove them from your computer's hard drive. If you find a mix of all three types of files, you need to decide if you will continue to keep all of them in this single folder on your hard drive, or if it makes sense to move the "cooler" files to separate folders to be backed up. For example, you might consider breaking up the contents of a folder into new, archived, "cooler" folders whose names refer to particular groupings (e.g., moving Warm and Cold files from a correspondence folder on your hard drive, to back up only folders named "correspondence_2000-2009" and "correspondence_1990-1999").

Future Use of Your Digital Archive

As you prepare your digital materials, keep in mind that, ultimately, someone without an intimate understanding of your digital content will need to make sense of what you have done. It will help such future users if the arrangement and methods you have used to prepare files are easily grasped. For example, folders and files that are named using abstruse

conventions (e.g., "HVBT," "18943," "Hy412jT," "BC24," etc.) will be difficult or impossible for others to understand without a key to decipher them. The same can be said for conventions associated with multiple versions of files. While the files themselves can be used to make sense of their content and version, having to open each file to understand it can be a maddening process.

In naming and organizing computer files and folders, the best rule to follow is: Keep it simple. Following these basic practices of organizing files and documents will help ensure that your digital content remains accessible and useful long after you created it. In naming and organizing computer files and folders, the best rule to follow is: Keep it simple. Following these basic practices of organizing files and documents will help ensure that your digital content remains accessible long after you created.

Chapter 8
Archival Storage Media

INTRODUCTION

After you have identified the content you currently have that needs to be preserved, you will need to determine where these materials will be archived. Several readily available options of storage media are available, ranging from CDs, DVDs, and Bluray discs to flash drives, data tapes, portable external drives, and web-based storage services. Most of these options can store a limited amount of digital content and will require you to own or have access to specific devices for the creation, access, and use of your archived material. Each storage media has advantages and disadvantages and will be most useful for a specific storage purpose. In this chapter we discuss the various storage options available to you, the devices you will need for creating or accessing the stored con- tent, and and highlight some of the problems that can be created by limited storage capacity. As the storage media and required devices you choose will have a lasting impact on your digital archive, spending some time to learn about the available options will help you make informed decisions. But whichever storage media you select, one of the most important things to remember in archiving your digital content is the LOCKSS principle: Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe.

External & Networked Drives

The most common media option for individuals needing to store large amounts of data is the external hard drive. These come in a variety of sizes, from small, easily portable devices to large drives that can store the digital content of multiple users across a network. Drives differ in terms of storage capacity, whether or not they need an external power source, how they are connected to your computer, and how backups are performed. Today's external drives can store multiple terabytes (TB) of content; require an external power source of their own; and tend to be physically large, stationary devices designed to be permanently attached to a computer or a network. Small, portable drives typically have much smaller capacities, but do not require an external power source.

An example of a portable external hard drive. The date of purchase is written on it in permanent marker, so the owner knows when it's time to be replaced.

There are several ways to connect your computer to an external drive. The simplest of these is to run a Universal Serial Bus (USB) cable directly from your computer to the external device. If you are using an external drive, this is probably because you have a lot of digital content; if so, you will want to think about the rates of data transfer of the storage devices and media you use. Transfer speeds between your computer and external drives will vary based on the technology of the devices and the cables used in the process. At the moment, the fastest technology available is USB 3.0, with a transfer rate of up to 5 gigabits per second (5Gbps), or about ten times faster than the older USB 2.0 technology's maximum speed of 480 megabits per second (Mbps). In other words, a group of files that would take 120 minutes to transfer via USB 2.0 would take only 12 minutes to transfer via USB 3.0. Clearly, if you work with vast quantities of data that you copy or transfer on an ongoing basis, investing in the fastest technology you can afford will save you a lot of time.

Another option often used in transferring data is a network. In a wired network, your computer is connected to a router via a cable, through which data are transferred to a networked drive or server attached to the router by another cable. In a wireless network, data are transferred from a computer outfitted with a wireless card (internal or external) to a wireless router, which then passes the data along to a drive or server via a wired connection. Rates of data transfer can vary depending on the characteristics of the network, the Internet service provider (ISP), cables, routers, and the technologies within the computer, devices, and external drive(s). As a general rule, the fastest data-transfer speeds now available are achieved with a computer connected directly to an external drive via a USB 3.0 cable.

Online Storage Services, aka "The Cloud"

These services provide free or fee-based storage space to which you upload your content. Commonly, they offer various levels of storage capacity at various subscription rates, and often the interfaces they provide for up-loading your content have been designed to replicate the look and operation of your computer. Online storage services are a good option for individuals who want to back up files of small to medium size on an ongoing basis or store selective sets of moderately sized files. The rate of data transfer to these services is generally insufficient for individuals who need to upload large files and/or vast data collections. Transferring very large files or complete backups of large amounts of data can take a day or more. Be aware that connections can "time out"; if this happens, not all the data in the process of being transferred may have been copied. Another problem with online storage services is that none of these companies has a long history of being in business—understandable, with such a recent technology, but hardly reassuring to the customer. To

help ensure that your digital content will be archived for the foreseeable future, be sure to rely on another storage method for your primary backup.

CDs, DVDs, & Blu-ray Discs

Compact Discs (CDs) and Digital Versatile Discs (DVDs) are among the most ubiquitous storage media available. Typical CDs have a maximum storage capacity of 700 megabytes (700MB), and their main advantages are that they are inexpensive, easy to acquire, portable, and easily labeled. The disadvantages of CDs are that their storage capacity is limited, they are prone to failure, they are easily broken, and the retrieval of files from them requires a CD drive. Double-layer DVDs have a much higher storage capacity of 8.5GB. Blu-ray discs (BDs) share the basic characteristics of CDs and DVDs, except that they require a Blu-ray drive. BDs can store far more data than CDs and DVDs, to a maximum of 50GB. This increased storage capacity makes BDs an affordable option for a second method of storing your digital content.

Flash Drives

Another highly portable form of storage media is the USB flash or thumb drive. These have various storage capacities, ranging in size from 100MB to more than 64GB. Flash drives' main advantages are their portability, durability, reliability, and speed. Their compact design and USB technology make them an ideal means of trans- porting data to multiple machines—to save and move digital content, all you need is a machine with a USB port. Their main disadvantage is that their storage capacity is unlikely to serve the needs of artists with large collections of digital media files. Their small size also means that they are easily misplaced.

Data Tapes

Data tapes (aka data cartridges, DAT tapes, MiniDV), like CDs, DVDs, and BDs, also require a specific device for data to be copied and stored on removable media. Data tapes range in capacity from 20GB to multiple terabytes. This method is one of the industry standards for backing up server contents—if you have multiple external hard drives full of data, data tapes might be a good option. Typically, a series of tapes is used to back up the contents of a networked drive or server, and multiple backups of all of the data are made. For example, tape 1 and tape 2 are exact copies of the contents of a server on a specific date. Tape 1 will be kept onsite, while tape 2 is stored offsite. The next tape backup, done at a later time, will use tape 3 and tape 4. Tape 3 will be kept onsite and tape
4 will be moved offsite.

Tape backups offer several advantages over the storage media discussed above. Data tapes are compact and relatively inexpensive for the quantity of data stored. They also encourage the development of a routine for data backup, and this alone may help in the long-term

preservation of your digital content. However, there are several disadvantages to data tapes. The tapes have a limited lifespan, they degrade after being used multiple times, and backing up digital content to data tapes is more labor intensive than using other media. The process can be automated to some extent, but for each routine backup, someone needs to remember to insert the tapes into the drive, monitor the data transfer from computer(s) to tapes, and rotate the tape offsite. And, of course, you must buy a tape drive.

