

RECORD YOUR COLLECTION ON A DVD TO SHARE WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

For this project, I have selected to use family history as an example. But your topic could be any collection that you would like to share with friends and family. The obvious examples that come to mind are a stamp collection, coin collection, a collection of quilts, teapots, tea cups, model airplanes, trains, cars, family history, or antique lace, and simply antiques (some examples were suggested by my wife) – **guess which ones!**

For any of these collection choices, several different kinds of media could be used to document or describe the contents of your collection – digital photos of objects, scanned photos, images, diagrams, maps, newspaper articles, certificates, licenses, and so forth. Previously recorded interviews, video, or home movies could also be included. It is fairly obvious where these media types would be used, but I'll discuss each prior to using it.

The primary focus of this article is to introduce you to the process and methodology to record your story or history about your collection onto a DVD such that you may share it with friends or family who share your interest or simply want to know more about your collection. You would use these guidelines generally as how to proceed. Since I have no idea which application you will use to edit your video, you should use the detailed instructions of your application to actually complete the steps I present here.

In order to record your collection on DVD, you should collect some interesting objects as examples to include in your production. Using various media to tell the story of the history of your collection, and then record that story on a DVD for sharing with others. The WACUG board of directors felt this was yet another way to use your personal computer to enhance your collection and enlighten your friends and family.

LET'S BEGIN!

Your family history consists of many individuals, and any hobby contains many components. Just as it is possible to tell a “story” about one of your ancestors, it is possible to tell a story about a specific item in your collection. This might include a special coin, stamp, or a quilt. Perhaps the story could include an adventure about how you came to possess this item, where you found it, how and/or when it was created and so forth. There is always something unique about each and every collection and this unique item always has an interesting story that should be included for added interest.

These stories may be organized chronologically or by categories you define – or both. However you choose to organize your collection, the stories are more interesting if they consist of photos, or images, documents, newspaper articles, movies, videos and other graphics and objects. You may also include narration, background music, transitions between scenes and sound effects. You can add as much or as little as you desire.

STEP ONE: ORGANIZE YOUR MATERIALS

1. Move the photos, documents, movies, videos and any materials you might use into your project work area
2. Review them to get familiar with the contents (make notes to help you remember the details later)
3. Think about your collection and how you want to organize the stories that it includes.

4. Prepare a list of the major categories of stories, and to the extent you can, the stories to be included in each category (write these down)
5. Purchase a number of small boxes, one for each category, and label them by category
6. Sort the photos, etc., into the boxes for each category

STEP 2: PREPARE YOUR COMPUTER

The assumption here is that you already have your video editing application installed.

On your computer, create a folder for each of the boxes (category).

Create a sub-folder within each folder for each story in that category box. Remember, this is simply a guide or suggestion that works for me. You can organize your stories in any manner you wish.

The source for this project is "Family History DVD" by Merle Volding and Becky Volding McLaughlin. Visit their web site for information about their book, <http://www.familyhistoryondvd.com/>.

While they used **Pinnacle Studio 9** as their video application, I used **Adobe Premier Elements**. Several video applications are currently available and if you already have an application that creates video, use that one. If you don't currently have such an application, both Pinnacle Studio series and Adobe Premier Elements are good. Other applications are also available in the same general price range. Bottom line, use the application with which you are already familiar.

OTHER EQUIPMENT (BESIDES THE COMPUTER)

Scanner: Used to enter photos, documents and other items (newspaper articles, recipes and etc.) into the computer. They are converted to digital files by scanning.

Digital Video Camera: Used to enter digital video into the computer. Old movies and VHS video must first be converted to digital before they can be entered. A Digital Camcorder produces DV or digital video and usually connects to the PC via a "FireWire" or IEEE 1394 connection.

Microphone: Required to record narration into your stories. Some computers have microphones built-in or you may purchase an external microphone.

DVD Burner: Required if you choose to record your stories on DVD yourself instead of using a service.

The list of categories you made (item # 4 in Organize your Materials above) becomes your guide when setting up your project files on the computer.

