



Organizing Your Artwork: DO IT!

Bernard Poulin • Vice President Emeritus

Archiving is a classic word which simply means “for gawds-sake get organized and manage your stuff!” Trust me! Waiting to do this after you’ve been creating for awhile can be a pain. Amateurs, professionals, and everyone in between who produces artworks need to archive. Once organized, it takes 5 minutes max to “click” the information into being—thus identifying and forever locating (throughout their whole existence) our completed masterpieces.

What is “provenance”?

Being able to archive to the satisfaction of auction houses and experts is called providing “provenance”—a MUST in the art world. Provenance is “the history” of an art piece. It’s knowing what road our creations have travelled once they have left the safety of our studio spaces. It’s what proves our stuff isn’t fake.

After nearly 50 years of painting and drawing, I have finally found the perfect archiving software. For more than 20 years it’s actually been in my studio...right under my nose (not unusual!). The most ironic part of this story is that the best archiving software to be

found (as far as I am concerned) has never promoted itself as such.

But aren’t there already proprietary archiving apps around? Absolutely. Lots! Some cost thousands of dollars with added monthly fees and online ads that rival Ralph Lauren and Gucci. Some cost \$59, some \$129. Some are downloads to your computer. Some are in the cloud. Most give you some of what you pay for. And many give you less. I’ve tried, tested and researched several of them and, in the end, I have never really been satisfied.

Why am I not? For one simple reason. None of these specialized archiving apps directly connect to the most important part of what we already have: our day to day email and contact software, like Outlook, Thunderbird, Mail Spring, etc.

In other words, if we want to make the best use of our spanking new, state of the art (no pun intended) archiving software, must we create its own name, address, and email lists? And this, over and above the one we already have and use to send out emails and connect with friends and family...Really? A second list of names, addresses and emails is needed to use