Transfer Rate

Data-transfer performance across a network, wired or wireless, can be affected by many factors: hardware, connection speeds of ISPs, number of simultaneous connections, etc. The fastest rate at which you will be able to transfer data will be the speed of the slowest link in your data-transfer chain. In other words, the latest hard- ware technologies may be available to you, but there will be little advantage in that if you're trying to use a DSL connection to transfer your data to an offsite storage device or server. The slow speed of the DSL (128 Kbps to 3 Mbps) acts as a dam in the flow of data.

Data-transfer test showing different speeds of data download and upload across a cable-network connection

Also important is the fact that data-transfer speeds of download and upload can be remarkably different across the same network at different times. A related issue that can affect transfer speeds is the route your data are taking to reach their destination. Running a trace route of your connection can help you see just how many devices and servers are involved in the process of moving your data.

Automatic Backups

One way to reduce the amounts of time and effort you spend preserving your digital content is to automate your backups. Data drives, external drives, and online services often come bundled with software that you can use to automatically copy a new file or create backups at predetermined times that you define (e.g., 3 a.m. every morning, each Friday at 9 p.m., etc.). Furthermore, the software can be set up to indicate whether or not the backup will copy all files, only specific kinds of files, only specific folders, or only those items that have been added or modified since the last backup. How the backup is set up and carried out will depend on the backup software you will use, or the backup options provided by your online service. Automating this process means that there is one less thing for you to remember to

do. Automation removes much of the work involved in pre- serving your digital content, and that will give you more time to do other tasks.

Best Practices for Storage

There are several things you can do to make sure your digital content is accessible longer into the future. First, whenever possible, you should use standard, well-adopted file formats for your digital files. Next, be sure to mark your storage media with the purchase date, and plan on copying or migrating your digital content to new media every two to five years. Try to use at least two different forms of storage media to archive your digital con- tent, and store these in geographically separate places. Using different forms of storage is one way to mitigate the risks associated with decaying media. Remember to organize and label your storage media so that you can easily find and access needed files, and keep your storage media in a safe, secure location, preferably one that does not see large fluctuations in temperature and humidity.

Scheduling Storage Routines Regularly scheduled storage and backup routines will help ensure that your digital files are preserved into the future. The amount of digital material that you preserve and how often you add to it will dictate the type of schedule you follow. Nevertheless, some basic suggestions for a workable routine are:

- **Daily**: Back up files that have been modified to at least two different media and locations.
- **Weekly:** examine backups to make sure they are being carried out correctly, and that the files and folders you want preserved are actually being preserved.
- **Monthly:** Examine media and devices to ensure that they are in good operating order. Spot-check files to ensure their continued accessibility, readability, and original state.
- **Yearly:** Check file types and perform updates for critical software changes. Examine updated files for undesirable changes (e.g., formatting changes, poor readability of file).
- **As needed:** Refresh media every two to five years. How often you will copy all of your stored files to new media will depend on the format of the media used, the devices used to create and read the files, how often the content is accessed, and environmental factors such as temperature and humidity. Be conservative— while manufacturers might claim that their CDs will last 10 to 15 years, this figure is likely based on studies conducted in ideal situations far removed from the real-world challenges you face.

Move Forward! Determining Your Digital Storage Needs

Goal: Determine how much storage you need to make a copy of your digital content.

What you need: Access to the various computers and devices containing your digital content, and a way to record and calculate the storage amounts (i.e., pad of paper and a calculator or an Excel spreadsheet).

Time required: 1-2 hours.

In this exercise you will inventory the various computers and devices you have to determine what you have, what you should save and how much storage space you need to adequately create a single back- up of your digital content.

Questionnaire

How many computers and other devices do you have? What do/did you use each computer and device for?

For each:

- What do/did you use it for?
- List the type of computer or device and when it was acquired. Was it new or used at the time you acquired it?
- Is this computer or device shared with anyone else? If so, who else do you share it with and what do they use it for?
- Determine earliest and latest dates of file creation on this computer or device.
- What types of files are on this computer (make a checklist here with a space for "other")
- Are there any personal files located on this computer or device? If so, are they kept separate from your work files?
- Should only certain files on the computer or device be backed up? If yes, please list folders and files to be saved.

Once you have inventoried all of your computers and devices you will need to move all of the back-up worthy content to a single folder on each computer or device to determine the size of the folders and files.

Example

Device name: Michael Sample

Kind of device: PC desktop computer
Description of contents: Professional and personal correspondence, artwork images from January 2010 to January 2014.
Number of folders / files: 29,254 Files, 2,504 Folders
Size: 65.9 GB

Your Devices

1. Device name: Kind of device:
   Description of contents:
   Number of folders / files: Size:

2. Device name: Kind of device:
   Description of contents:
   Number of folders / files: Size:

3. Device name: Kind of device:
   Description of contents:
   Number of folders / files: Size:

4. Device name: Kind of device:
   Description of contents:
   Number of folders / files: Size:

5. Device name: Kind of device:
   Description of contents:
   Number of folders / files: Size:

6. Device name: Kind of device:
   Description of contents:
   Number of folders / files: Size:

(Repeat as needed)
TOTAL Storage Requirements:

Move Forward! Archiving Digital Files

Goal: Identify how you will archive your digital files.

What you need: Your computer and storage devices, a pad of paper, and something to write with.

Time required: 30 minutes.

Which files?

Which formats? How often?

What storage media? How many backups? Located where?

Institutional, departmental, personal?

Incremental (initial then changed) OR Differential (initial then changed or created) backup? What procedures for backup checking (completeness, verifying)?

What organizational and naming conventions?

Chapter 9
Dealing with E-mail

INTRODUCTION

The technical complexities of electronic mail, and its importance in the documentation of your life, the art you create, and your legacy as an artist, warrant a chapter of their own. As with other records you keep, saving e-mail correspondence can be critical to protecting your rights, ensuring accountability in business transactions and agreements, reconstructing events and actions you have been involved in, and revealing your connection to a network of individuals, organizations, friends, and family members.

Today's e-mail messages comprise correspondences that, in the past, were recorded on paper. Because e-mail documents, like the paper documents that preceded them, are one of the primary ways that you and your work will speak to the future, you need to decide what to do with them. Do you keep every e-mail you ever sent or received, or do you delete inconsequential items? If the latter, how do you decide which e-mails are consequential, and which are not? Do you use separate e-mail accounts or folders for professional and personal e-mail? Do you flag and save only the most important items? What about the private data concerning you and your work, colleagues, family, and friends that e-mails can contain? When your e-mail is transferred to an archive, will you allow everyone to have access to everything, or will accessed be restricted—whether for a specific period of time, and/or to particular individuals? This chapter discusses the technical issues involved in saving your e-mail.

I keep as many e-mails as I can, and the thing that I'm bad at – and I'm trying to get better at it – is to go through and delete e-mails that are not important. But I try to keep everything, because I'll never know when I'm going to need information that's in an e-mail. But I also go back in time and I try to delete as much as possible and keep the ones that are important.

-Phyllis Baldino, artist

Approaches to Archiving E-mail

Paper Copies Currently, there are several ways to archive your e-mail. The most basic of these is to print e-mail messages (and their attachments, when possible) as hard copies, file them as you would any other paper documents, and then delete the digital copies from your e-mail service. This solves the problem of the limited storage capacities of some e-mail accounts. While this method is attractive for its simplicity, and the convenience of filing together all items concerning a particular project or topic, it removes the indexing and search possibilities of computerized files. Another weakness of this method is that the integrity of the documents cannot be ensured; their header data may not be visible, or may have been tampered with, which would limit their usefulness in legal matters.

Paper files, including some printed email, at the studio of artist Cai Guo-Qiang

Digital Copies E-mail messages can be duplicated and kept on digital storage media. The messages are copied and saved in their native format, separately from the e-mail system. This preserves the integrity of the files, but the underlying structure of the messages within the e-mail system (threaded con- versations, attachments, etc.) may be lost in the process.