Once you have your folders and sub-folders setup on your computer, you are now ready to begin taking items from each box and entering them into the folders on your computer.

STEP 3: ENTERING PHOTOS AND DOCUMENTS INTO YOUR COMPUTER USING A SCANNER

Photos, documents, certificates, newspaper articles, magazine articles and awards add interest to the story about your collection or activity. Many of these items have high intrinsic value and may be irreplaceable if lost, damaged or destroyed. Because of the added interest and their value to you, they will be included in your production by scanning them into your computer.

You made folders on your computer to coincide with the boxes you collected to hold your

articles that you sorted by category. Photos from a digital camera are already in digital format so this part deals with scanning items into your computer. These procedures are generic for scanning. If you need assistance, contact the manufacturer of your scanner or the retailer where you purchased your scanner. You may also ask another WACUG member for some help or assistance.

NOTE: The specific steps taken will depend on your operating system, your scanner and the scanning software that came with your scanner. The following steps are generic so be sure to check your scanner software (and manual) for specifics.

1. Start the scanning application that came with your scanner.
2. Use the scanning software to “setup” the scanner and resulting files.
3. Set the resulting scan size to be 100% object size. Documents and photos need to be scanned such that the scanner output is the same size as the original. Unless of course the output needs to be larger (the object was very small),
4. Find the option for resolution setting. This determines how many “dots per inch” the scanner will use to scan your item. The higher the number, the clearer the resulting image will be, but the file size also increases. *Use a resolution setting of 300 dots per inch for scanning for use in a DVD.*
5. To obtain the best scan results, you will need to describe the object to be scanned *prior* to actually scanning. An object is either a photo or not. If it is a photograph, it is either color or black and white (grayscale to the scanner). If it is not a picture, then perhaps the object is a document or another object which is simply an object on the platen glass, line art or text or even custom. Your choices will vary based on the scanning application, your scanner and your operating system.
6. Place the item you want to scan on the scanner glass and close the lid.
7. To start the scanning process select the “Preview” Button and the scanner will scan the item.
8. When scanning is complete, the item will be displayed on the screen. Some gray area may extend around some, or all, of your scanned image. The gray area is the area that was scanned but it could be larger than your item. This is the time to “crop” or resize the image using instructions that came with your scanner.
9. So far you have only performed a preliminary or preview scan.
10. If you were not happy with the results so far, you may change the contrast or brightness using slider controls (if available on your system) and scan again.
11. Make your best guess on the various choices and press next or scan to get another preview.
12. When you are satisfied with the scan, then select final scan. You will be prompted for a file name. Then you need to select a file format. Select “JPG.” Finally, you will be prompted for a destination for your scan. Select “Browse” and navigate to the folders you created earlier. Put this image into the folder with the same name as the box from which you took the item for scanning. Then select “OK” to finish your selection process and then click on “scan” or “Next” to continue.
13. Digital photos are already in digital format so simply place them in the correct folder

on your computer.

STEP 4: ENTERING VIDEOS AND OLD MOVIES INTO YOUR COMPUTER

Old home movies and VHS video both must be converted to digital format before they can be entered into the computer. It is usually better (cost effective) to contract a service bureau to do the conversion for you unless you have a lot of money, equipment and spare time available. Once you have the resulting digital file or files, place them into the folders which correspond to the category box that matches the video or movie.

STEP 5: ENTERING DIGITAL VIDEO INTO YOUR COMPUTER

Most new camcorders are digital. The designation of digital camcorders is DV. These camcorders include a special cable that connects the DV camcorder to the IEEE1394 or Fire wire port of your computer. If your computer does not have a fire wire adapter, they are available for about \$30 - \$90. The upper price range includes software for editing video to make movies on your computer and perhaps includes some adapters for connecting VHS VCRs and so forth. Remember that Windows XP includes a simple video editor, Windows MovieMaker. Kurt DeSoto used Pinnacle Systems Studio 10 software and I use Adobe Premier Elements. Numerous other applications are available but are not as popular as Pinnacle Systems and Adobe Premier Elements.

