



STAFF ILLUSTRATION/MIKE BARRETT

CDs, DVDs, exterior hard drives; online services let you store digital photos

Save them or else?

BY LINDA JOHNSON
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The end of summer is always a bit sad.

Luckily, you have all the great photographs you captured on the high-tech digital camera you received for Christmas or your last birthday.

What's important now is knowing how to keep them.

The filmless camera is new enough that most of us are still focused on taking good pictures.

We have not yet developed the habit of backing up photos or, indeed, considered how to make sure they're still intact 20 years from now.

In the short term, the biggest threat to your photos, as with all files, comes from sudden onslaughts — the information is wiped out or lost because of a hard drive crash, a hacker, virus, or computer thief.

In these cases, you can avert a major loss by backing up files onto an outside source such as a portable hard drive, DVD or CD-ROM.

If you forget to save regularly, you might consider investing in a program such as the Norton Save and Restore, a software product made by Symantec Canada that allows you to schedule automatic back-ups for all or some of your PC's files.

Right now, there is no MAC version. "It gives you peace of mind," said Jim Galpin, senior manager for Canadian consumer sales.

"You can back your photos up to a number of sources that would not be attached or physically left with your computer all the time.

"So, you can store or organize them outside the hard drive on your computer," he said.

The product, which sells for \$70 to \$90, takes a picture of your hard drive. So, if your computer crashes and you put in a new hard drive, the program will re-image your computer exactly as it was before.

To preserve photos for 10 to 20 years, you have a variety of options, according to experts.

The best way to keep images intact is to put them on CDs and DVDs, said Jorge DaSilva, manager of Henry's School of Imaging.

"It's the cheapest and most reliable way," he said, adding it is essential to buy high quality discs.

"Not all CDs or DVDs are created equal," he said, adding one good manufacturer to look for is Delkin Devices. The company makes an archival series of discs, eFilm Archival Gold, that are estimated to last 200 to 300 years.

These discs, which contain gold and high quality dye, cost about \$3 each and are available at specialty photo stores and at www.delkin.com.

Proper storage is also key, Mr. DaSilva said. Light and heat are bad for CDs and DVDs. So they should be kept in a wallet and placed in a drawer or other dark space.

"You don't want to leave these CDs in the window sill where the sun rises every morning," he said.

As well, keep them away from any space that's really humid or really dry — a closet in an upstairs bedroom is a better storage spot than one in the basement.

Between the two, CDs are better than DVDs, Mr. DaSilva added, because

DVDs, which have finer, more sensitive tracks, tend to scratch more easily.

And, though the info is burned onto the underside of the CD, the upper side is more fragile.

Clean the CD only if it has finger prints and then use a microfibre cloth and wipe from the centre out, not in circles.

"Otherwise, the less you do with a disc the better," he said.

Mr. DaSilva also stressed the importance of keeping an eye on advances in technology.

If a new and better way of storing pictures comes along, you should be aware and consider switching over.

"The other issue is players. You don't want to forget about these pictures on CD if CD players are dropping off the face of the Earth and a new technology is taking over," he said.

Of course, you can also go the old-fashioned way and print photos.

"The ultimate way to save them is to have prints," said Phil Chapman, Black's vice-president of imaging and business development.

"They look great over time, especially with today's technology. You see photos that have lasted hundreds of years, handed down from generation to generation. And you don't need a computer to do that."

Another long-term option is to store photos with an archival online service such as dotmac, Data Deposit Box or Ace Index.

For more information about Save and Restore, visit www.symantecstore.com. For more information on online archiving, check out www.dotmac.info, www.datadepositbox.com or www.acecam.com/digital-prints.html

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