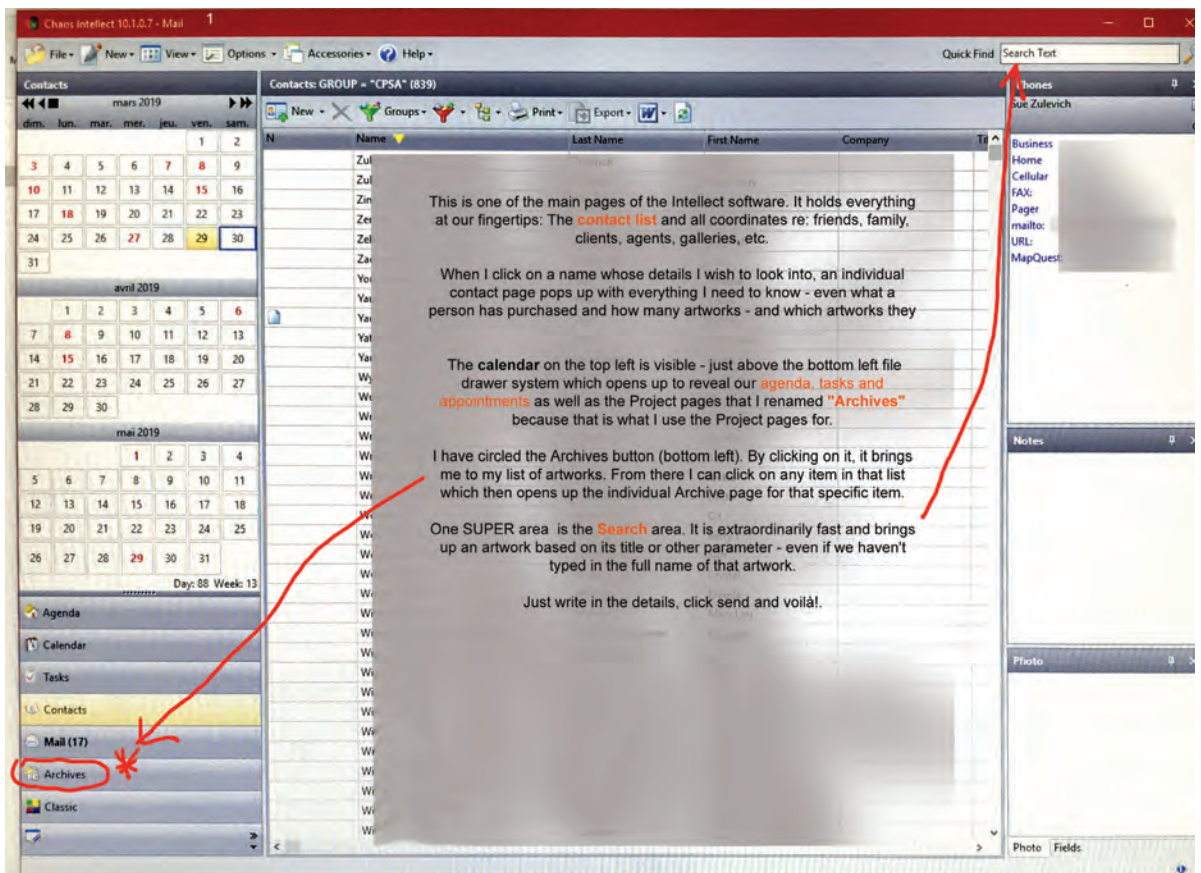


Figure 1 “Contact” page

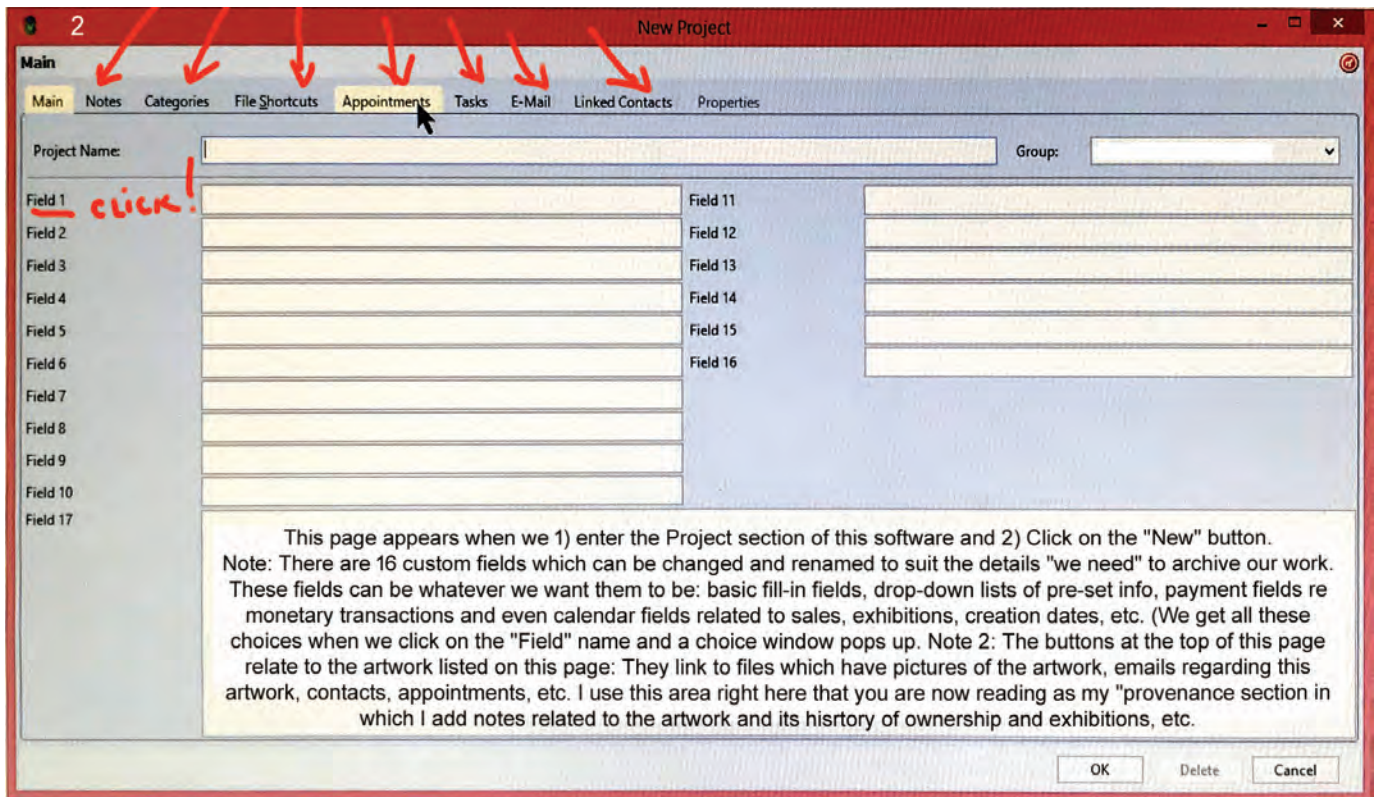


Figure 2 “Project” page

our oh-so-special name-brand archiving software? NOT GOOD! So what’s the solution?