Once you have all the digital video files into your computer, you edit the video by arranging the files in proper sequence according to the timeline you created for your story and then save your project as a movie.

STEP 6: CREATE THE STORY PROJECT

Open your video editing software and create a new "project." All video editing software works with projects, so create a project for your story. Think of your project as a document, like a research paper, with multiple chapters. Each time you work on your "research paper," you must open your document and return to the last place you were working.

STEP 6A: PREPARING TO CAPTURE VIDEOS

"Capturing video" is the process of playing a tape in your camcorder while it is connected to the computer. As you watch the video on your computer screen, the video is "captured" on your hard disk under the Project Filename you created for your project.

For this part of the instruction, the assumption is that you have already recorded some video about your collection but have not transferred the video to the computer. Once again, as many applications are available, these instructions are generic. You should check the manual that came with your application for specific details. Assuming you have your DV camcorder connected to the FireWire port on your computer and the camcorder is turned on. I'm also assuming you have shot some video of some of the objects in your boxes and have the video tape in our camcorder for playing. You are now ready to "capture" that video and save it in the category folders on your computer.

Following the directions for your application, click the "capture" button. Use the VCR-like controls to play your tape. As it is being played by the camcorder, your computer is "capturing" the video to the hard drive in the folder you designated for your "project." Remember that video generates very large files so make sure you have plenty of room on one of your hard drives. Adobe says to allow 1 Gb of free hard-disk space for every 5 minutes of footage. Pinnacle Systems reminds customers that 1 hour of video uses 12.7 Gb of storage. You will need more storage space than you think you will so make sure you have

extra space available. I recommend you defragment your hard drive prior to capturing video.

Most current software will automatically detect when the camcorder started and stopped recording on your tape and will record the video as separate segments, scenes or clips along the timeline. As the video (and audio) is captured, it should also be registered in the *Album Area* (Studio Plus) or *Media Panel* (Premiere Elements). It also is placed on the TimeLine in the order it was captured.

The whole purpose of video editing is to organize your clips to best tell your story while removing or eliminating the less desirable video that doesn't add to the value of the project.

Once you are happy with your work for the current session, be sure you save your project. It's a good idea to save often to protect the investment of time you have made working with your hobby project.

If you look in the timeline area of the workspace, you will notice how the video clips are laid end-to-end to create a continuous video of your work. Looking closely, you can see that it is very simple to click on a clip with the mouse and drag it into another location, thus editing the video clips. This is one of the main functions of video editing. The software will also allow you to put transitions of varying length between clips. This helps your audience mentally transition between the action sequences and the audio narration.

Tools are provided within your application to "cut" or remove sections you don't want in your final product. See your manual for details of how to do this.

STEP 7: MOVING PHOTOS, DOCUMENTS, AND MOVIE CLIPS FROM THE FILE FOLDER INTO YOUR STORY PROJECT

Remember those photos and documents you scanned (or digital images from your camera) and placed in a file folder? Now you are ready to use them in your story. Locate and open the first folder. The specifics for copying or moving photos into your video depend on your video editing application. In Premiere Elements, images, documents and movie clips are moved, copied or pasted into the *Media Panel* and then into your story. In Pinnacle Studio, images, documents and movie clips are copied or pasted into the *Album Area* for use in your story.

As you add photos to your story, you will probably want to change the amount of time each photo image is displayed on the screen. The suggested time is about seven or eight seconds. Five seconds is almost too short but more than ten seconds will soon put your audience to sleep, Documents need more time. I usually try to read the words to myself a little slower than usual. It's easy to go too fast with text. Since you already know what the text says, it's easy for you to read it too fast mentally. However, others who are not familiar with the verbiage will be reading more slowly and will appreciate the additional time.

Once you have the digital version of any home movies in your category folders, they should be copied into either the *Media Panel* or *Album Area* for insertion into the timeline later.

Depending on your application, the primary views are listed below. Some applications allow multiple views while others require you change your preferences to change views. Check your documentation for specifics.