File Migration A final method is to migrate e-mail messages to another format, such as.pdf or .xml, and store them in a separate preservation system. This retains the critical underlying structure of the messages within the system and the information in the headers and provides a means by which the e-mails and their contents can be searched and sorted.

> For a long time, we printed out every e-mail…It's gotten somewhat out of control. Now we try to print out just important e-mails. We do a little more, like editing, saving, and occasionally….we just print things as PDFs that we save on the server.
>
> -Bonnie Huie, archive assistant, Cai Studio

Technical Issues

The difficulties of preserving e-mail stem from the technical complexities of e-mail itself. The first complexity involves the systems used to write, transfer, and display messages. E-mail

systems have two basic components: the server side, which transfers, accepts, and, in some cases, stores e-mail messages; and the client side, which allows users to read, write, send, and sort messages. Depending on the system, its settings, and the way your client side is configured, the messages you send and receive may be stored on the server (i.e., webmail), on your computer, or both. Where your messages will reside will need to be determined before you begin to archive your e-mail. Once this question has been answered, you need to be aware that, to be as useful in future as they were originally, your saved e-mail messages must contain:

- the header data
- the contextual clues provided through threads
- the original attachments
- any formatted content embedded in the message

The header data of a message is hidden by most e-mail systems, but it is the main means of authenticating messages. The header reveals a number of important details about the message, such as who sent and received it, the date and time it was sent, the server where it originated, and the Internet protocol (IP) address of the server. You will want to investigate how to display the header data in the e-mail system you use. The underlying structure of messages, the threaded organization that they followed, is useful for tracking conversations about a particular event, topic, or date. E-mail messages and the files attached to them come in a variety of formats, which inevitably complicates the process of preserving them. Finally, be aware that content embedded within your e-mails may not transfer to messages that have been removed from the original e-mail system.

Tools for Saving Your E-mail

Your E-mail Account Settings and PDF Several tools are available to help you deal with archiving your e-mails. A basic way to create an e-mail archive is to print the item to a PDF file and then treat this file as you would any other digital content. However, this method is time-intensive, and the PDF will not preserve the e-mail's header data (unless you can find a way to display and print it). Adjusting the e-mail settings for your account might allow you to print the header information; this is something you will want to explore, if printing your messages to PDF is an option that attracts you. Regardless, the threaded organization of the original messages in the e-mail system will be lost, which might make this not the best solution for your needs.

Other Commercial and Open-Source Tools Several commercial and open-source tools and services are available that can be used to mi- grate your e-mail messages to other formats, or

to copy and store your e-mail in a different location. Software has been developed that you can use to capture all e-mail you send and receive, migrate messages from one of the proprietary e-mail formats (e.g., .pst, .nsf) to a more preservation-friendly format (e.g., .pdf, .xml) and to automatically store your e-mail messages in a separate storage area. In addition to software, several cloud-based e-mail storage services are available. A few of these tools are suggested in the "Resources" section at the end of this book.

Unfortunately, I think a lot of it [his e-mail] was not preserved, because he had AOL. I think they had [only] a megabyte of storage for a while...on some projects...he did print out, and so we have physical copies of the e-mails...Luckily, now he's using mail server, but that only goes back to 2006 or 2007...through the Mac program...it's like he kind of needs to make that decision of what [to keep] because I'm not going to search through is e-mails.

-artist archive assistant

Move Forward! Inventory Your E-mail

Goal: Create a basic inventory of your e-mail.
What you need: Access to your e-mail accounts, a means of recording your accounts, their details, and your login information.
Time required: 30 minutes - 1 hour.

How many e-mail accounts do you have?   1   2   3   Other   (write in number)
List each of your e-mail accounts, providing their access location, login and passwords

Have you ever discontinued an e-mail account? If so, what did you do with the old e-mails? If you have more than one e-mail account, what do you use the different accounts for?

Are you able to access all of these e-mail accounts?

Details of Each Account
Identify the account:

- Which e-mail program do you use with this account? How do you organize your e-mails in this account?
- How do you save your e-mails in this account? Do you use an address book for this account?
- Is there a space quota assigned to this e-mail account? If yes, have you exceeded the quota?
- What kinds of correspondence are sent and received using this account (i.e., personal, financial transactions, amusement, as an archive of important work documents, etc.)?
- What is the earliest e-mail sent and received from this account? Is this account still active?
- If no, when is the latest e-mail sent and received from this account?
- Do you share this e-mail account with other people? If yes, with whom and for what purpose?

The value of e-mail messages to your legacy cannot be overstated; it is important that you make sure they are properly preserved.

To gain some control over your e-mail, you will need to perform an inventory of the e-mail accounts you have and record some basic details about them. Because it tracks all of your accounts, this information will be helpful to you, your assistants, and your heirs. It is needed to support your everyday work, but in emergency situations it can be critically important. List each e-mail account you use, and the main purpose(s) of that account (e.g., personal, professional, financial, etc.). A brief statement of each account's contents will also be useful. Be sure to include active and inactive e-mail accounts and their rough dates of use. The number of e-mails included in each account can also be useful information since it can indicate the accounts' relative importance. If you can, provide a breakdown of the folder structure and the general contents of each folder. Finally, the login information used to access each account should be recorded. This information should be kept with your other mission-critical documents, as a part of your management plan for your digital content. This type of proactive preparation is the first step in determining in determining which e-mails to store, and how and where to store them.

Chapter 10
Database Basics

INTRODUCTION

Databases are systems that make it easier to sort, organize, and manage information. Some databases, such as Apple iPhoto and Adobe Lightroom, can live on our computers, whereas others, such as Flickr and LinkedIn, exist only online. Databases are highly useful because they allow us to sort or browse thousands of items in seconds, and because they let us find things using only small bits of information. This chapter looks at what databases can help you do, and the various technical capabilities of databases. We begin by talking about how a database can support various tasks an artist needs to do. We then discuss the basic kinds of databases available and provide you with a glimpse at the technical details under the hood of databases to help you make informed decisions about the kind of database that might work best for your needs.

How Databases Are Useful to the Artist

Databases are designed to contain key pieces of information that can be examined, tracked, updated, amended, sorted, printed, and exported, among a host of other useful tasks. Many artists have databases to help them become more efficient in their studio practices. Databases can be used for a variety of tasks, ranging from maintaining simple lists of e-mail contacts to providing legal documentation of intellectual-property rights and the history of works' sales and valuation. Put simply, databases let you maintain records about your artwork, the materials you've used to create that work, the institutions, and people you've worked with, and key events. The information contained in the records of your database is extremely useful to what you, as an artist, need to do to succeed. For example, a database's contents would be remarkably useful for estate planning, and the research needed to compile a catalogue raisonné. In short, a database will help you work more effectively so that you have more time for your creative pursuits.

