

## **Photo Books for Everyone**

*Jim Everett 2008*

Photo books are a wonderful way to present a special selection of pictures, or to tell one of many different stories. I want to share a few thoughts and ideas on how you can create great results with photo books that you, your family and friends will love.

You need to do a little work and preparation, but once you start to make progress, you will find creating photo books can be addictive. You get delight from the experience of creativity, and you get kudos from their friends and family

Photo books can be used for a variety of purposes: vacations and trips (either as journal stories or as stunning showpieces); holiday gifts; in-memoriam books of a loved one or honored citizen; tributes and celebrations - 50th wedding, turning 80, turning 21, graduation.

There can be a book for each major household event or project - home renovation, vintage car restoration, starting a restaurant, modelmaker collections, a much-loved garden through the seasons, or a even personal portfolio of interesting or expressive photography.

Maybe your son or daughter has a lead role in a school play, or makes it onto the winning school team – what great stories!

A picture needs to tell a story, or say something to the viewer. In some cases, the picture tells its own story, or it can illustrate a story, or explanation in words. People love stories. And this is what brings a photo book to life!

### **First, some guidelines on design and quality**

If you are planning on creating a photo book, look at the different options, styles and levels of quality, and the pricing for each. If you have stunning shots, and a good budget, consider going to the premium end.

For a simple album, there are inexpensive choices. Ad this can help if you want some practice to get used to creating books

These are some design choices you will look at.

- Hard or soft cover
- Size and format (portrait, landscape or panorama)
- Number of pages
- Binding - saddlestitch, spiral, spine-glued or sewn
- Dust cover or not
- Hard cover style - glossy, fabric, leather, window, embossed
- Paper finish - glossy, matte or semigloss
- Image quality - resolution, type of printing
- Layout choices - template or custom, bled, type styles

Think about how you want to use the finished book, and who you will show it to. That will start the ball rolling. Plan the type of shots you will need.

If it is from pictures you take on the trip of a lifetime, consider making one premium quality hard-cover book for the sights (coffee table book), and one soft-cover book to share (or several), with all the family shots.

There is a huge range of end results, pricing and quality. From a little soft-cover book of snapshots, to premium color-matched leather-bound masterpieces.

The amount of work involved varies too. The easy solution can be a collection of holiday snaps automatically filled into a template.

Others can be a more extensive and creative production. Visit a retailer or lab offering photo book services, check out what you will get for your investment, in terms of levels of quality, and what you put into it.

Here is a technical tip. Ensure the digital originals are the right resolution for the photo book. When you scan 35mm slides and negatives, these need to be at least 2000 dpi to allow for the finished large image to be included in the book at 240 dpi.

The final image at the size it will be in the book should be 240-300 dpi. Ideally, for a high end book, images need to be fine-tuned, and your computer calibrated. Laptop screens are not as accurate as flat screens and CRTs (monitors).

### **Books of travels and vacations**

And when you are on vacation, capture other information such as locations, and stories associated with the subjects you photograph. Pick up brochures and booklets when you travel for back stories on locations and places of interest.

Don't just limit yourself to group shots and family pictures. Take special subjects, locations, detail shots, and local people doing interesting things.

Practice how you can take two or multiple shots to stitch into a simple panorama.

Some subjects lend themselves to vertical shots, so take a horizontal and vertical shot of the same subject to give a choice later when compiling your book. It is better to have too many pictures (just don't show them all to your friends).

Make two books! One for the scenery, sights, characters, local touches, close-ups of colorful items and actions, people, places and things you see. One for the memento of your family or travel group.

For those glossy coffee table books of your trip, your family and friends can be included in some shots to show scale, or add interest, say, looking at artifacts. Keep those beaming group shots and posing family members for the personal book.

If it is a truly stunning coffee table book, then maybe devote a page at the end with a group shot and personal story of the trip, similar to a commercial folio publication.

And for the family book of the trip, take plenty of spontaneous pictures of your family doing things and being together, not just posed. Show the context and location. Make sure you get shots of the whole family doing things together.

Have your kids doing interesting things, having fun, or looking at stuff. If you travel with your extended family, show the family together and interacting. And, put yourselves as the parents (or grandparents) to show the whole family for future generations.

Another side-benefit of photo books of trip photos is that you need to get yourself and your pictures organized. Then you actually give some thought to the ones you include, and how you layout the book.

This means that when you show your books, other people get a great experience of your pictures, much better wallets with lots of prints.

No more will your friends fear that first visit to you after your vacation, when they will have to look politely through a pile of albums or wallets of prints.

Recently, a friend showed me a high quality photo book of her travels in Patagonia. She had chosen a high-quality book, with a dust jacket. Only her best pictures were included, and it was compelling. She got so much joy and pride out of showing it, and it was a joy to look through.

### **There are even more ways you can use photo books**

Many people are creating impressive and treasured family history photo books. They gather photographic material and prints from across the country and the world.

The format, quality and condition of these varies enormously in the amount of care and effort in putting these together.

If you plan to use a lot of old prints, slides or negatives, you will need the right scanner for your needs. Or you can use a scanning service, which will save you a lot of time.

If you are about to renovate, remodel or decorate your home, use photobooks to tell the story. Do a before-and-after series on facing pages. Learn how to place a tripod for identical positioning. For a wider view of a room, take two images and make the wider shot by stitching them together.

For interior shots, lower the viewing height, and point the camera level to avoid those converging doorways and walls. Include pictures of yourself and others working on the renovation, as part of the story.

Need a last minute gift? How about a simple photobook? Just make sure the book is one the recipient will enjoy receiving and will value, not just politely keep in a drawer and bring out when you visit them.

If you take a lot of good photographs for a family wedding, then this can make for a wonderful photo book. And you can add in other pictures of the happy couple from when they first met, and on early dates, as part of the story.

You can determine the style and quality that will allow you to make copies for the closest family members and friends. If funds are tight, maybe each person who wants one could offer to pay for their own, much as people do when they order from the photographer.

Sharing the news and pictures of a new baby can be done with a little photo book. It does not have to be a huge production or expensive – there are many simple and budget-priced books that can be chosen from.

If you have a loved one with dementia or alzheimers, wonderful and caring approach is to create a tribute or memory book for that person. Here are a few tips...

Caption and group the pictures to make sense for the loved one. For example, someone with dementia is likely to be prompted by the inscription they once wrote on the back of a photo, even if it is cryptic to others.

Be careful adding your own interpretations. But do add in names of others in the pictures and their relationships to your loved one. Maybe some added explanation and facts from the time around when the photo was taken.

You and the caregivers can go through the book over and over again with your loved one, and for it to be a fresh experience every time. I have done this myself with a much beloved aunt who was in a hospice. The poor dear cried with happiness every time the nurses read the stories to her.

In an earlier article, I wrote how important it is for children need to see photos of themselves and their parents, and images of their grandparents at younger ages. They get a much better sense of their own identity through seeing their place in the larger family. So if you are a parent, make sure you are in lots of the pictures with your kids.

What better way to do this than give them their own family history book loaded with characters and stories. Pictures with captions, and more detailed stories they will grow into as they learn to read.

They will be able to share this with their friends and classmates. Keep duplicates of digital originals you used on file in a single location, so that if a book is lost or damaged, you can easily have another made up from the same images.

So, with the range of books, styles, quality, formats and services available to you, whether online or at your local camera store, you can take advantage of this and create wonderful bound books, for whatever purpose you need.

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