

# Names and Formats for Digital Philatelic References or Studies

By Francis Adams

## Part VIII

Our Digital Philatelic Study (DPS) files typically will be stored on our computer's hard drive. Ensuring we can find them easily among our other files can be problematic unless we use a filing system. Finding them is the first step. Knowing what each file contains is the second step and using appropriate file names helps us to recognize a file's content quickly.

That practice also makes it convenient if we need to move, modify, or send files as attachments via an e-mail message. Let's discuss a few factors that contribute to keeping these files straight with minimal effort. After all, our time for hobbies is usually limited.

**BEFORE WE DO** — always back-up your work for safekeeping to a different drive or media type such as a CD-ROM, DVD, or a flash drive, just in case the inevitable hardware failure occurs. We'll cover media types in another article. The dog eating your homework excuse doesn't work.

## Naming Conventions

The main file or folder of your study should have a name reflecting the study's subject. Use a name with a direct relationship to the study and don't be cute. Trying to associate content with nebulous or cute names only makes it more difficult to remember which file contains what information or what an image depicts.

If you're dealing with older computer operating systems, try to use a name that is eight characters long as this will assist with compatibility: it's a useful practice. In more modern systems, this is no longer a requirement and the file name may be of any reasonable length.

Use an underscore ( `_` ) between multiple words in a file name instead of a space. A space can cause problems depending on the operating system and computer program language. This also reduces the ambiguity of whether it's our eyes playing tricks or if there really are two words in the file name. The computer recognizes the underscore and it's plain to our eye as well.

Always include the file extension suffix (i.e., doc, pdf, pps, ppt) after the file name as that allows the computer to open files without asking which application to use. Macintosh users are doing this more often now, although the Mac operating system (OS) automatically knows which application to use through information embedded in the file.

Microsoft PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat both produce files with file extension suffixes after the file name. PowerPoint's extension is ppt (pptx for PowerPoint 2007), pps for a PowerPoint Slide Show, and Acrobat's extension is pdf.

At a higher level, the media the study is stored on should also have a name. When a CD is inserted into a computer's drive, the CD's name appears under the icon and again, that name should also be directly associated with your study's subject.

**BOTTOM LINE** — name everything and insist the names are descriptive enough that your non-collecting spouse can identify the file or folder content from the name.

Does it take a little thought to do this? Yes, but you'll be happy you did when you come back to do an update a year from now.

## Folder and File Organization

Having all the necessary files present is important when your study must be portable.

Nothing is worse than getting to a show in a strange city — with dealers that have your gems — and having forgotten a file that makes the study work. Submitting your study to be evaluated in a competition and having files missing is a close second. Keeping everything together in an organized fashion will allay most of your fears that something is not available when needed.

Ensuring everything is in the same place can be relatively easy by using one main folder for all files used in the study. This main folder may also contain subfolders. As illustrated in Figure 1, the *Piltown\_Study* folder contains subfolders for documents (docs), images (pics), references, and varieties. Organizing your files by either file type or subject is perfectly acceptable.

When using a series of folders and/or files, you may wish to associate the file and folder names to each other to appropriately identify their content. Graphics or image scans might be in a folder named *pics* for instance. Within the *pics* folder, a file might be named *pic\_stamp\_variety\_1.jpg*. Use names that make sense to you, but also are not something other viewers will not understand.

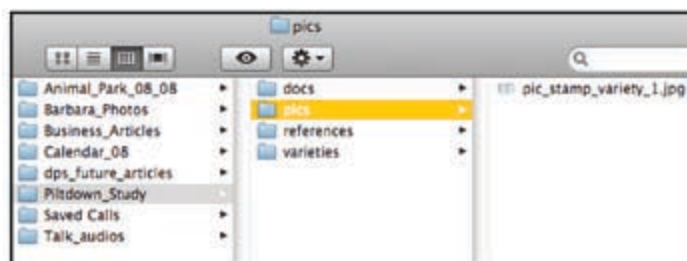


Fig. 1. Folder Organization and Image File Name

We all modify our files and update them with the latest information. In doing so, we often retain older versions or versions with or without certain content. To help keep these versions straight, it's useful to modify the name slightly to indicate a version number. Using the example above, the modified version might be *pic\_stamp\_variety\_1a.jpg* and a subsequent version would be *pic\_stamp\_variety\_1b.jpg*.