A short list of the types of information a database can help you track:
>   **Artist biography**—résumé, bibliography, oral histories, interviews
>   **Artwork provenance**—tracking the condition, sales, and ownership of your works
>   Artwork documentation—artwork and exhibition images, intellectual-property rights (copyright), valuation, insurance, conservation, and condition reports
>   **Contact information**—telephone numbers, e-mail, addresses, and key details about people and institutions

Records

In a database, a record is roughly equivalent to an individual document in a paper-based filing system. However, unlike documents in a paper-based filing system, each database record can potentially be linked to many other records in that database. For example, in your database you could create an artwork record to describe, in detail, an artwork you created. This artwork could have been curated by a particular individual, who might have a person record in your database, and/or been shown in a particular exhibition, which might have an event record. Both the person and event records could be linked to the artwork record. Furthermore, if this exhibition took place in a gallery, that gallery might have an institution record; and if the work was also reproduced in a publication, it might have a publication record. All of these records are stored in the database. Depending on how your database is structured, these records can also be linked to the records for the artwork, person, and event. Each of these records—artwork, person, event, institution, publication—could contain more detailed in- formation, and have images, documents, videos, and audio attached to them. The richness of the information stored in a database

depends on the basic mechanics of the database, and on how much effort can be devoted to entering records and attaching media files. The next sections clarify how the underlying mechanics of data- bases affect the way they function.
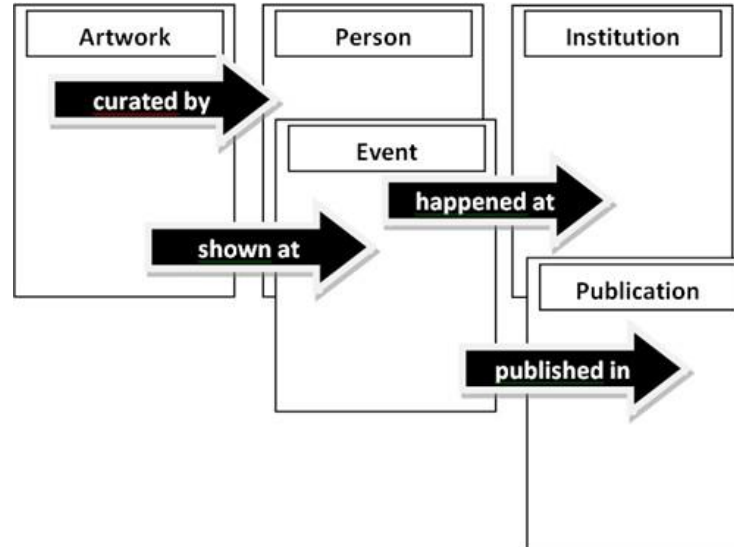
Some of the ways different tables of a database can be linked

Types of Databases

Databases are collections of associated bits of information that have been arranged in a way that grants easy access to that information. Folders of paper-based documents in a filing
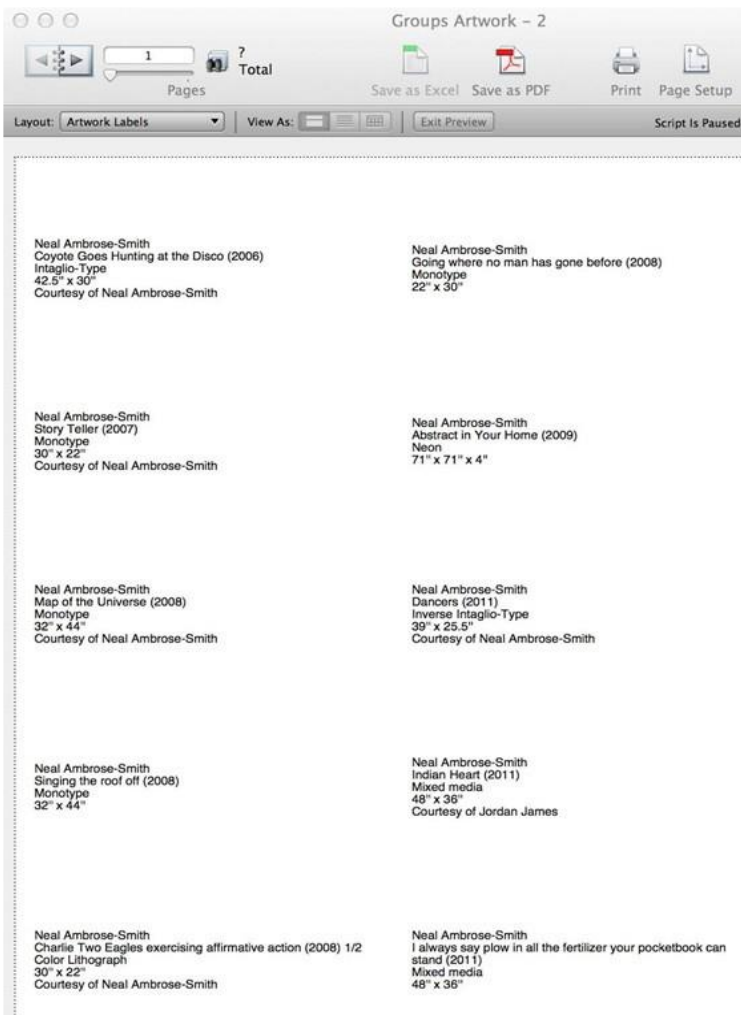
cabinet, library card catalogues, and recipe cards in a box are examples of databases in paper form. Computerized databases operate on the same principle as these paper-based systems, but have the added advantage being able to sort their data along multiple parameters. All databases can sort, discover, and display the data stored in them. In a paper-based system, the organization is generally based on the terms assigned to the folder or card. In a computer-based system, the organization is based on the alphanumeric sorting of particular fields within the database. Computerized data- bases vary greatly in their features and how they handle data; here are some pointers that will help you decide which database will work for you.

Key Points of Database Design
Point 1: Find out about the functions.

All databases organize and display the data contained within them and allow for searches, but there are many other functions that databases can do for you. Before you start shopping around for a database you should think about how a database can be used to automate some of the tasks you need to do in your studio. What do you want your database to be able to do for you? These can include creating an updated CV, bibliographies, mailing/shipping labels, labels, or information sheets for works, condition reports for works, and printing location inventories. The report writing feature of the database you select will be key to all of the previous tasks.

In addition to being able to extract specific fields of data out of the database, will you want the database to have the capability to incorporate data from other technologies such as a barcode or RDF reader, or a camera? This can allow for the direct importing of data. A truly critical function to look for in a database is the ability to import and export data with ease. Most databases will allow you to import and export your data as comma (CSV) or tab (TSV) separated values files. These kinds of files make using your data (e.g., within a spreadsheet, in another system, for developing web- sites, etc.) a straightforward process. Current databases offer a variety of functions and so as you investigate what databases are available, you should think about which of these offer the most useful functions to support to your practices. These functions all dependent on the underlying mechanics of the database and that's where we turn next.

Point 2: Flat-file and relational databases work in different ways.

Databases use tables to store data. Tables are the columns and rows that you see in a spread- sheet. Most databases use specific layouts and design for their tables to provide an aesthetically appealing and useful user interface, whereas a spreadsheet is a view of many columns and rows of cells. Cells in a spreadsheet are like the fields or boxes used for data entry. Databases are de-signed with either single or multiple tables. Single table databases are known as "flat file databases", while those with multiple tables are known as "relational databases". A relational database for use by an artist might contain tables for artworks, events, people, institutions, publications and shipping information. A flat file database would contain all these various kinds of data together in a single spreadsheet fashion.