For someone else, other apps may be satisfactory. But for me, Chaos Intellect is the one that checks off all the boxes. I replaced Outlook with Chaos Intellect years ago. Like Outlook (but WAY better) its primary purpose is to be a management, email, and contact software. Its flexible layout constantly amazes me. My latest find within it, is that it is THE perfect archiving software even though it was never created for that purpose. Because it was so creatively invented, I’ve suddenly realized that I have two software programs in one! I don’t need to buy anything else!!!

For the additional price of \$0, it’s a second to none archiving app—and all of this for no more than the price (\$60 or so) I paid for it years ago.

Note: I have no monetary connection to Chaos Intellect. They pay me nothing to say what I am saying, and they don’t even know I am saying it. This is just a solid product I purchased a long time ago and use every day without a glitch—unless I

cause it! I LOVE its solid offerings and the service I get when I need it. Updates are also regular and easy to install.

From emails to support

Chaos Intellect comes from Richardson, Texas. It has a superb support service (meaning “Bill” who answers all emails for help). There is also what is called “Chaos University” on their website. Quickly accessed from the software, it offers a series of plain speaking, 24-hour a day available videos which explain every detail of the software’s offerings in 3 to 5 minute presentations.

First and foremost, this management software maintains all of my agenda, contacts, the sending, receiving and saving of emails—be they of clients or otherwise. Figure 1 (at left) shows the contact list page modified to suit my needs. (I’ve grayed out the names and other details to protect the innocent.) Each name and its coordinates can be placed in specific groups or in as many categories as I want.

For my contacts, that means placing them in categories such as friends, enemies, or clients and of portrait,

landscape, still life, etc. Each client can be linked to each and every project (artwork) with which they are related, and every buyer has a project page button connecting them directly with a list of all the artworks they have purchased over the years.

In the upper right of Figure 1, you see an arrow pointing to the super fast search field. (By typing the name or other identifying coordinates of an artwork, the software will find it IMMEDIATELY.) Encircled at bottom left is the word “Archives” (I changed it from the usual “Project” title). By clicking on it I go directly to my complete artwork listings.

Adaptability is the key

So, what makes this software different, therefore the best? How does this product serve as an archiving software? THAT is Chaos Intellect’s greatest asset. We can adapt the Project section of this software into anything we need it to be.

After decades of using Chaos Intellect, I discovered this “Project” page. It starts out looking empty, but clicking the “new project” button at the top left pops up a

(continued next page)

Organizing Your Artwork...continued

template (Figure 2, below). This template displays 16 custom fields which can be adapted to however you wish to use them. They can be editable list fields, drop-down lists, payment/currency fields, calendar fields, etc. All we need do is set up this page as we need it.

A personalized “archive” page

The third image (Figure 3, below) shows you how I turned this template into a “my needs” archive page. I am both a genre and a portrait painter. I need the names of models and subjects and their coordinates. Someone who paints landscapes won’t need this. I need to know which artworks were sold and from which shows or by which agents. All of this is possible in Chaos Intellect when setting up our own personalized “archive page.”

Now, all of this planning and setting up had to be worth it for me since I had to input (and still am doing so) information on 3,000 artworks over a period of 50+ years! But, once set up, every time I click on the “new” button, a properly organized individual Archive page template pops up making the “filling in the blanks” a breeze.

Once completed, this information is automatically added to the Archive’s growing list of already created artwork files—all listed by year (or any other identification number combinations we give our artworks). The linked names can connect us to the artworks in the same way artworks can connect us to names and places.

These possibilities exist since in addition to all of the 16 adaptable custom fields, there are also several already set-up direct links to: buyers, appointments, tasks, emails, files with images of artworks, etc.! (See the arrows in Figure 2.)

Search at rocket speed

As mentioned before, at rocket speed, the software’s search engine brings us to a requested Archive page. Simply type in the name of the artwork. Not having to scroll down hundreds of (for me 3,000) images just to get to the artwork you are looking for.

And lastly—every buyer, interested client, agent, gallery, exhibition, etc, can be directly linked to our individual artwork pages. A better, more clearly defined and

less troublesome archiving software than that has not yet been created.