STEP 8: THREE "VIEWS" OF YOUR PROJECT

Your editing application will offer several different "views" of your project. These different "views" show your project using different visual formats. You should select the view that works best for your editing style that your application offers. Whichever view you select will be the

view you will use most for creating the movie about your hobby and story.

Storyboard – shows the order of video scenes and transitions using icons. Good for quickly structuring a movie

Timeline – shows the positions and durations of clips or scenes relative to the time scale. Clips or scenes are shown head-to-toe as a continuous stream of video.

Text – is a list showing the start and end times of clips as well as their duration in time scale.

Most people prefer to use the Timeline view since the media files or scenes are displayed real time in chronological order.

STEP 8: CREATING TITLES

Just as used in Hollywood, titles are an important part of your story and should not be overlooked. You need a title to introduce your story. An additional title may be needed at the beginning of a specific segment of the story to document the time and location or to identify individuals in a photograph and of course at the end of your story. The specifics for adding titles and setting their properties will vary based on your video editing application.

Sometimes superimposed text as a title works best for identifying individuals in a photo or to identify a location and add a date stamp. Using a “title” at the end of a story adds to its professional appearance.

STEP 9: ADDING TRANSITIONS

Everyone has seen a transition while watching TV. It’s not unusual to see one scene fade into the next. This is important in telling a story. It helps viewers understand the story and how the current scene relates to both the previous and the next scene. Without transitions, viewers would become very confused mentally trying to make logical sense of what they are seeing. Transitions are like paragraph breaks in writing. Without them the story would become very confusing.

Your video editing software usually contains a library of transitions. But a word of caution is in order here. With so many transitions available in the library, it is easy to use too many transitions that become more and more exotic or spectacular such that the transitions become more interesting than the story. Please don’t fall into this trap — sometimes, simpler is better!

Like everything else that has properties, you may change the duration of the transition you selected from the library as needed.

STEP 10: ADDING SOUND EFFECTS AND AUDIO, INCLUDING NARRATION

Most video editing software allows you to add audio from several ways. Your audio must be digital in order to add it to the *Media Panel* or *Album Area*. You may add sound effects or music that came with your application software, imported from a CD, or downloaded from the Internet. Audio from a CD is converted to digital format through your sound card and music you download from the Internet is already in digital format. Another way is to use a pre-recorded audio tape. Like an interview. This is very popular in genealogy. But perhaps you have a recording (tape or record) that needs to be included. There are various methods and ways to play these sources into your computer using various audio adapters (line-in on your sound card) that save the captured audio file in digital format. Another way to add audio is to record audio using a microphone. Again, the audio you record will be converted to digital format by your sound card. The primary reason for recording using a microphone is to allow you to tell your story by providing additional interesting narration details or “voice-overs” while

the video is playing.

Once you have added audio clips to the *Media Panel* or *Album Area* you add them to your story by dragging them with your mouse to the audio track and inserting them at the correct spot on the timeline. As usual, you may adjust the duration and volume of the audio clip to fit your needs.

One thing you should keep in mind, most camcorders do not do a good job recording audio. The microphone is small and is attached to the camera so it is not directional and it picks-up other sounds that are not wanted. In addition, the volume level is automatic and as such you cannot control the sound level that is being recorded. Therefore, I recommend using a desk microphone to provide voice-overs to describe objects and to add narration to your story as required.

STEP 11: THE FUN PART

So far we've covered the basics about collecting and organizing materials you will need for your story. We talked about creating categories and labeling corresponding boxes and then computer folders. Then we discussed scanning photos, digital photos, documents and other printed materials for inclusion and putting these images into the folders on your computer.

We discussed getting old movies converted to digital format for inclusion plus using a DV camcorder to take some video how to "capture" that video for use.

We covered creating titles for use in your story and how they provided a professional touch. Then we discussed adding transitions between scenes or clips to eliminate confusion for the audience.

Then we reviewed how to get audio, music and narration into the story. So the next step is to take these components from the Media Panel or Album Area and move them into the story.

This is the actual editing process. You will need to follow very closely the instructions that came with your editing application for the particulars of exactly "How to" when it comes to copying or dragging the various clips of media into the timeline of your story. However, logically you may use your mouse to select a clip and then "drag it" to the insertion point you choose.

