

Organizing Your Archives

Jerry Hale

When I bought a CD writer I thought I had found the perfect solution to archiving my many many genealogy files, files I have accumulated by downloading information from many sources over the years. These files are very helpful when and if I can find them.

When scanners became common I scanned every photo I had then started on those owned by other family members. I learned I could even copy photos without removing them from the wall in some cases.

Having learned that I must create a backup I started to do so. At first floppy disks were the solution. Before long, however, the size of a single photograph was too large for a 3-1/2" floppy disk.

ZIP disks were the answer for a while, 100 MB disks were replaced by 250 MB disks. Then came the JAZ drive with 1GB of space followed by the ORB drive with 2 GB disks.

Even 2 GB wouldn't back up my hard drive which has gone from 500 MB to 80 GB over the years. Onstream came along with an even better solution, or so I thought. A 30 GB tape! Until one of them ate 30 GB of my data while I waited half a day to restore a crashed hard drive I thought I had discovered the perfect solution. Finally the CD writer came along, became affordable and then became cheap as the DVD began to drop in price.

Blank DVD discs are now below \$1.00 each and the capacity is 4.7 or 9.5 GB and the reliability is very high so that will be the next logical step.

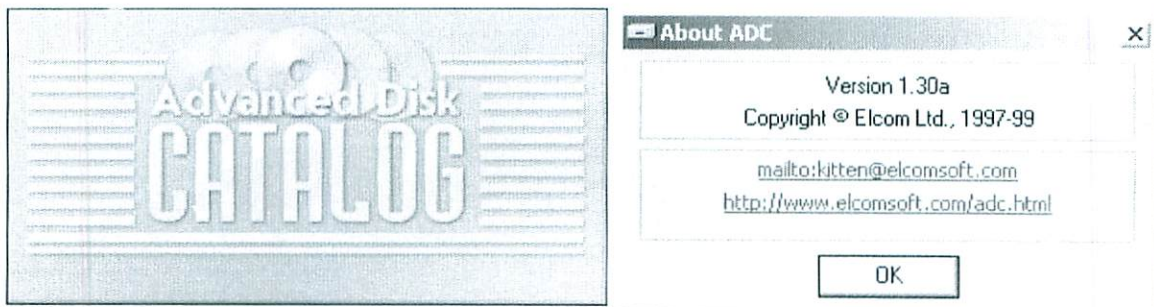
There is one enormous problem with all of these methods. How does one quickly find a file buried in all of this media?



I have developed a system that I believe will hold up for the long term.

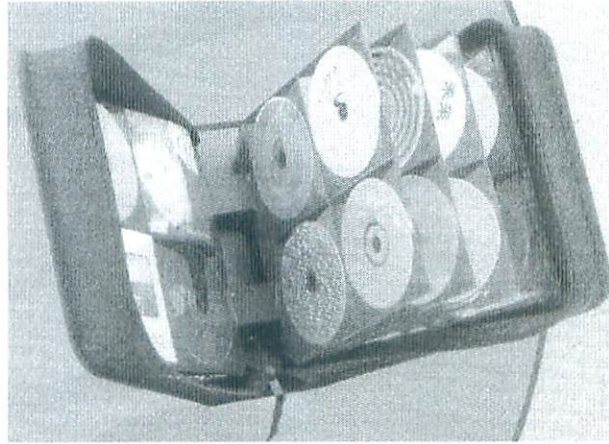
My system consists of a CD-ROM writer and will soon be replaced with a DVD writer. I have approximately 300 CDs of archival and backup material that I have migrated from all of the above media types onto CD-ROMs.

I have found a program called the "Advanced Disk Catalog (ADC)" from Elcomsoft, which is ideally suited to keeping tabs on all of these files.



ADC may be downloaded from the Ziff Davis web site at the following URL: <http://downloads-zdnet.com.com/3120-20-0.html?q=advanced+disk+catalog&tg=dl-2001>. The program is shareware and is free to use and costs \$20 to register.

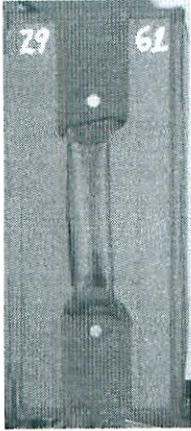
All of my CDs are placed into Case Logic CD Wallets. Each wallet accommodates 264 discs. Each page of the wallet holds 8 disks, 4 on the front and 4 on the back of each page.



I have used labels to number each page. Pages are numbered across wallets. In other words the first wallet holds pages 1 through 28, the second wallet holds pages 29 through 61 etc.



The pockets on each page are designated A, B, C and D. A specific location in the middle of the first wallet would then be designated 12Bc which translates to the 12th page, back, pocket C.



After placing all of my CDs into the pockets of the wallets I write the location code on each CD with a Sharpie permanent marker. This makes it very easy to quickly return the CD to its proper pocket within the wallet. The beginning and ending page number is written on the spine of each CD Wallet using a "Liquid Paper" pen.

