

LIFE GOES ON BAG – ADVANCED GEEKERY

[Workbook](#) page: None

[Listening to Katrina](#) companion page: [HYST - Documents](#)

To this point I have outlined a basic strategy for creating and maintaining a digital data store. This page contains some other methods for those persons pre-disposed towards technology - i.e. geeks. I was a geek before geekery was cool, so I'm qualified to speak to this.

ADVANCED GEEKERY # 1



The first advanced method isn't all that advanced, and credit for this one goes to my friend Bill. (Hi Bill!) I had a number of notebooks I wanted to digitize, and running them on the scanner was going to take forever.

I set up my camera on a tripod, adjusted as you see in the photo, and took photographs page by page. Some quick cropping in an image editor, and *presto* I had readable copy.

[Listening to Katrina](#) - www.theplacewithnoname.com/blogs/klessons

Shane Steinkamp © 2008 - All rights reserved.

While this method is not as good or as 'clean' as a document scanned on a flat-bed scanner, it does work well for some things - like notebooks. If I have a document I want to re-print, or photographs, then I will put them on the scanner.

There are several 'tricks' that will help you if you need or want to use the camera-on-a-tripod trick.

1. Adjust the tripod so that the camera is pointed *straight* down and perfectly level.
2. Align the camera with some 'index' so that you can align your notebook or document easily. In this case I have used the seam in the table.
3. Adjust the camera settings to disable the flash and force a longer exposure. In most cases, turning off the flash will do this automatically. My Panasonic camera has a 'scene' setting for (of all things) food, which works perfectly. You can use the flash, but I get better results without it in most cases.
4. Once you download them into your laptop, the images can be manipulated like any other image. You can crop them, for instance. Using the image resizer, you'll find that you can reduce the file sizes quite a lot and still have perfectly readable copy - although it isn't optimal for printing.

ADVANCED GEEKERY # 2

Advanced Geekery #2 has to do with external hard drives. For most people, they are just a black box that works by magic. Well, inside that box is a 3 1/2 inch device just like the one in the lower left of the photo above. It's a fairly sensitive electric and electronic device that should be protected since that's the thing that protects your data wealth. I went looking for an inexpensive solution to storing external hard drives. I wanted something waterproof and cheap. Cheap being the operative clause. I discovered that [Witz](#) makes just such an animal.

Their Utility Locker I (small), and Utility Locker II (large), are under \$20 and waterproof. I wish they weren't Made In China, but you can't have everything. The Utility Locker II (large) is pictured above. I cut the foam (\$5.00 from Witz) to fit two external hard drives into the same unit. If you only have one, then you can store other things - like power and USB cords - in the additional space. It's almost like they're made for external hard drives. A very elegant solution.

The large is a little too large to fit into my laptop bag comfortably, which brings me to:

ADVANCED GEEKERY #3

I have recommended 3 1/2" external hard drives to you primarily because of ease of use and dependability. There is, however, a smaller solution. 2 1/2" external hard drives - which are the same hard drives in most laptop computers. You can also get these in an external case - but they will be more expensive, have lower capacity, and be more fragile than 3 1/2" external hard drives. Those tradeoffs will buy you portability.

Here I have cut the foam in a Utility Locker I (small) to fit one 3 1/2" external hard drive, the cords for it, and some additional items. They all fit nicely with plenty of spare room. There are slots on the sides of the case to accommodate a strap or belt of some kind, and this could easily allow the Utility Locker I to be carried easily.

My external hard drive is 320 GB, which is the upper limit of 2 1/2" hard drives at the time of this writing. I utilize the storage space in a different way than on the 3 1/2" drives. I only keep one copy of my backup data and one copy of my data root on it. I also keep a secondary copy of some archive material that I keep on the 3 1/2" drive.

Yes, I do actually have both types of drives with the same data on them - which is probably going overboard - but I'm paranoid when it comes to my data.

A 2 1/2" external hard drive is convenient in one way, because it can be powered entirely from the laptop with no need to plug into an AC outlet.

You can see mine in use here, plugged only into two USB ports. The second port only supplies power.

2 1/2" external hard drives tend to get very hot, so it is a good idea to rest them on two pencils or two ink pens like I have done here. That will keep it off the desk so air can circulate around it.

While the drive is in use, do not move it. Don't pick it up. Try not to touch it at all. The disks inside spin at high rates and moving the drive around while they are spun up causes unneeded stresses. I have had other geeks tell me that I'm too careful with the hardware - but I have never learned to trust the machines.

Shane