Remember there are video tracks and audio tracks. The video drops into the video tracks and the audio fits into the audio tracks. Then you begin to add the titles and transitions between the video clips to eliminate confusion and tie the video segments together into a complete story. Sometimes you will need to remove extra video that is not important or too long and the same will apply to the audio.

STEP 13: DVD MENU – YES OR NO?

Almost all DVDs purchased today have a menu that allows you to go directly to specific scenes within the story or movie. This option is available in both Premiere Elements and Pinnacle Studio. You need to look at your story and determine if menus are needed to help viewers access a particular scene. This is entirely a personal call based on your story and topic. If you want to add a menu to your story or DVD, now is the time to do it. Follow the steps in your application to create the DVD menu and the associated tag points (where the menu takes you). You usually select a menu template to use which simplifies the entire process. Whatever your choice, this is the last step before burning the DVD.

STEP 14: A CRITICAL STEP – BACKUP OR SAVE YOUR PROJECT OFTEN

Now that your story is complete, it is a great time to protect the time and hard work you have invested. It is time to save your project using a new name for use as a “backup.”

STEP 15: READY TO BURN A DVD?

For the best results, be sure to follow the specific directions that come with your application. The information that follows is generic that applies to burning a DVD using most applications. The steps for your specific application could be different.

Now that your story is complete and you have a backup copy saved, you can burn a DVD of your story for sharing. But prior to that, you would be wise to defragment your hard drive again so the files are contiguous. Also remember that video files are quite large and rendering and burning a DVD consumes a lot of computer cycles so it behooves you to have your system drive and your data drives clear and defragged. Rendering and burning could be impacted by malware or spyware that has infected your computer and is slowing it down just enough to cause errors during the rendering and burning steps so verifying your computer is free of spyware is a good idea prior to rendering and burning.

STEP 16: BURN A DVD.

Creating or burning a DVD is actually a two-step process. Because the files are so large, the application will “burn” the DVD in two steps. The first step is to create the actual DVD content as a movie from all the individual files you collected. Once the content is “collected” and the movie is created, then the DVD is actually burned as step two.

To create the DVD content from the individual files is “rendering.” That is, the disc content is collected, created, compressed, and saved as a file, but the content is **NOT** burned to DVD. The second part is to actually burn the completed content to the DVD. This is the best way to proceed. It is possible to encounter errors during the rendering process that would result in a faulty DVD being created. But by rendering first and then continuing to the burn phase only if the rendering process was successful helps eliminate creating a worthless DVD.

Making a DVD involves compressing your video into the MPEG-2 format. Compressing video and audio for use on a DVD is very time consuming, even on high-end dedicated systems. The time required varies depending upon the speed of the computer processor, the amount of available memory, and the complexity and length of a project. A standard video project of 60 minutes may take from 4 to 6 hours to burn. Many DVD producers burn a project overnight.

SUMMARY — SO THERE YOU ARE

So with any luck you now have a DVD that is ready to play that describes your hobby or collection. If we have been successful, you have included the unique and or special objects with an interesting story that will make your hobby or collection very unique and interesting.

You added transitions between some scenes where needed to help the viewer follow the context of the story and reduce confusion. You added titles where useful to designate locations or individuals in photographs. You could have added chapters and menus to enable viewers to jump to a specific scene or section of the story.

So watch your DVD and see how you like it. Since it is your production, you may burn additional copies to distribute to friends and family. You may also notice some things that didn’t turn out quite right. But now that you’ve made your first DVD, you can edit and change the story and content to your desire.

Remember to visit the web site for the latest information, <http://www.familyhistoryondvd.com/>.

The 195 page book will be available for WACUG members to review on a reservation basis. If you are interested in creating DVDs for distribution consider purchasing the book as a reference. The book contains a lot of detail that steps you through the entire process of producing your DVD. However, remember that Pinnacle Studio 10.5 is the current version and the book used Studio 9. Who knows, perhaps the author will produce a new book for Studio 10.5?

THE END!