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File Names and Formats

File Names

A file's name has the potential to convey important information about its contents. Establishing a clear naming system for project files should be a priority in early development stages, but may also need to be implemented later in the process in order to make production, publication, and archiving proceed smoothly. Ideally, file names should logically reflect the subject matter contained in the file. This makes archiving easier, and it can also aid in managing the files during review and editing stages. The key in any file naming system is consistency. While many techniques are acceptable, it is crucial to maintain a consistent method. The following are additional common and basic recommendations for file naming:

- Do not use spaces. If the file name consists of multiple words, use hyphens or camelCase.
- Do not use arbitrary numbers as filenames. Unless there is an obvious reason to use numbers instead of words for filenames, only use numbers when appending to words in order to distinguish states or versions.
- Do not use punctuation other than hyphens. Many special characters and punctuation marks trigger actions in the back end of a site that could cause errors.

File Formats

As in the case of file naming, it is important to use consistent file formats throughout your project. For images you might need to employ a variety of formats for quality and functionality (see “Images” guide). However, for other media, including video and audio, it is preferred that you use the following formats whenever possible. Depending on how your project operates, you might need to use other file formats defined by an outside API or platform, and these recommendations might need to be reconsidered in those cases. If your preferred format is not listed below, please contact us so we can assess the needs and requirements of the project's media storage and delivery.

Images

- **jpg/jpeg:** This format works for most images.
- **png:** Use this format if the image contains transparent layers
- **tiff:** Only use this format for images that need extremely high quality for zooming purposes. In a digital environment, the need for this will be rare.

Video

- **mp4:** Use this format if you will be employing an HTML5 player to deliver video locally. This method is preferred for projects that do not include a lot of video.

- **mov:** This format is preferred for delivery through our digital repository. If your project contains a lot of video, we may determine that this is the best delivery method, in which case you will need to provide all video for the project as soon as possible so we may deposit the files in the repository and provide you with their persistent urls.

Audio

- **mp3:** Use this format if you employ the HTML5 audio player in your project.
- **wav:** This is the preferred format of our repository's player. If you have a lot of sound files, we may determine that storing them in and delivering them through our digital repository is the best method. In this case, you will need to provide all audio for the project as soon as possible so we may deposit the files in the repository and provide you with their persistent urls.

Text

If you are using a platform such as Scalar, your text files will be automatically rendered within the system. For all custom built sites, text-based files should be html(5) or txt. Do not use PDFs.

Resources

- W3C's overview of video formats for HTML5 players: https://www.w3schools.com/html/html5_video.asp
- W3C's overview of audio formats for HTML5 players: https://www.w3schools.com/html/html5_audio.asp
- Stanford University Libraries' recommendations on preparing digital audio and video content for the digital repository: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/sdr/StanfordAVContentGuidelines.pdf>