## Cross Platform Compatibility

We've mentioned cross platform compatibility in the past. Let's look at it closer. The study should be available in a common file format that can be read on either Microsoft Windows or Macintosh computers. Again, if there are questions, Windows files can be read by both Windows and Macintosh machines.

Because there are instances where a function may work on one platform and not the other, we try to avoid functions that do not work in both environments. Or, if we can use it on one and it does

Continued on Page 6

## Names & Formats — Continued from Page 5

not harm the other, that's fine as well. It simply needs to degrade gracefully when it fails.

Presently, the software program most commonly used to develop a study is Microsoft PowerPoint (ppt), a presentation software package that essentially allows you to produce slides. It's included in the Microsoft Office Suite in addition to Word and Excel for both Windows and Macintosh systems. A PowerPoint file may also be converted into a slideshow.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *An excellent alternative to MS Office for Macintosh users is Apple iWork '09, which includes Pages, Keynote, and Numbers, all of which are much more responsive and less intrusive than Office. Pages opens all current Word files and has an option to save in doc format. Keynote opens all current PowerPoint files and has an option to save in ppt format. Numbers opens all current Excel files and has an option to save in xls format.*

To allow the study to operate on Windows systems without PowerPoint, save the files as a *PowerPoint Show* (pps), an option within the program. (Fig. 2) A PowerPoint Show file will function without the PowerPoint application installed on the computer used to view it.

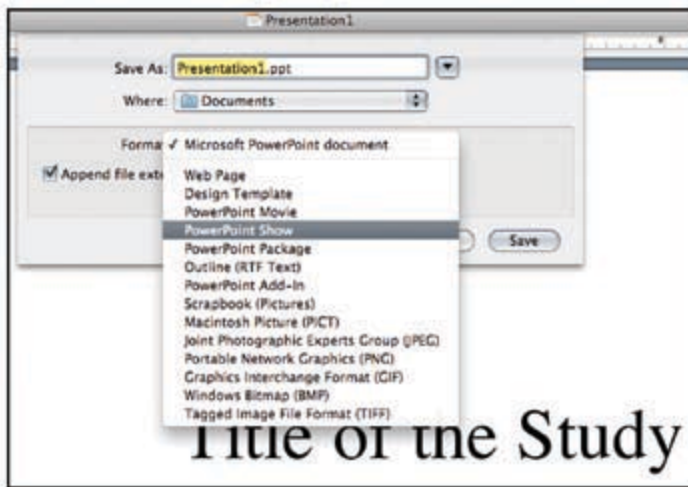


Fig. 2. PowerPoint Show Command

An Adobe Acrobat pdf file format is also an option to be used for your study. Pdf files are compatible with Windows, Macintosh, and other operating systems with the Adobe Acrobat program — a commercial product. A pdf file will open on any computer with the free Acrobat Reader software installed.

The Acrobat Reader software does not generate pdf files; it only reads them. The full Adobe Acrobat program is used to generate pdf files. It is also possible to convert many other file types into pdf format using Adobe Acrobat. If you do not own Adobe Acrobat, using the PowerPoint SAVE AS command will also allow a pdf file to be generated from within PowerPoint. An option from within MS Word is to use the PRINT ► PDF ► SAVE AS PDF command.

Other options include CutePDF Writer ([www.CUTEPDF.COM](http://www.CUTEPDF.COM)), a free Windows-only program plug-in which is downloadable from the internet. This plug-in allows you to convert files into a pdf format. Another free Windows program to make pdfs is *PDFCreator*

([SOURCEFORGE.NET/PROJECT/SHOWFILES.PHP?GROUP\\_ID=57796](http://SOURCEFORGE.NET/PROJECT/SHOWFILES.PHP?GROUP_ID=57796)).

The Macintosh operating system has pdf file generation capability built in, as does Adobe's Creative Suite.