Screenshot showing preview of artwork labels generated by a database's report-generating function
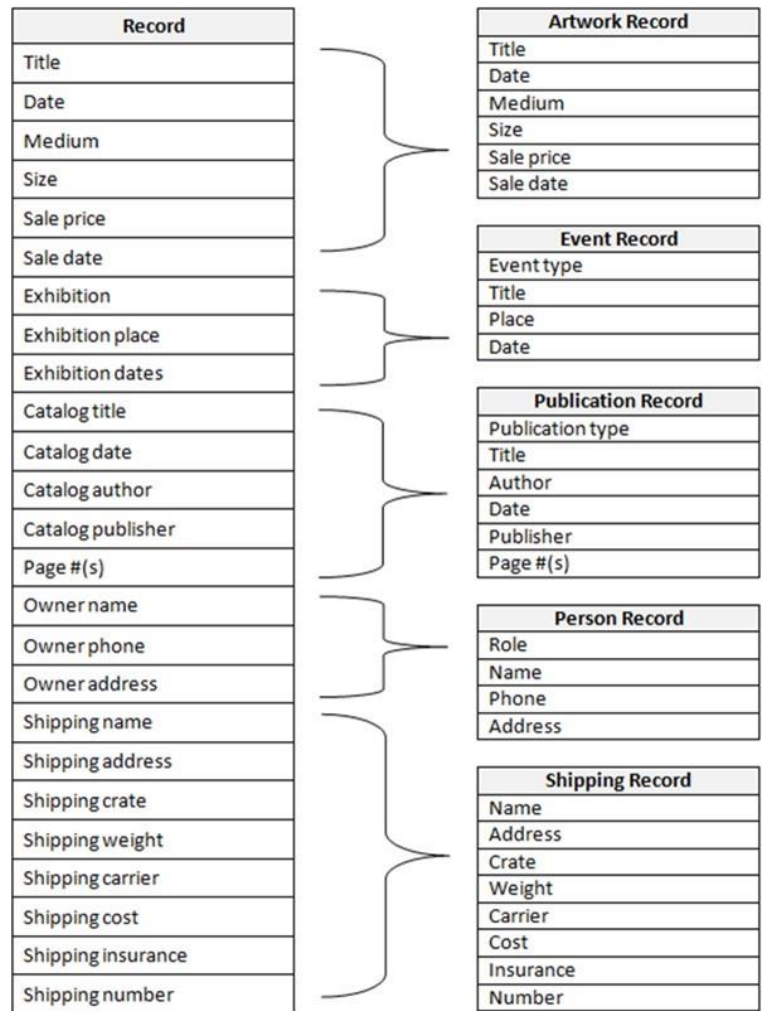
Why is this important for you to know? There are specific uses for flat file and relational databases. If you are recording data about a single type of thing (e.g., artwork inventory), a flat file will do the job. However, a relational database is a much more efficient option if you need to store and link related data (e.g., linking artwork inventory records to exhibition records, bibliography, and sales records). Relational databases offer some key advantages over a flat file database or a simple spreadsheet. They let you make global changes to your data that occur across the entire data set. For example, if you notice that you made a typographical error in the name of an exhibition which showed several of your works, you can change this error in every record merely by updating the exhibition record. In a flat file

database, which would not have this feature, you would need to go into the records for each of the works shown in the exhibition and make the change.
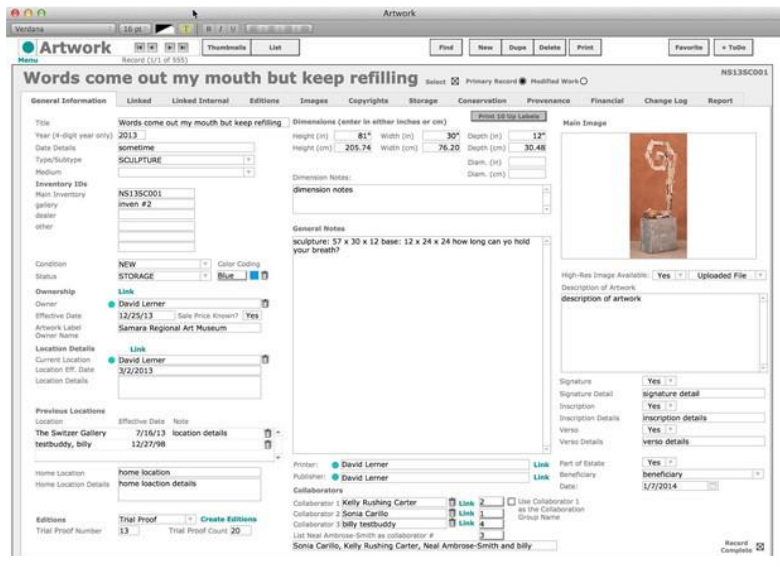
Point 3: Databases index their contents differently.

Databases are excellent at ordering pieces of information about you and your work, but not all databases order (aka index) their fields in the same way. These variations can mean the difference between your being able to easily find things and losing the information in your database. Variations in indexing can include fields that will accept only alphabetical or numerical characters, fields that restrict the number of characters or the particular types of terms that can be entered, fields that are indexed only on words longer than a certain number of characters, fields that are unindexed, or indexing modified by an internal list of common words (e.g., the, of, at, by, etc.) that the ordering process ignores entirely. The differences in database fields, and how they affect the database's abilities, are important for you to be

Record
Title
Date
Medium
Size
Sale price
Sale date
Exhibition
Exhibition place
Exhibition dates
Catalog title
Catalog date
Catalog author
Catalog publisher
Page #(s)
Owner name
Owner phone
Owner address
Shipping name
Shipping address
Shipping crate
Shipping weight
Shipping carrier
Shipping cost
Shipping insurance
Shipping number

Artwork Record
Title
Date
Medium
Size
Sale price
Sale date

Event Record
Event type
Title
Place
Date

Publication Record
Publication type
Title
Author
Date
Publisher
Page #(s)

Person Record
Role
Name
Phone
Address

Shipping Record
Name
Address
Crate
Weight
Carrier
Cost
Insurance
Number

Comparison of flat-file database (left) and tables in a relational database (right)

aware of as you think about what system you might want to use. When examining a database, you will want see how it responds to several kinds of basic searches. These include strings of numbers (e.g., 12, 124, 1240), combinations of numbers and letters (e.g., DC-10, Rte. 66, F110), small words (e.g., I am, red ant), and punctuation marks (as in sit-in, what?, don't). The results may surprise you.

Screenshot of a database artwork record that includes a thumbnail image

Point 4: Examine the database with an eye toward media matters Media file handling is a topic that you also need to consider when choosing a database. As an artist it is likely that you will want to include some media content in your database. What kind of media does your database need to be able to handle? For example, you may want to be able to include a thumbnail image of one of your artworks in its work record for identification and documentation purposes. You may also want to link the record to a full-sized version of the image. Some databases will allow you to link the work record to additional images of the same item or to a panoramic video file showing the same artwork from all angles and, or a PDF documenting the sale of the artwork.

Media files add an additional level of complexity to the database selection process. Identify the kinds of files you want to be able to include and then examine each database for how these files are handled. Some databases extract a small thumbnail or preview of the original file and place it in the work record. If this is the case, the original media files are likely to be placed in a folder that sits alongside the datafile of the database. Other databases will embed the original media file within the record that is then saved within the datafile containing all of your records.

Handling media files within the database requires greater computational power of your system and so the performance issue needs to be examined in greater detail when you are shopping and selecting a system. Be sure that your computer is beefy enough to handle heavy media processing, display and storage requirements. As database technologies have matured over the last few decades, those that deal with media files have become commonplace. Just how databases handle media files varies and so be sure to see if the system can handle the kinds of files you have and want to include. Remember to look at the specifications required for the system before you purchase. Ask friends and check with other artists for their recommendations.

name report 1

Count	Image	Inv. Number gallery Date Details	Title Dims	Medium	High Res Image	Condition	Current Owner	Current Container	Frame Dims	Frame Info
1		NS06PR002	Coyote Goes Hunting at the Disco (2006)	Intaglio-Type			Neal Ambrose-Smith			
2		ns09sc002	Abstract in Your Home (2009)	Neon						
3		ns12pr039	Zombies need romance (2012)	Mixed media						
4		ns12pr041	Strange traits bred in darkness (2012)	Mixed media						
5		NS13PG010	Sonny Speaks-Easy (2013)	Oil on canvas, mixed media						
6		NS13PG011	Walter Redglare (2013)	Oil on canvas, mixed media						

Screenshot of a database showing how it displays thumbnail images of multiple artworks

Point 5: Databases search data in different ways.

