



Backgrounder

Photo Sharing: a Better Alternative

America is going digital. More and more of us are purchasing digital cameras and camera phones. Estimates put U.S. household ownership of digital cameras at 39 percent – up 26 percent from 2003.¹ Adding to the growing backlog of digital images are camera phones, now predicted to outsell digital cameras in the U.S. this year.² With so many of us now snapping thousands of digital pictures every year, the mountains of printed photos stashed in shoe boxes across the country are being replaced by piles of digital pictures sitting in unnamed folders on hard drives everywhere.

The implications of this movement toward digital photography critical mass are clear. Pictures are meant to be shared. So how do we arrange, present and share all of these digital pictures with friends and family? Let's look at the most common methods of photo sharing.

Sorting through photo sharing options

Email is by far the most widespread way to share digital photos. Seventy five percent of digital camera users who share their photos do so via email³; however, only 13 percent of digital images were actually sent via email due to slow upload times.⁴

Online photo services offer another popular way to share photographs. One-third of U.S. households with digital cameras are expected to become members of an online photo service in 2004. Why are online photo services growing at such a rate? Primarily because most online photo sharing services are free. These companies make their money by charging for photo prints. Interestingly, this expansion of the photo services market has resulted in more competitive pressure which has forced down print prices – as much as 50 percent lower than just two years ago.⁵ With this price pressure impacting revenues, it remains to be seen if more and more of these services resort to charging for photo sharing as some have already begun to do.

CD, DVD or floppy disk burning is still a common way of sharing photos. Although there is typically plenty of space on these media for storing digital photos, delivering them by hand or via the mail is inconvenient and slow. The pros and cons of each of these three common methods appear below.

Photo Sharing	Pros	Cons
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common form of sharing digital photos • Easy to send one or two low resolution photos • Most people have email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File size limitations restrict the number of low resolution photos that can be emailed • Lacks organizational capability: photos can't be captioned or arranged into albums • Choke someone else's system (not to mention your own) if they don't have cable or DSL • Need to have the latest address, or get a bounce back • Need to know the maximum size limit of the recipient's email system

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guess if they have high speed or not and then reduce the file size if they're on dial-up • Attachment concerns: given the proliferation of online viruses, people are wary of email attachments
Online Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many services are free • Accommodates low tech users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow picture-by-picture uploading • Interrupted transfer of images during the upload process: you have to start all over again • Registration hassle: viewers need to register in most cases, which many people are reluctant to do • Intruding banner ads • Limited personalization and customization • Poor photo sharing experience: photo hosting sites make their money printing photos, pitching specialty items and up-selling members to premium services. The photo sharing feature is often a low priority resulting in a weak design and a frustrating user experience • Insufficient storage space, particularly for free services • Disappearing photos: hosting site consolidation can result in discontinued photo sharing services. See http://www.andromeda.com/people/ddyer/photo/casualty-list.html for a casualty list, including most recently Lycos and MSN) • Charging fees: some formerly free services now are not
CD, DVD or Floppy Disk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of space to hold a maximum number of photos • Reliable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipient needs to have appropriate viewer • Time consuming: mail or hand-deliver

Finding a better alternative: photo Web page creators

Anyone who has used the sharing methods listed above knows how time consuming and frustrating these options can be. Is there a better way?

A recent survey of U.S. Internet households shows the penetration of digital cameras increasing to 59 percent of Internet households, up from 45 percent in 2003. While the demographics of digital camera owners continue to shift towards representing the average Internet user, digital camera owners still show a greater tendency to acquire new technology than non-owners.⁶

Twenty one percent of Internet users have posted photographs to websites, and 13 percent maintain their own websites.⁷ This convergence of digital camera owners and Internet users, who are increasingly sophisticated in their use of the Internet as a communication tool, is the basis for a better way to share photos online: photo Web page creation software.

Software, like Web Gallery Wizard™, from KOMOTION, Inc., enables photo enthusiasts to create their own photo Web pages. Without needing to know HTML, this software lets you import your images into a wizard-style application, apply a professionally designed theme, and with the click of a button, generate your own Web gallery for posting online.

This method of photo sharing has clear advantages:

- **Fast and easy creation of online photo albums.** In just five easy steps, organize an unlimited number of digital photos into photo albums that are ready to post online.
- **Virtually no space limitations.** Create multiple albums with multiple photos.
- **Complete control.** Your Web gallery is secure because it resides on your hard drive. If your Web host changes page design or settings, or goes out of business, all you lose is the posted copy. Your original gallery is safe on your computer.
- **Easy switching of providers.** Because the Web gallery resides on your computer, you can switch providers easily without wasting time and effort to rebuild a photo site.
- **One step, easy uploading.** The entire Web gallery is uploaded at one time, to any Web host provider, using any FTP application.
- **No unwanted intrusions.** No ads, no pop-ups, no spam.
- **Multiple sharing options.** Still want to email those photos? You can compress and email your entire Web gallery as a ZIP file for a more powerful viewing experience. You can also upload your gallery to a host site or burn it to a CD or DVD.

Choosing photo Web page creation software

There are several photo Web page generators available over the Internet. Consider the following features before buying:

- **Try before you buy.** Many photo Web page creators offer a “try before you buy” option. Take advantage of these trial versions and experiment with the software to make sure it’s right for you.
- **No HTML required.** Unless you have experience with HTML, be sure to select software that requires no advanced technical skills.
- **Fast and easy.** A good photo Web page creator should be intuitive, simple and quick. Again, try before you buy to make sure the software won’t be a frustrating experience.
- **Attractive galleries.** Select software that offers professionally designed, stylish themes that can be applied to your website and changed at any time, without having to redo your whole album.
- **Functional galleries.** Make sure you select an application that gives you the features that are most important to you, such as slideshow mode, enlarged images suitable for printing, comprehensive help files, etc.
- **Unlimited space.** Some photo Web page creators are limited in the number of photos and albums they support. Pick one which allows virtually unlimited space.
- **Keep your viewer in mind.** Make sure the software you choose generates galleries that are easy for the viewer to navigate.
- **There are numerous utilities.** Pick one from a developer you can trust. How does the developer’s website look? Is it professional and easy to navigate? Are there clear descriptions of the product and an easy way to contact technical support? Are there application screen shots and album examples?

Locating photo Web page creation software

Enter key words, “Web page creator,” “Web gallery” or “online photo album software” into a browser search window to get results for Web page creation software. Shareware sites like www.download.com list software by functionality. These sites typically offer trial software downloads as well.

Finding more information

For more information about photo Web page creation software, go to www.webgallerywizard.com, or send an email to: media@komotion.com.

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