In the event you're moved to produce a study as a web site, that effort requires a specific format — hypertext markup language (HTML). Using this format will allow the greatest flexibility, but it has a steeper learning curve than PowerPoint or other programs such as a Word.

To produce an HTML document, some visually oriented programs will allow you to work with minimal knowledge of HTML. They include Adobe Dreamweaver, the more affordable Rapid Weaver ([WWW.REALMACSOFTWARE.COM/RAPIDWEAVER](http://WWW.REALMACSOFTWARE.COM/RAPIDWEAVER)), and the freeware Kompozer ([WWW.KOMPOZER.NET](http://WWW.KOMPOZER.NET)), which are all quite capable of producing a study. Although Microsoft Word will also produce an HTML file, it is not recommended due to the resulting large file size and low quality of the HTML code it generates. It's simply not the correct tool for the job.

## Multiple Formats

Regardless of the software you finally choose to produce your study, the best option is to convert it into more than a single format (typically ppt and pdf). This is the greatest advantage of having an electronic document; files in a multitude of formats can be produced from a single document.

By having the study produced in a minimum of two common formats, such as doc, ppt or pdf, viewers may choose either version depending on the software installed on their respective computers. This will address the needs of more than 90 percent of viewers.

**ONE CAVEAT** — remember that a document may not look or act exactly the same when saved in different formats or opened in different applications. Our goal is to get the document to look as close to the same as possible — it need not be exactly the same. Don't be put off by small differences as long as the overall meaning of the information is not changed by the appearance.

Don't know what formats might be produced from your application? Using the SAVE AS command is often the quickest way to determine that. Depending on the application, formats from images (jpg, tif, etc.) to text (doc, pdf, etc.) can be generated quickly and automatically. (Figs. 3 and 4)

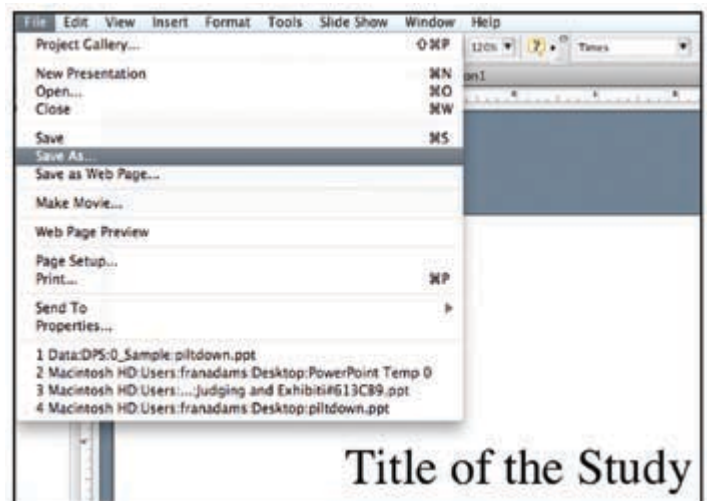


Fig. 3. Using the 'Save As' command

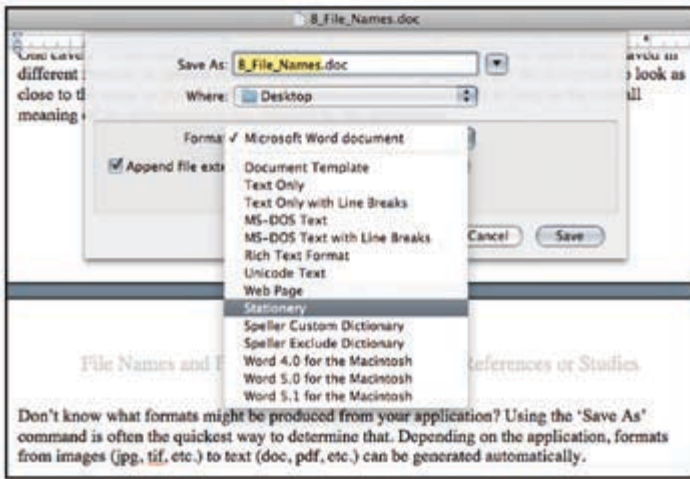


Fig. 4. Multiple file types

Don't forget, there's always the program HELP function that may be searched using terms such as *export*, *import* and *file format*.

