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you will have a file on your computer that you can look at. Boxes of negatives are not viewable. It is working for me. I have aboiut 30,000 negatives and slides and very few prints. Many date back to 1917. some are even older and are negatives on glass and positives on metal.

Ed

Posted by: Edward Taylor | Thursday, 24 February 2011 at 12:55 AM

*Just last night I started another backup of my entire digital archive of photographs, which currently totals about 25,000 files and just under 700 gigabytes.*

A question for the people who do regular backups of large numbers of files: How do you know that the files you are backing up are good? Is it possible that you are making copies of files which are corrupt without knowing it?

Posted by: Steve Smith | Thursday, 24 February 2011 at 02:49 AM

"It depends on how old you are whether you're going to die. I distinctly remember that when I was 27, I wasn't going to die. Now that I'm turning 54, I'm beginning to see it as more of a possibility.

Mike"

Had a friend here in the same block of flats as I live in, now. He died on his 60th birthday January 29, 2011!. There were no outward signs of impending death, for him. he was out of work, yet still functioning. Scary.

Death is similar to falling into either a
deep sleep or anethestic for a major bout of surgery. And that's it, or so I am told.
You're there one minute and the next minute not. My last round of surgery made a complete shambles of the process as I counted backwards to zero from ten and then suggested maybe if we started at a higher number then maybe it would be easier for the anethesiologist.
He agreed and I started at thirty. Apprently got to twenty before I dropped off. The anethesiologist came to seem me two or three days after surgery with his apologies, but noted "don't do very many
big males, especially those approaching seven foot tall and 400 pounds.

I turn 65 in May of 2011. Yikes!

Posted by: Bryce Lee | Thursday, 24 February 2011 at 09:13 AM

Verifying backups is important. I have a friend who discovered when the backup tapes were brought back from off-site to restore from the big disk crash that the tapes they'd been writing were unreadable. And this was at work.

The methods are specific to the software and format. And, unfortunately, you can't count on the "verify" function in your backup software to do the right thing (I remember catching NTI backup skimping there, years ago).

In my own case, all the data on the backup volumes has block checksums in the metadata, and I can instruct the software to read the blocks and verify the checksums. That protects me against hardware problems during the backup writing process, but won't find other kinds of errors (like my scripts not actually saving all my files, say).

One of the things that helps in my case is that the "backup" format is actually just an image of the filesystem. So I can mount it, and look at things on it at random and see if they look right.

Posted by: David Dyer-Bennet | Thursday, 24 February 2011 at 10:21 AM

Dear Steve,

Here is how I confirm that my archived files are good. I set the Contact Sheet automation in Photoshop CS4 loose on the archived files (Elements, Lightroom, and I think Aperture, have similar functions). Photoshop reads every single file in the archive and generates a thumbnail image of it.

(The automation works better for this purpose than merely having Photoshop or whatever program you use open every single file. The automation doesn't consume much memory; opening every single image archived on a DVD is going to really bog down your system unless you have a lot of RAM.)

Photoshop is very brittle; 99% of the time, if it hits a corrupted file it will simply halt. On rare occasions it will continue, having generated a corrupted thumbnail; they will be very evident when you look at the generated sheets.

In my case, I print out the contact sheets and file them all, as I've written about previously. But you don't have to do that; you could simply save them in the archive as a convenient set of references or even just throw them away after you've examined them on-screen. Their main purpose is verification.

I do this on any hard drive or DVD archive I create. Doesn't ensure against corruption down the line, but it does ensure that at the time of creation the data was uncorrupted and the archive was readable.

pax \ Ctein
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-- Ctein's Online Gallery http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations http://photo-repair.com
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Posted by: ctein | Thursday, 24 February 2011 at 10:49 AM

This comes a little late to the discussion, but this news about the imminent destruction of the Sygma archives (approx. 12 million images) would appear to illustrate yet another way in which images are lost forever.

http://blog.melchersystem.com/2011/02/25/the-fire-this-time/

Posted by: Mike Rainwater | Friday, 25 February 2011 at 10:51 PM

Ctein's method of verification makes sense to me but I get the impression that a lot of people just make copies of their files assuming that they are all o.k.

Posted by: Steve Smith | Saturday, 26 February 2011 at 03:12 PM

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