The way that databases search for records differ and so it is good to be able to test the system before you decide which one to purchase. While most databases will allow you to do simple searches for terms (aka keyword searching) across its indexed fields, there are many variations on how databases can be searched. Some databases will give you the ability to do advanced searches for exact names or phrases in a particular field (e.g., find "Elvis Presley" in the title field) and can allow you to perform multiple searches simultaneously (e.g., find "Elvis Presley" in the title field where "serigraph" is found in the medium field). Some databases will allow you to save frequently used search queries and build upon a search that has just been completed.
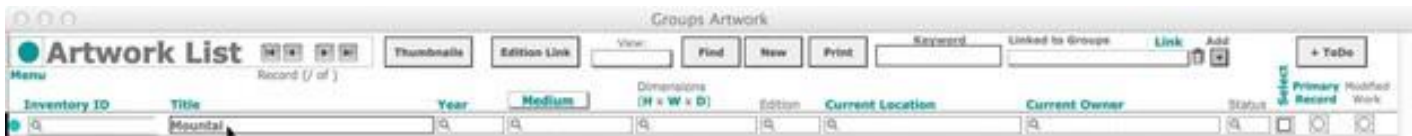
Screenshot showing a search for "mountain" in the Title field of a database while in a List view

You may be able to perform exact searches for a single term only, or use wildcard characters (e.g.,*, ?) to replace single or multiple letters. This kind of search can help you find items with various spellings or endings (e.g., walk* retrieves walks, walked, walking, etc.). Other search variations might allow you to search for multiple terms that are near one another, or that occur only within a set number of words. Some databases let you perform administrative searches—say, all records created by a particular user, or that were modified before, on, or after a specific date. These types of searches can be very helpful when multiple people are entering information in the database in ways that may not be perfectly consistent. While not every kind of search will be a must-have for you, you should be aware of the ones you most need as you investigate which database to purchase. The Move Forward! worksheet below should help you define your database needs.
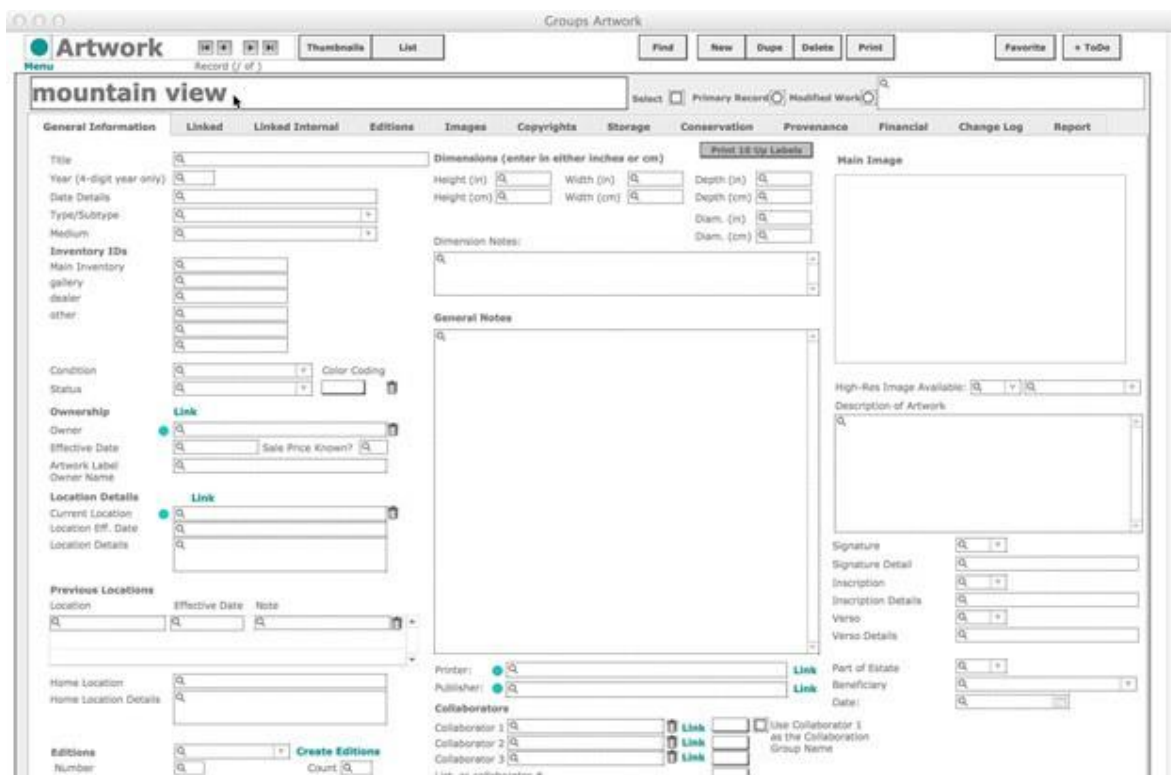
Screenshot showing a search for "mountain view" in the Title field of a database while within a Record view

Point 6: Different databases display and sort records in different ways.

The way that records are displayed and sorted are unique to each database system. When you perform a search, the items found within the database will be displayed together. Typically, these are organized in some way, and you will want to look at this. Since the way the records are displayed and worked with are critical aspects to the usefulness of a database, you will want to investigate this aspect of a database's design carefully.

Developing vs. Selecting a Database

Now that we have talked a bit about the various ways databases can function, the time has come to think about whether or not you want to select a previously developed database or create a system of your own. With an off-the-shelf database the development of the different tables, fields, and report writing is largely completed for you.

This means that while you may do some basic tweaking of the system, the database is ready for use as it was purchased. Commercial databases generally have some flexibility built into them, but if you have specific database requirements) that go beyond modifying a few fields and editing reports you may want to hire some- one to help you. Database developers have the technical skills needed to create a system suited to your needs. Be aware, however, that system development is a time consuming and labor-intensive process.

Inventory ID	Title	Year	Medium	Dimensions (H x W x D)	Edition	Current Location	Current Owner	Status
ns12pr021	Power Speed Reliability (2012)	2012	Inverse Intaglio-	37.5" x 24.75"				
ns10pr101	Powwow Elvis Lives (2010) 5/8	2010		22" x 12"	5/8			
ns07pr030	Powwow Night (2007)	2007	wood cut	12" x 8"				consig
NS13PRD40	Prairie Dancer (2013)	2013	Mixed media	9" x 11.5"				
NS13PRD41	Prairie Dancing (2013)	2013	Mixed media	9" x 11.5"				
ns10pr010	Put a spring in your step (2010)	2010	Intaglio-Type	47" x 32"				STUDI
ns07pr027	Racing time (2007)	2007	Inverse Intaglio-	40" x 30"				consig
ns09pr015	Read between the bubbles (2009)	2009	Monotype	30" x 21.5"				
ns09pr016	Reading is my watering hole (2009)	2009	Monotype	37" x 25"				STUDI
ns10pr036	Red House (2010)	2010	Intaglio-Type	42" x 28"				
ns12pg007	Red Ryder, Red Ryder (2012)	2012	Oil on canvas,	48" x 72"				
ns11pr027	Relocation (2011)	2011		51.5" x 39"				
ns07pr003	Remembering (2007)	2007	Monotype	30" x 22"				STUDI
ns07pr019	Ride the White Horse (2007)	2007	Monotype	30" x 22"				consig
ns09pr005	Rolling Through Time (2009)	2009	Monotype	22.5" x 15"				
ns08pr004	Sailor (2008)	2008	Monotype	22" x 30"				
NS13PRD36	Salish Yacht (2013)	2013	Mixed media	23.5" x 22.5"		Catherine Louisa Gallery		For
ns08pr012	Sam Small Feathers and his cape at the	2008	Intaglio-Type	41" x 30"				
ns09sc007	Sasquatch (2009)	2009	Found Objects	84" x 60" x 60"				
ns10pr020	sea monster (2010)	2010	Monotype	44.5" x 30"				
ns10pr014	second movement (2010)	2010	Monotype	30" x 44.5"				
ns07pr028	See back for details (2007)	2007	Inverse Intaglio-	40" x 30"				consig
ns09pr018	See yourself flying (2009)	2009	Monotype	25" x 37"				STUDI
ns10pr023	Seed Dance (2010)	2010	Intaglio-Type	42.5" x 30"				
ns10pr031	Seed Dance II (2010)	2010	Intaglio-Type	26.5" x 19"				
ns10pr022	Seed Planting Time (2010)	2010	Intaglio-Type	42.5" x 30"				
ns10pr017	seeing (2010)	2010	Monotype	44.5" x 30"				
ns08pr036	self portrait four (2008)	2008	Monotype	30" x 44"				
ns08dw001	self portrait one (2008)	2008	Graphite on paper	22" x 30"				
ns08dw003	self portrait three (2008)	2008	Graphite on paper	30" x 22"				
ns08dw002	self portrait two (2008)	2008	Graphite on paper	22" x 30"				
ns04pr004	sey lu pn sqwliu (2004) 4/24	2004	serigraph	29" x 22"	4/24			
ns06dw001	Shadow Catcher (2006)	2006	Graphite on paper	30" x 22"		Ambrose-Smith, Neal	Samara Regional Art Museum	Not