Once you've decided which formats to produce, include each format version of your study in a separate folder, within the master folder. Each folder should be appropriately named and placed on the same distribution media. Let the user decide which file format is best for them using their existing computer and software. More work for you, but an excellent option for users.

## Putting it Together for a CD or DVD

PowerPoint for Windows has a command called PACKAGE FOR CD. This option collects all the related files, places them in a single folder and allows you to burn a CD or DVD with everything included automatically. Always name the CD or DVD.

If you envision running the study / presentation on a computer without PowerPoint installed, check that the option ENSURE LINKED FILES is checked. (Fig. 5)

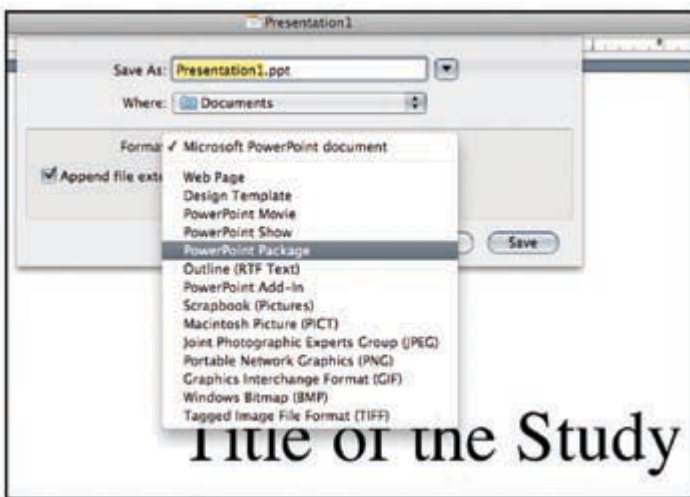


Figure 5. Selecting PowerPoint Package

You can burn the files to a CD or DVD or choose COPY TO FOLDER (place it on your desktop so it's easy to find) and everything should appear in your new study folder. Move the folder to a specific area on your hard drive or transfer it to any portable media, such as a CD, DVD or flash drive, for safekeeping.

On a Macintosh, choose SAVE AS ► POWERPOINT PACKAGE to produce a single folder. The option to SAVE AS PDF is also available or another choice might be a POWERPOINT MOVIE for Macintoshes or PCs with QuickTime software installed.

## Fonts are Files too

If you have special font typefaces installed on your computer and you have used them in your study, they may not be installed on the computer used to view your study.

If those typefaces are not available, the text formatting you've taken great care to ensure is on a single, unbroken line may not be. Computers substitute different typefaces if the ones used in the file are not available on the computer used to view the study.

# VICTORIAN

Fig. 6. Unusual typeface

To get around this problem when generating a pdf file, check the EMBEDDED TRUE TYPE FONTS box and the typefaces from your computer will automatically be embedded in your file when it's prepared. This option makes the file size larger, but ensures the text is displayed correctly rather than the user's computer attempting to guess which substitute typeface is best to use. (See *Sharing Fonts* below)

## Password Protection

If you wish to password protect your files, that option is also available after completing the study. The password may only be applied to the pdf version of the study if that is your wish. We suggest not using password protection unless your study is a document for sale — and even then it's usually inconvenient for the user. Keeping the document user friendly is our goal.

## Conclusion

Ordering your files properly will eliminate a source of frustration when assembling your digital study or replacing files with updated versions. You'll know exactly where everything is and if it's the proper version. Generating the final product will be much easier. A year from now, you'll be a very happy camper if you implement a few of these suggestions. ➔

# Sharing Fonts

Sharing fonts through embedding or outright packing is a hotly debated issue. Since TrueType fonts are obsolete and valueless, Microsoft apparently believes they can be freely distributed.

PostScript Type 1 fonts are also rapidly losing ground since Adobe discontinued their development and support in favor of the new OpenType standard. Although Adobe claims its fonts are intellectual property, it allows users of InDesign to easily package all the fonts in output sent to a printer or service bureau — theirs and those of other typographers — to be included in the package.

However, including fonts on a commercially distributed CD or DVD may result in litigation.

— Albert W. Starkweather