

SAVING MY STUFF
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Written Yesterday:

“The weather outside is frightful...,” you know the song, so I am rummaging around in my various workrooms trying to get rid of stuff. As an award-winning archivist, does it surprise you that I collect things? My wife is horrified by the amount of stuff I have, and I really have to agree with her. It is too much. I sometimes wish I had a fulltime person just to take care of my stuff, but that makes no sense either, not to mention I can't afford it. In the end, that person has to be me, and it has to be done before the end, before I drop off this planet. It is time to get on it.

One day someone else will have to do something with all my stuff, and I 'really' don't like that idea. How on earth would they know what to do with it, when I hardly know myself? I am the one and only person who knows what all this stuff is good for, and even I have forgotten why I am saving some of it. A couple of weeks ago I got into sorting all this out.

First I went for the low-hanging fruit (I hate that phrase) and that was a seven foot by ten foot wall of electronic related stuff that I just couldn't throw away because obviously it still has value. Well, for the most part that was years ago and the value has gone, but the wall of stuff is still there. This part was easy, and I thought I was clever. I would just move this stuff to another building and “voila!”... no more stuff in building number one. With the help of my brother Phil (who was very kind not to say anything about my worthless stuff to me directly), all the stuff left my basement and appeared in our little woodshop next to my software company. It filled most of the floor.

Years ago I used to know some electronics, at least computers. That was a long time ago and today I have no idea what all these old motherboards, logic boards, parallel printer cards, RS-232 cords, video driver cards, and dozens and dozens of related items are good for or were good for. Obviously, I can't go through this stuff because I no longer have any idea what is treasure and what is trash. And secretly I was relieved that “I” didn't have to deal with it. Someone else can do it. Goody.

And we do have a hardware expert on staff and he knows what is useful and what is not. Thank god for him, I thought. My idea was to put all this stuff, all these boxes of old stuff, down in the nice warm shop and let him go through it a bit at a time. I knew it would take weeks and he would have to squeeze out time for it, but gradually it would get done. Then I would keep the good stuff for the company, give some to schools, put some on EBay, and throw the rest out. I let him know the stuff was there and that I would appreciate if he would check it out as he found extra time.

When I came to work the next day I kind of slid by his office to let him know that he should try to do at least a little each day. He just looked up at me and said that it was all done and organized into three neat piles, a very small pile of the stuff the shop wanted for parts, a very small pile of some old toner cartridges that our office manager can trade in at Staples, and a mountain of stuff that he declared had no value and could be donated, recycled, or junked. I was shocked.

This was to take weeks. I thanked him and quickly ran down to the shop, turned on the lights,

and sure enough, there were three piles, a little baby pile of things to keep, a mama sized pile to go to staples, and a daddy-bear pile that filled the floor of the shop from front to back. Worse, I immediately began to see all kinds of really good stuff in the 'junk' pile. In a flash I was right back where I started, unable to let go of all that junk. Now what do I do?

The first thing I did was to turn out the lights, lock up the shop, and promise myself I was not going to worry about it for a 'while'. It was out of the house and no one needed the floor space, so I could give it a rest. But I can't believe that it all (most of it anyway) is still there. Talk about bad feng-shui! And that is as much as I am going to tell you, because that is as far as I have gotten.

I 'guess' I will go through the junk pile again and relive my attachments in an attempt to reach a point of disgust with myself where I can say "Just throw it all out," but that day has not yet dawned, and the one person I did not want to have to deal with all of this any longer has to deal with it. And you know just who that is.

[Photo: the next in my series of eatable subjects for photographing.]