Move Forward! Database Selection

Goal: Examine the features and performance of a database to critically evaluate its usefulness to your needs.

What you need: Access to a functional version of the database.

Time required: 30 minutes - 1 hour.

Database name:

Date of examination:

System Basics

Cost	FREE	INEXPENSIVE (<$100)	EXPENSIVE (>$100)
Cost is	Purchase only	Monthly only	Annual fee
platform	Mac	PC	Unix
Installation	Host/cloud	Stand-alone	Networked
Architecture	Flat file	Relational	
customizable	Add fields	Add tables	Create pick lists
links tables (e.g. record to a person, record to exhibition, etc.)	Yes	No	
Individual or multiple accounts	Individual	Multiple	

Media

Does it handle media?	Yes	No			
If Yes, what kind?	Images	Audio	Video	Documents	Other:
How is media handled?	Embedded	Linked to files	Copied to new location		
Allow proprietary files?	Yes	No			
Media display/review as	Preview	Original Size	Both		

Display

Search returns are displayed as a text list	Yes	No	Allows sorting by a single field	Yes	No
Search returns are displayed with thumbnails	Yes	No	Allows sorting by multiple fields	Yes	No
Search returns are displayed as text with thumbnails	Yes	No	Allows sorting by multiple criteria (e.g., numbers, letters)	Yes	No
Ability to switch between image and text driven display	Yes	No	Fields shown on display screen can be modified	Yes	No
Displayed records can be sorted	Yes	No	Can create record groups	Yes	No

Searching

Keyword search across	All fields	Subset	Single field	2+ Selected fields
Search for terms in specific fields (e.g., horse in title, where 1997 occurs in date)	Yes	No		
Wildcard search (e.g., hap* returns happen, happening, happier, happiness, happy)	Yes	No		
Exact phrase search (e.g., "happiness blooms")	Yes	No		
Boolean search (e.g., happiness AND/OR/NOT blooms)	Yes	No		
Limit search by criteria (e.g., date, person, medium, etc.)	Yes	No		
Save searches	Yes	No		
Modify search	Yes	No		

Additional Functions

Data can be imported	Yes	No	Prints media files	Yes	No
Data can be exported		No	Built-in layouts for labels	Yes	No
Report writing	Yes	No	Hosts website content	Yes	No
Standard reports included	Yes	No	Has barcode scanning	Yes	No
Allows report creation	Yes	No	Has event tracking	Yes	No
Prints reports	Yes	No	Has alert system	Yes	No
Prints records	Yes	No	Send reports via e-mail	Yes	No

Entering Data

The database you use is only part of the equation. The information entered into the database plays a very important role in the future usefulness and performance of the system. Because databases and computers only retrieve things based on terms entered, some decisions about what can be entered need to be made. Without this step you may find yourself searching for things using every possible variation you can think of, and still not finding what you know exists in the database. Most of the decisions to be made concern how you will control the variation in how things can be entered.

Field	Entry 1	Entry 2	Entry 3	Entry 4
Date	05/3/2013	05-3-2013	May 3, 2013	3 May 2013
Name	S. E. Smythe	S. Smythe	Silvia E. Smythe	Silva Eliza Smythe
Place	MI	Mich.	Michigan	Mchgn
Subject	pig	swine	boar	hog

Common examples of variations used in database entries

Other variations in how data is entered have to do the with level of detail provided in what is entered, the basic format of data to be entered, or the meaning of fields.

Example Field	Entry 1	Entry 2	Issue
Medium	photograph OR gelatin silver print	mixed media OR dust, shells, wood, glass, tempera, and 35mm slides	Level of detail
Dimensions	01:09:00:02 OR 1 hour 9 minutes 0 seconds 2nd frame OR 1 hour 9 minutes	2' 6" OR 2 feet 6 inches OR 76.2 cm OR 0.762 m	Units of measure
Date	completed OR begun	sold OR exhibited	Meaning

Common issues of data entry that create problems in databases

A way to reduce variation in the entries in your database is to document what you have done. Create a list of terms and names used in your database, this is called a controlled vocabulary. Some databases allow you to create "pick" lists for fields, which pop up so you can chose your entry for a particular field. Without a pick list option in the database, external lists can be created and referred to as needed. Another document needed to keep your database in top form should outline the decisions you have made. In it you will identify the fields used in your database, define the fields' meanings, give their pick list(s), and clarify the format of data that is entered in the fields. Printing this document and putting it in a binder next to the computer is a great idea! Even if you are the only person that will ever enter data in your database, creating this documentation will clarify for you how each field will be used. On top of this, if you have data entry help others will understand how to use your database without having to ask you questions about every entry. Ultimately, as a part of your legacy, the data- base will provide critical information about your artwork, and so the documentation of your decisions will help future individuals better understand what you have done.

Chapter 11
Placing Your Archives

> It is crucially important that the creative activities and production of artists be documented and preserved and the information made available to scholars and the public. In this way, art history is made.
>
> -John Coffey, former Deputy Director and Jim and Betty Becher Curator of American and Modern Art and Curator of Judaic Art, North Carolina Museum of Art

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we cover which institutions typically collect artists' archives, why they collect them, and the value of making artists' archives available. We also give advice regarding what types of materials are usually collected and how you can better prepare for the donation or sale of your archive to an institution.

GETTING STARTED

Which Institutions Collect Artists' Archives & Why They Collect
In researching this book, several mid- and late-career artists asked us questions about donating or selling their archives to public and private institutions. They recognized that family members who may become stewards of their estate upon their death may not know what to do with an artist's records. We've also heard stories from archivists about family members and friends throwing away records, simply because they did not understand the value of the artists' records or they did not know who to turn to in order to donate the records.

Many artists begin to think about where to place their archives at mid- or late-career, or at a stage when they begin to realize their impact on a particular community, generation, or art movement. Questions about the disposition of an artist's records also can arise during conversations with museum or gallery curators who wish to see an artist's records made accessible for public use because of their research value. Making an artist's records

accessible to researchers can also positively impact to what degree an artist's work is understood and known about widely.

> (Lack of access to an artist's records) can be detrimental, particularly for an artist at the end of his or her life. There's a critical moment…art historically speaking, after an artist dies…if (art historians and critics) don't have access to that material (then) interest wanes…It has a chilling effect on interest in that artist's legacy. So, access is really important.
>
> -Jason Stieber, Archives of American Art

Where and When to Place Your Archive When is the best time to consider who will care for your records after you no longer can? The answer is to start now. If you don't already have a will or living trust, start putting together these documents so that you can rest easy knowing that your legacy will be in good hands if you become incapacitated or upon your death. Most friends, family members, and even artists' studio assistants are unable to steward artists legacies according to the artist's' wishes without a will or advanced directives. Too often, archivists hear from heirs who have no idea what to do with archives that have been left behind. Heirs may decide that some records are without value and throw them away, while in fact those very records would be incredibly valuable to a researcher or to someone interested in the local arts community. Heirs may also not be prepared to steward your collection appropriately. You may decide to assign this task to a specific individual who, while they may not have other responsibilities regarding your estate, are more knowledgeable of your work and will be able to make better decisions regarding the disposition and care of your collection.