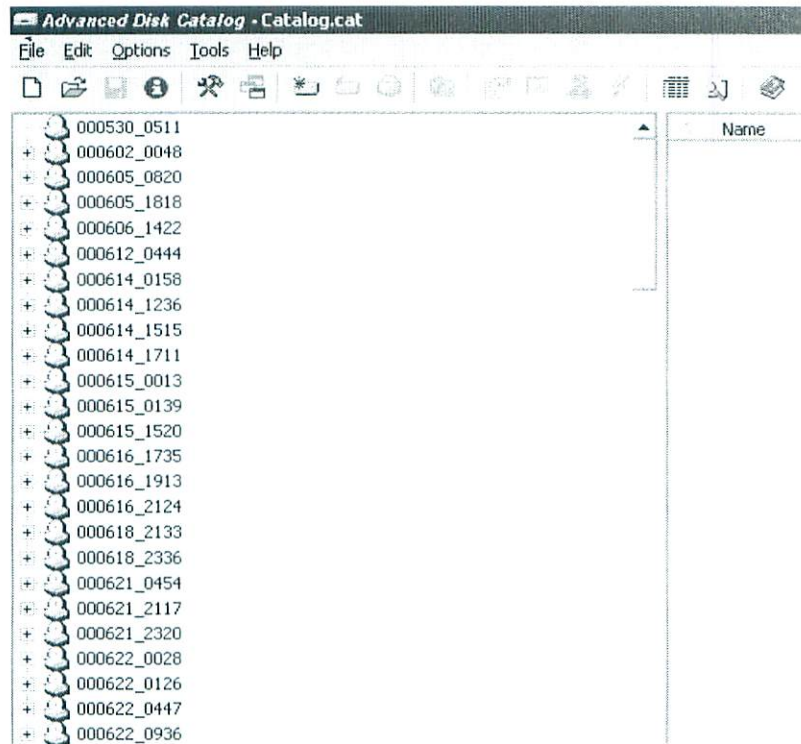
The next step is to use the ADC program to read each of the CDs in the collection. This is quite fast and easy to do. In the ID portion for each disk which is read into the catalog I note the pocket location code.

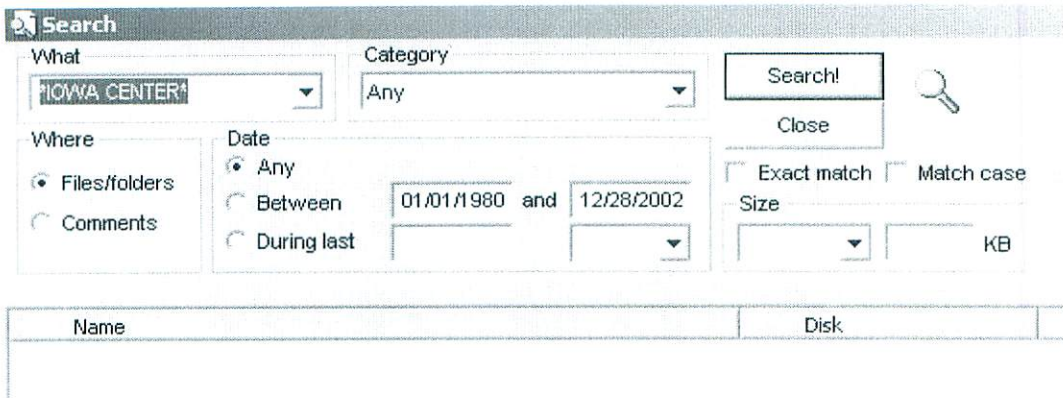
Once the catalog is complete it can be easily updated and is no problem to maintain. Using the SEARCH function of the program I can easily search on a particular file name and the ADC program will quickly tell me where, in this massive collection, the file can be found.

The figure at the right shows the listing of cataloged CD ROMs.