To make this all happen...

1. Purchase Chaos Intellect (\$60).
2. File your artwork images and other related data permanently in folders on a drive of a computer where you have Chaos Intellect.
3. Import contact and email data from Outlook to Chaos Intellect (see Chaos Intellect website for instructions.) I’m lazy. When I purchased Chaos Intellect, I got a technician at Staples to do the transfer.
4. Set up the project template page as an archive page. And voilà!

So. Do what you will. This is my effort and my favorite all inclusive, not a toy, software—Chaos Intellect: <https://www.chaossoftware.com/>

Hope this encourages you to get organized.

—Bernard Poulin, VP Emeritus,
The French connection in Canada

Figure3 “Archive” page

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Artworks' window in Chaos Intellect. The 'Main' menu is open, showing options like Notes, Categories, File Shortcuts, Appointments, Tasks, E-Mail, Linked Contacts, and Properties. The 'Artworks Name' field is empty, and the 'Group' is set to 'CI-Canada'. The 'Number' field contains '2018-0020'. The 'Subject' is 'Port-Official-F', 'Medium' is 'Oil-Canvas', and 'Dimensions' are '30" x 24"'. The 'Agent' is 'Me', 'Market Value \$' is '6 600,00 \$', '\$ Value (latest)' is '10 000,00 \$', 'Sale/Exh Date' is empty, 'Price \$ - Sold' is '5 940,00 \$', and 'Signature' is 'Signature - Date'. The 'Reference Source' is 'Ottawa', 'Status' is 'Commission', 'Exhibition' is empty, and 'Series/Locale/Category' is 'Ottawa'. The 'Provenance' field contains '2018 - Poulin, Bernard' and '2018 - Commission - Ro...'. A text area at the bottom explains the importance of provenance.

AS YOU CAN SEE IN THIS SAMPLE ARTWORK PAGE FROM MY ARCHIVES!
All the custom fields have been changed to meet my needs and wants. All the information I wish to gather via drop-down lists, calendar and payment fields have been added. I simply took the time to make dummy pages on paper to be sure I included all the historical notes required of an archive list.

Again, this is the **provenance** area.

It tells the story of the painting or sculpture or other artwork created. It clearly indicates where the piece went once it was completed - to what gallery, agent, buyer, renter, etc. It says who sold it and to whom or who rented it and to whom - or, in the end, who inherited it and where it went from there. The history of artwork is what proves "I", "You" or "who else" made this thing listed as our artwork.

The only proof that something is not a fake, is this archive page. **Provenance** is proof we did what we say we did.



Keeping Records: More Options

CJ Worlein, CPSA • Corporate Image Director

In the article by Bernard Poulin that precedes this one, you learned about the reasons for archiving records of your artwork and about Chaos Intellect, the customizable software Bernard uses to track his more than 3,000 completed works of art. It looks like it can do just about anything.

Even if you don't really need to interface with your email and contact software, Bernard's article is eye-opening about the importance and value of organizing and archiving information about your work once it's completed.

You might wonder. . .are there other, perhaps simpler, methods to organize and track information about our art? But, before anyone can set about answering that question, there's another one to be answered first—"WHAT do I want to track?"

So let's start with that question

What to track is going to be a little different for each of us, depending on how much art we do and what we do with it after it's done. But here are some basics that could go on your list:

- Artwork title
- Start and completion dates
- Artwork image size (usually mat opening size, if matted)
- Frame, mat, and glazing information (type, size, where purchased, cost, etc.)
- Show(s) in which art was entered (or other venues in which it was shown), and results, if applicable
- Sale (to whom, date, amount, type of payment, etc.)
- If a commission, for whom and price

And say you enter some of your work in several shows every year, and sometimes you resubmit the same piece to the same show again if it wasn't invited the previous year. Wouldn't it be of value to have a way to track—for each work of art—all the places you've entered it, when, and what the results were?

Looking at other tracking options

Once you have a feel for what to track, you can start deciding the "how." Bernard mentioned that other specialized art archiving software packages exist that didn't work for him, but if your needs are different, you could research those.

But what I'll focus on here are two options that are both basically free and fully customizable: **spreadsheets** and good ol' low-tech **pencil and paper**.

Here are some thoughts about each of these.