University, state, and national libraries and archives, as well as art museums, are the primary collectors of artists' archives. However, where your archives end up will depend on multiple key factors:

- To what degree your archives aligns with the collecting aims of the institution and, specifically, whether or not they have a history of collecting the archives of artists.
- The perceived long-term research value of your archives.
- The stories your archives tell about local, regional, national, or even international art communities or movements.
- The stories your archives tell about other important events, people, or places - perhaps less related to an art community, but still key to the local history and culture of a place or a people.
- The institution's ability to provide access to archival collections like yours.

- What preservation challenges the collection may pose for the institution. This is a particular issue with digital materials.
- The staffing, funding, and storage available at the institution, in support of archival collections.

When an archivist conducts a preliminary assessment of a collection, they look for contextual links between the collection under consideration and the collections already in the archive. Therefore, you should look to institutions where there is a research interest in the type of work you've done and the movements or social circles you have been involved with in the past. Most archives will have established acquisitions policies that define the scope of their collecting, so look for those policies posted on institutional websites, or call the institution to ask about their collecting scope. Talk with friends and colleagues about where they have deposited their own collections. An institution may be interested in your archives if they have already collected the records of other artists who moved in the same social circles as you or created work similar to yours.

In order to facilitate access to your archive, try to keep the collection together. If some of your collection is already with one institution, archivists will tend to suggest keeping collections together in one unit, rather than accepting part of a collection that's known to be partially deposited with another institution. This is mainly to serve better the researchers who will be the users of your archives.

When archivists consider taking in an archive from a donor, they must consider:
- what the costs of acquiring and shipping the material might be,
- to what extent the right storage and preservation support is available,
- whether or not they have the staff available to adequately process the collection, and
- what additional funding might be necessary in order to process, house, and possibly digitize the collection.

Set mutually agreed upon expectations in advance of placing a collection with an institution, which should take the form of a written and signed deed of gift. Before agreeing to place your archives with an institution, find out what kind of access researchers and the public will have to the collection. It will also be important to clarify to what degree the institution will be able to process your archive. The degree to which an archive is processed can impact how accessible that archive is to researchers and the public. Find out if an inventory will be made of the collection and whether or not the collection, or a portion of the collection, be digitized. How long will it take for the institution to process the collection and what types of access restrictions, if any, will need to be placed on the collection? Processing archives is very time-consuming and expensive, and it is important to know that access is typically more

restricted while a collection is being processed. Some institutions may also request funding to hire additional staff to process your archive. To what extent will you and your heirs continue to have access to your archives? Are there personal letters that you would like to restrict access to for a certain period of time? Be sure to work out these agreements with the institution prior to depositing your records.

Selling Your Archive One of the hardest things for many artists to hear is that a vast majority of archives are donated to institutions and not purchased. It is only very large institutions that will have limited special funding to purchase some collections. Another route is to hire a dealer or work with an auction house in order to sell your archive. Sometimes, institutions will work with private donors who are in a position to purchase a collection and then donate it to an institution.

> You have to determine 'How much am I going to get for this?' and not be crazy about thinking you're going to get a million dollars for it, because what you really want to do is have your archive placed somewhere safe where it will be used and where it will be taken care of. Where it will be with like materials so that it will become even more important than just your work. It will be about others work (too) and the relationships between artists…
>
> -Marvin Taylor, Director of the Fales Special Collections Library, NYU

Loaning Your Archive Another option is to loan your archive to an institution while you are still alive. Although this occurred less frequently in the era of paper records, the fragility of digital records may increase the number of cases where individuals loan or donate their records at an earlier point in their lives. In the case of a loan, the agreement you sign should clearly stipulate the exact material to be loaned, how it will be cared for and used, the period of the loan, and how the archive will be handled if you die during the period of the loan.

Preparing Your Archive for Deposit Archival institutions typically prefer to receive archives in their original formats and with as much contextual information included as possible. This includes both physical and digital collections. The more information you can make available about the digital contents of your archive, the easier it will be for the institution to make these accessible to researchers. It's best not to mess with digital files prior to giving them over to an institution as this may lead to dates and other metadata being changed or corrupted. An increasing number of collecting institutions have people on staff who are trained in the proper handling and long-term stewardship of digital records.

As we've stressed throughout this book, do a good job of keeping your archives in relatively good order and in a clean and secure location. If you keep your archives fairly organized and pest-free, an institution will be in a better position to accept your materials. Recordings of interviews with you about the contents of your archives, metadata with image records, and simply placing labels on folders and keeping original envelopes with letters are all good examples of contextual information.

If you tend to move frequently, consider renting a storage unit or keeping your archives, or a portion of your archives, with trusted family members or friends until you can find a more stable storage solution. You may decide to keep working copies of certain records on hand for yourself, and leave the originals in safe storage.

Finally, make certain that your legal will provides clear instructions for your heirs regarding the disposition of your archive. If you were able to make arrangements with an institution to take your archive, then be sure to fill out a deed of gift with the institution that describes the collection as well as any access policies related to the collection.

A Few Words About Artist-Endowed Foundations If you have the financial resources to establish a foundation in your name then you may decide to keep your archives with the foundation, in order to maintain control of your legacy for a longer period of time after your death. In making the decision to establish a foundation, you'll have to decide whether or not the long-term management of your archives will support or hinder the philanthropic mission and aims of your foundation. Additionally, due to the limited staffing frequently found in artists' foundations, researchers may have more difficulty accessing archival collections than when collections are publicly available.

Many foundations have a limited lifespan of several decades, while most public institutions such as universities and major art museums have existed, and will likely continue to exist, for centuries. If you decide to go the route of establishing a foundation, it will be important to establish guidelines for the sale and donation of your archives and artwork that are aligned with your personal values and goals.

Authors

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Joan E. Beaudoin is an Associate Professor in the School of Information Sciences at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. She teaches and conducts research on metadata, information organization, digital libraries, digital preservation, museum informatics, and the access to and use of visual information. Prior to her appointment at Wayne State University she performed archaeological fieldwork, taught art history, and had a lengthy career in academic visual resources collections. Her research has been published in scholarly journals, including the Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology, Journal of Documentation, Journal of Academic Librarianship, Knowledge Organization, and Art Documentation, and she has presented her research at regional, national, and international conferences. In addition to a Doctor of Philosophy in Information Studies at Drexel University, she holds a Master of Science in Library and Information Science degree in the management of digital information from Drexel University, a Master of Arts in art history from Temple University, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Art History from Massachusetts College of Art.

Heather Gendron is Director of the Robert B. Haas Arts Library at Yale University and is past president of the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA). Previously, Heather was Head of UNC Chapel Hill's Sloane Art Library, Adjunct Professor at UNC's School of Information and Library Science (SILS), and Head of the Art & Architecture Library at Virginia Tech. She is a working artist and designer and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts from Purchase College and a Master of Library and Information Science from The University of Texas at Austin.

Eumie Imm-Stroukoff has worked in museum libraries, archives, and special collections including The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, The Museum of Modern Art, The Print Collection in the Research Division of the New York Public Library, and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. She is also past president of the Art Libraries Society of North America. Eumie holds a Master of Science in Library and Information Service from Columbia University, as well as a Master of Arts and a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the University of Cincinnati.

NOTES