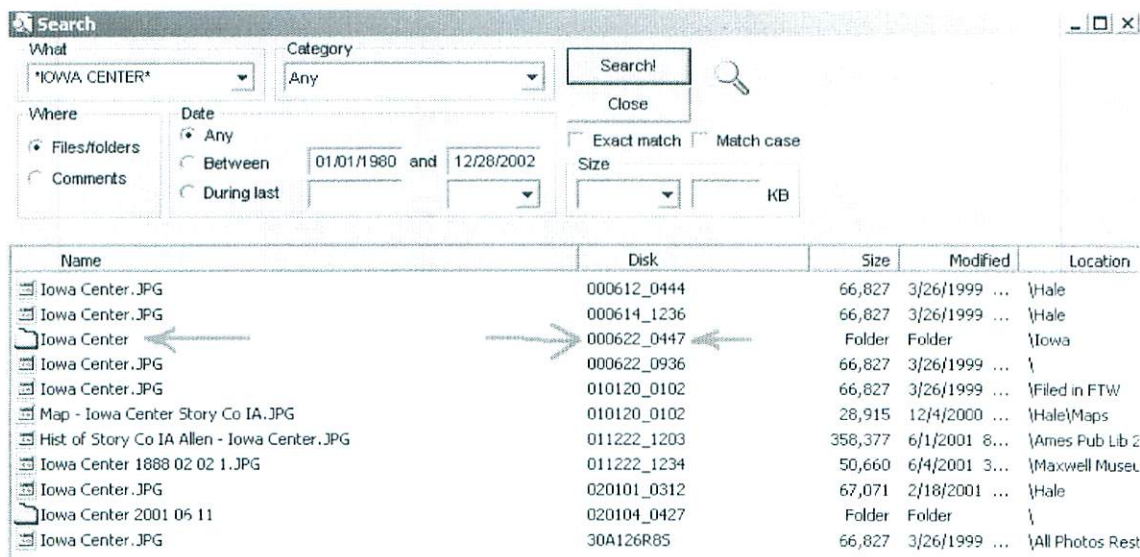
If I want to search for my Iowa Center photos I would bring up the search window and type "Iowa Center" into the search box as demonstrated in the figure below.

If, for instance, the file turns up with a location of 32Ba I know I can find the file on the CD-ROM which resides on page 32, back, upper left pocket.

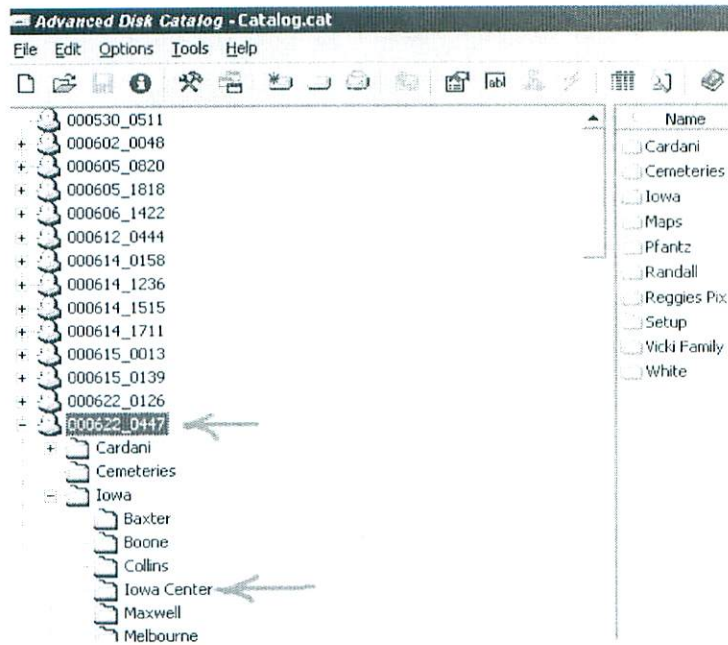




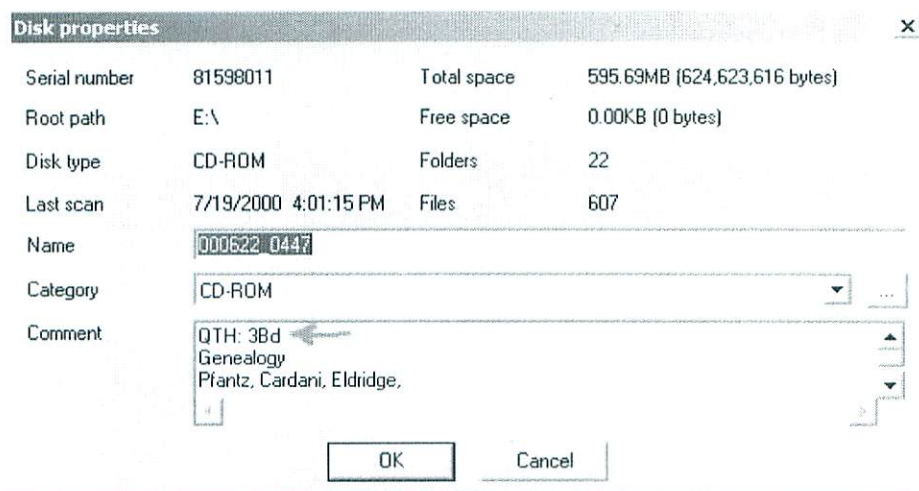
Searching for Iowa Center.



Several Iowa Center files are located. The one on CD # 000622_0447 is the one I want to look at. I double click on that disk.



ADC then switches to the catalog and expands that disc listing. I want to know where to find CD # 000622_0447. Right clicking on that disk and selecting 'properties' expands the disk listing and reveals that the disk is to be found on page 3, back, pocket 'd.'



Using this system I can find a file in the blink of an eye.

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