



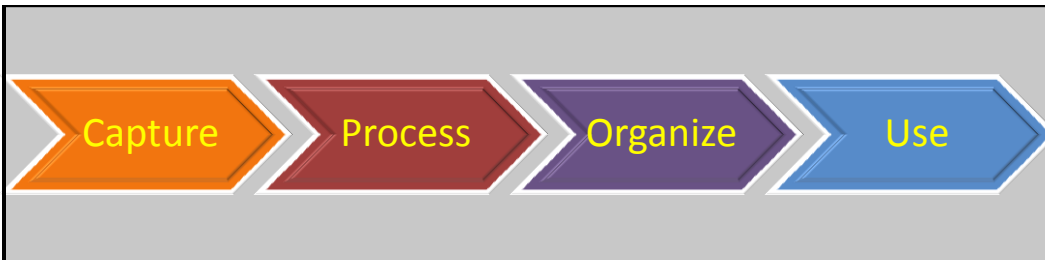
## ***Tips for Creating a Lodge Video History & Electronic Library***

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Does your lodge have an electronic library? A video history? Does it have a published history? How about a Lodge Historian? Some lodges in Texas have compiled and published their lodge history which is generally based on events documented in the minutes and other major activities. Lately however, most lodges are not publishing histories or even designating a Lodge Historian. This is a shame because our lodges have rich histories just waiting to be captured for posterity.

A bigger shame is that we are in the midst of a generational passing with a new generation of Masons acceding through the line to lead their lodges while our Charter Members pass to The Celestial Lodge. As our Charter Members and prior generations pass, so too does much of the rich history of Texas masonry, lost forever to the passing of time. My brethren, this does not have to be the case!

We live in a technology-rich era where we are blessed with inexpensive technological solutions to many of our problems – especially that of building an electronic library and capturing our history in videos. How many cell phones are in our lodges today? The trick is to organize what you want to capture, determine how you want to capture it, and how you want to organize it for easy retrieval and use.



**Figure 1. Creating an Electronic and Video Library for your Lodge**

**CAPTURE.** Obviously you cannot capture your Stated Meetings, nor would you likely want to. So what would you want to capture for your Electronic Library and/or Video History? Here are a few recommendations that you can consider depending on how expansive you want your electronic library and how deep you want your history to go. With technology as inexpensive as it is today, there is probably nothing that it is out of your reach, so here are some recommendations:

For your Electronic Library

1. A masonic library might include E-Books or .pdf versions of popular masonic books. For instance, all of Carl Claudy’s books as well as many books by Albert Mackey are available in .pdf or E-Book format. These are very educational and having them in electronic form in your library would be very convenient. There are many masonic books available in “E” or .pdf form, so some research might be required.



2. Masonic podcasts are becoming more widely available and can be very useful in an education program.
3. Masonic videos can be very valuable additions to any electronic library. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts publishes a series of Masonic videos that would be excellent additions to your electronic library

Seek out that electronic masonic material for your library and make it available to your lodge!

For your Video History:

1. Video Interviews with Charter Members\*, Masters, and perhaps new Master Masons upon their raising with periodic interviews again at major masonic milestones (first office/installation, first visit to another lodge, first trek to Grand Lodge, etc....). You want to interview your charter or founding members\* and capture their thoughts on how and why they formed the lodge, who was involved, and stories they remember fondly about brothers and events in the lodge history.

*\*Charter and founding members may be the most crucial interviews when capturing the history of your lodge. You should focus time and energy with these members talking about things they remember in the life of your lodge – they were there at the beginning and they are the living history of your lodge, but they will not be with you forever!*

2. Major events – annual Installation of Officers, Masonic Service Award presentations (50, 60, 65, 70, etc.), 25- & 40-year award presentations, public events (Lamar Medal presentations, scholarship presentations, etc), lodge anniversaries, and other major milestones in a lodge's life.
3. Photos – You should also capture pictures of significant events, annual officer line up with portraits and group pics, newly raised Master Masons, major changes to your lodge building – anything significant to the history of your lodge!

***((NOTE: Remember, do not operate a camera or video camera in a tiled lodge that is at labor.))***

Now that you have some ideas for things you might want to capture, how do you want to do it? The answer here runs from really inexpensive to really expensive, depending what you have available to work with in the way of resources. This question though requires some consideration because you will have to decide on a couple options for capture, processing, storage, and retrieval (or use).

Video capture can be done with everything from a cell phone, to inexpensive hand-held HD video recorders, to more expensive, higher-end video cameras. Most DSLR cameras can also be fitted with a “shotgun” microphone and operated in “video” mode. If you choose either cell phone or the DSLR



camera option, I absolutely recommend the use of a shotgun mic to provide you the best audio quality. They do make inexpensive shotgun or external mics for both and they will vastly improve the audio quality of your interviews and event recordings. Photos are as easy as a smartphone! But you can go with the inexpensive hand-held cameras or the high-end DSLR's, whatever you have available and can save your images as .jpg files.

You have the means to record your videos and photos, but that is only half of “capture”, now you need to store them. I recommend external hard drives which can be purchased relatively inexpensively according to the amount of storage you desire/require. A three terabyte external hard drive will probably run you about \$90.00 to \$130.00 depending on the name brand and quality; a little research is in order. Always, always, ALWAYS make a back-up! Establish a primary device as your “master” and then make at least one back up copy, stored separately from your primary!

