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File Naming Conventions

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Before you begin to create a digital collection of any kind it is imperative that you establish a policy on file naming and folder hierarchy!

Why? Ask the graphic artists whose desktop publishing software can't find the linked images because someone decided to reorganize the folder system. Or ask the person scanning images who has now been asked to prepare her files for a database, but she has files with the same name in different folders. These are not imagined scenarios. I can not tell you how many people find themselves in a situation where a program dictates that they rename or reorganize their files, but if they do, then other programs won't work.

Be prepared - Think it out - And have a system.

You can do this by looking at your current method of naming, reviewing what information is essential and planning the step by step procedure of using that name and folder system. By procedure I mean, scanning, saving, entering in a management system, using and recovering. If you can visualize how all these steps can be done easily with your system then you are ready to go. Some guidelines to help you accomplish this are:

1. Be consistent in format - be case sensitive, don't use underscores_ only_as spaces.
2. Each file name must be unique - unique does not mean meaningless
3. Naming scheme ideally preserves in the filenames a *trace* of the identity of each image - not contain all the information.
4. "Meaning" is self evident or self documented.
5. Entry of the name is easy and not prone to human error.

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