The spreadsheet route

If you're computer savvy and familiar with spreadsheets, you may already have Microsoft Excel or Apple's Numbers on your computer or tablet. If you don't have one, there are free spreadsheet programs available online (just Google "free spreadsheets"). Since you are dealing with rows and columns,

the hardest part is figuring out what goes in the columns and what goes in the rows. As in the example below, you can keep it pretty simple—one column each for the title, year completed, image size, frame measurements, and a link to an image of the artwork stored on your computer. Or...go big and track *everything!*

Spreadsheet Advantages: Spreadsheets make it easy to search for specific words, names, or dates. You can include links and set up multiple tabs in one document to track other things, and re-sort your information in a variety of ways. Then everything is saved and stored on your hard drive or in the cloud.

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	A	B	D	E	
1	Title	Year Done	Image Size	Frame Msrmnts	Link to Image
17	Staredown	2016	10-1/2 x 16-1/2	20-3/4 x 26-3/4	Staredown/Stare
18	A Grampa Moment	2017	18-1/8 x 23-1/4	29-3/4 x 34-3/4	A Grampa Momen
19	Hostage	2018	12-1/2 x 17	19-7/8 x 24-1/4	Hostage/Hostage
20	Once Upon a Time	2018	10-1/2 x 14-3/4	17 x 21	Once Upon a Tim
21	Elinor	2019	24 x 19-1/2	28 x 32-1/4	Jan H grandkids/
22	Enlightened	2019	20 x 18	28-3/4 x 26-1/4	Boo/Enlightened

Spreadsheets can be as simple or as complex as you want to make them. But there's nothing wrong with an old-fashioned binder and handwritten records. Either way, you'll be ready to enter details as they happen over time.

Title of Artwork _____

Date started _____ **Shows/Competitions Entered**

Date framed _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

Notes _____

Measurements (h x w) and Framing

Mat opening/image size _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

Mat dimensions _____ Notes _____

[] Single mat _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

[] Double mat _____ Notes _____

Back mat borders T+S _____ B _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

Front mat borders T+S _____ B _____ Notes _____

Frame outer size _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

Frame type/model/color _____ Notes _____

Frame purchased from _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

Notes _____

Date frame ordered _____ Notes _____

Frame price \$ _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

1/8" Acrylic: _____ Notes _____

[] Acrylite FF _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

[] Acrylite FF OP-3 UV block _____ Notes _____

Acrylic price \$ _____ Show Name _____ Year _____

Other framing costs _____ Notes _____

Commission

Client _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Total Invoiced \$ _____

Giclees? [] yes [] no _____

Size(s)/Qty(s) _____

Delivery/Ship Date _____

Date Pmt Recd _____

Check # _____

Out-of-pocket costs:

Matboard _____

Frame _____

Acrylic _____

Giclee scan _____

Giclee prints _____

Other _____

Other _____

Total Cost \$ _____

Notes _____

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Spreadsheet Disadvantages: If your spreadsheet skills are rusty, you'll have a learning curve. Figuring out how to set up your spreadsheet can take some time and be a bit daunting.

The paper route (no bicycle needed)

With this option, you'll set up a three-ring binder with a data sheet for each of your completed paintings and you'll enter information by hand on the data sheet as things happen.

You could think of this as the more "artistic" approach, where you start with a blank piece of paper and decide on a "composition" of just what goes where. In the data sheet example on page 31, there's a place for details about the painting itself, about any shows it has been entered into, and about the client if it was a commission. Yours may look completely different!

To help you figure out the best format for you, sketch out a "test" page for yourself, and list all the things you think you need to record. Make a copy of it and enter info on the copy for a recent painting. You'll probably discover you want to add something else or move things around. Once you're happy with your

plan and layout, create a final master, make some copies, three-hole punch them, put them in your binder, and start entering information one painting at a time. It might be easiest to start with your most recently completed art and use a pencil instead of a pen in case you need fix errors.

Paper Advantages: Portability and instant access. A page per painting makes it easy to just grab your binder and record information as things happen.

Paper Disadvantages: You can't "search" or "sort," except by your own hands and eyes. You'll need to be able to make photocopies and to have a three-hole punch. And a binder takes up space and should have a place to live so you can find it when you need it.

Are you already tracking your artistic endeavors?

If so, be sure to share your system with Kay Schmidt for next issue's "Ongoing Dialog." (See page 8.)

But if you aren't currently tracking your work, I hope that now you've made the decision to find or set up a system that will work for you.