**PROCESS.** Now that you have your recording and storage device, you need a way to process your videos and photos meaning to move them from your recording device to your storage device and then also do any editing you may desire. Your processing may be limited to downloading, applying a name to the file based on a unique naming protocol and then move it to the appropriate storage folder on your storage device and that's perfectly okay, but you may want to do some additional editing on your videos or photos. Most lodges now have either a laptop or desktop PC available and either of those will have options for running video and photo editing apps or software; photo editing capabilities are built into the Windows Operating System. As you download and review your videos and photos, you may find you want to merge two or more videos, shorten videos or add musical backgrounds, or make photo montages. Your ability to do this will depend on the device and software you are using to process your videos and photos. Luckily, prices for the technology for processing and editing are always dropping and some apps are free. At the time that I'm writing this article, the “Surface” laptop is running at about \$400.00 and provides memory and processor power that should be more than adequate for minor or simple video and photo processing, leaving you to identify and load additional editing software/apps.

TIP: You might try shopping on New Egg online. Go to that site, and search for “refurbished” versions of what you are looking for. For instance, if you are looking for a laptop, search this string: “refurbished laptop”. You will be amazed at the bargains available, but there is a trick to shopping refurbished electronic merchandise – look for the items marked as “factory” refurbished or “manufacturer” refurbished. The “refurbished” trick does work on Amazon as well, but their inventory of refurbished devices is much smaller than New Egg.

**ORGANIZE.** The key step in organizing your electronic and video library is the application of a file name. A good, logical file naming protocol is crucial to being able to locate your electronic files quickly and easily. It should also be intuitive, allowing anyone who needs to search your file library for a specific video to recognize the way your files are organized and then retrieve the video they are looking for.



There are various ways to organize your file structure, I recommend the first field of the file name be a date in this sequence: YYYYMMDD – so if you shot a video on July 1, 2019, the first field of the file name would be: 20190701 – this field, formatted this way will automatically date-order your files.

The next field of your title should be descriptive, such as “installation” or, GoldenTrowel, or 50-Year for examples. So now you have two fields of your title that would look like this:

20190701\_Installation

The third field can further refine the event if you like so it may appear as:

20190701\_Installation\_Smith (which would indicate Bro. Smith installed as WM)

You can have as many fields as you like in your title, but after a certain number of fields, the title can become difficult to work with. However many fields you need for your file library, I recommend the last field be the event date in clear language:

20190701\_Installation\_Smith\_2019 OR: 20190701\_Installation\_Smith\_01July2019

Whereas the first date field is formatted to index and order your file among other files, the clear language date at the end provides a convenient visual cue for someone browsing files.

EXCEPTION: Recommended format for titles for Video History interviews:

Interview\_Smith\_Harvey\_01\_1July20190

In the case of interviews for the Lodge Video History, the date the interview was conducted is not the significant detail – it’s the fact it is an interview and then the name of the interviewee. Having “Interview” as the first field will group all the interviews together automatically, and the file will be ordered according to the last name of the brother.

Finally, you should consider your folder structure. If you want to organize your files according to event type, you might have an “Installation” folder, an “Interview” folder, a “50-Year” folder, or maybe a “Golden Trowel” folder. This will allow you to organize your files with all of your installations in one folder, all of your Golden Trowels in another, interviews in another, 50-Years in yet another, and then other folders as you need/want. Then, within each folder, the files will be automatically sorted according the first field 20170701, then 20180703, 20190702 and so forth in date order (except for interviews in the “Interview” folder which will actually be indexed according to the second field which will be the last name of the interviewee). Your second and third fields provide you your description of the content, and the last field provides you a quick visual date reference.

Ultimately it’s up to you to design the file system and naming protocols that will work best for you and your lodge. As you design it, keep in mind all those who may need to search the files for something



specific – *the more logical the file system, the easier to use by those who did not design it*. I have found it helpful to draw it out on paper in a tree format so that you can see the structure visually before you start applying a naming protocol. Seeing the structure on paper will likely help you define the naming protocol.

**USE.** Now that you have captured your video subjects and photos, processed them, and filed them in an organized manner, you are set up to use your files or “retrieve” them. You may have opted to store your electronic library on an external drive or the lodge computer, so the number of people with access to these devices is probably limited. I have recommended in other papers the idea of purchasing a lodge tablet where you can store your educational materials – including copies of your video library and photos. Tablets are relatively inexpensive (i.e. New Egg: “refurbished tablets”) and can be quite convenient for brothers to check out to read masonic e-books, watch masonic podcasts, or watch the video history of your lodge! Even if you aren’t able to purchase a tablet for the lodge, you may be able to share your videos to brothers’ smart phones, or to a cloud storage file such as Google’s “Google Drive”, Microsoft’s “One Drive”, or Amazon’s cloud. Storage in these cloud storage drives will also allow you to control access through password control or link-sharing. Your Lodge Education Officer might set up a set of Google Drive files with educational material where the brethren can share educational files, books, and yes, lodge history videos! The cloud is the limit!

I believe I have covered everything you need to develop a video history library and electronic library for your lodge. This paper is intended to suggest some ideas to assist you on your project, but the decisions and design will be yours and should be tailored to your lodge and your lodge’s needs. Capturing the history of your lodge today will ensure it is available for all time; the history of your lodge is in your hands – good luck!