TIPS: Build and Manage a Great Photo Library

Designing visually compelling communications is easy when you have a well-organized photo library, but getting beyond the electronic version of an overflowing shoebox can be a challenge. Here are a few tips to streamline the task:

Tip #1: _Invest in external hard drives._ Today, a portable one-terabyte (1TB) hard drive costs between $50–100 and can store at least a million photos. Distribute hard drives to the people who routinely provide your organization with images and keep a backup in a safe place. Label each external hard drive with your organization's name and phone number.

Tip #2: _Develop a system to label and organize your photos consistently._ Put the procedures in writing. While many groups can't afford an advanced photo storage database, anyone can tag photos for free. Use key words that will help locate the photos you want.

Tip #3: _Find a few good volunteers to manage the library._ Many of the volunteers involved in conservation enjoy nature photography. You probably have a pool of volunteers who are taking great photos; with luck, one or two will be willing to label, edit, and organize them.

Tip #4: _Get creative._ Photo contests are an excellent way to build a library of great photos. Also consider asking local professional photographers to donate stock photographs, train volunteers to take better pictures, or host a photo safari fundraising event for your organization.

Tip #5: _Only keep the best._ Keeping second rate shots just clutters your hard drive and makes it hard to find the keepers. The general rule is to keep just one out of every 100 photos. Make it a habit to go through photos before you store them to identify the ones that best tell the story and are the most compelling.

Tip #6: _Store the Top 20 in easy reach._ Every organization has a few favorite photos. Establish a place for the 'Top 20' where everyone can use them. Cloud-based storage solutions, such as Dropbox, can provide easy access for staff, board, and volunteers.

Need a hand getting organized? WE CAN HELP!