



# Viewpoint Mike Smith

Protecting and preserving our valuable images is always a bone of contention, so can our storage solutions ever be future-proof?

The archiving of photos for future generations has been a rumbling point for many years and has surfaced its head again with the doomsayers warning that we will become a generation of 'digital natives' destined to lose vast swathes of our digital life. The advice is to print our photos for the sake of archiving them. Generally, however, archiving has two aspects to it that are important to distinguish between: the accessibility of the storage format, and the durability of the storage medium.

The storage format for analogue products (negatives or prints) is always accessible, assuming we have physical access. That is not necessarily the case for digital products, where we move into the realm of both the storage medium and the file format.

The digital data needs to be on a device that is accessible itself. The BBC's Domesday Project ([www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/story](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/domesday/story)) is a good example of a product that became inaccessible within 15 years.

DVDs, CDs and CF/SD cards will have a very long shelf life for devices that can read them, but don't forget that it is relatively easy to format shift from one medium to another. Just copy your images from the SD card on to your hard drive (I'd avoid a floppy disk, though).

The file format can be a thorny

problem. Take some original digital art Andy Warhol created for Commodore ([www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27141201](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-27141201)), where the image format had to be reverse engineered.

For photography the JPEG is about as safe as it gets, but this isn't a raw file. NEF, CRW and ARW, for example, should be good for a long time to come and are very well supported by the software industry through, for example, Adobe Camera Raw. File formats do change, so this remains an unknown for the medium to long term. Of course, Adobe's solution to this is the DNG (digital negative).

### Choose your storage carefully

The durability of storage mediums is hugely variable. Physical print longevity can range from several years to several millennia. Modern archival paper should see hundreds to thousands of years under the right storage conditions (see *The Black and White Handbook*, 2000 edition, by Roger Hicks and Frances Schultz).

Magnetic media (tape, floppy disk, hard disk) have long been used in computing, and tape in particular has been shown to have good durability. Take the example of the amazing photos of Venus from the Soviet-era missions in the 1970s ([www.nbcnews.com/id/14786868/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-space/t/soviet-era-venus-images-get-new-life](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/14786868/ns/technology_and_science-space/t/soviet-era-venus-images-get-new-life)), where the original tapes were format-shifted and then reprocessed.

The lifespan of CDs and DVDs is variable, with CD-Rs and CD-RWs tending to be the worst after only a few decades. A clear-cut solution here is to format-shift and back up. For the diehard, 5D glass-storage beckons, although commercial products are some years away ([www.spie.org/x117492.xml](http://www.spie.org/x117492.xml)). A 1in disc of glass can store 360TB of data and withstand temperatures of up to 1,000°C. Its lifespan? A mere 13.8 billion years.

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## New Books

The latest and best books from the world of photography. By Oliver Atwell



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### Wilderland

By Andrew Fusek Peters, Fair Acre Press, £20, hardback, 160 pages, ISBN 978-1-91104-803-1



THERE has been a boom in photographers and writers taking flight from urban life to reconnect with Britain's natural spaces. Bookshelves

creak with nature writing by the likes of Robert Macfarlane and Helen Macdonald, and in the pages of this very magazine wildlife and landscape photography is in abundance. The charm and glamour of stepping onto and recording a land teeming with primitive history, and witnessing its inhabitants untethered by social concerns and problems, appeals to all of us. In this collection of wildlife imagery and writing, Andrew Fusek Peters explores the Shropshire borders. It's a project that seems not to be about an insider looking in and hoping to grab a few award-winning images, but a person using his camera to step into the world and, with some luck, bring something back that can be cherished and preserved on the most personal level. It's a lovely book and, above all things, inspiring. ★★★★★

### The Photographer's Pocket Book

By Michael Freeman, Ilex, £12.99, paperback, 256 pages, ISBN 978-1-78157-343-3



MICHAEL Freeman is one of those writers who is more than happy to occupy two camps. On the one hand he produces books that are geared more towards the experienced and professional, such as those that explore and theorise about composition. On the other, he is a writer who can expertly guide beginners through the most fundamental basics of photography. In this handy and portable volume, Freeman packs in just about everything you'll need to become more than proficient if you're thinking about getting serious about your photography, or even if you just need to take your photography up a level or two. There's something here for everyone, and that makes this book another worthy purchase from the Freeman catalogue. ★★★★★