

## Your Life on a USB Stick

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I'm trying to ween myself from the constant distractions of email messages bringing special deals to my attention. And this started well before the holiday season onslaught. Most of these "buy-now-before-it's too late" enticements, of course, are directly related to woodworking – they feature sales offers for tools, supplies, courses, videos, project plans, magazine subscriptions etc. in one form or another.

I've long been intrigued, though I have never taken the bait, for those incessant (3-6x per week it seems) offers to get every past issue of WoodSkill on a single USB flash drive – every issue since Noah used an article in the magazine to build his ark. I remember when not too long ago it was hip to save paper issues of Fine Woodworking. Despite their dust-collecting abilities, the magazines filled almost an entire resource room at the North Bennet Street School. Access to these jewels was carefully guarded. And until recently, it was not uncommon to see people offering to sell their FWW collections on-line. I started collecting and saving FWW and other magazine editions myself under the mistaken belief that sometime in the future I would need to go back and re-read an article or tip (assuming of course I could find it). FWW, indeed, has its own cult following (of which I am a member).

After a while, I stopped doing that and instead, I tear out whatever article I think I might need or want and then file the paper article into one of the two dozen file categories I created. And every so often, when the file drawer gets too crowded, I go through it and declutter. Now of course, I could just get the entire FWW archive on a single USB drive – presumably searchable and printable or the whole idea wouldn't make sense. I often wonder how useful that search function really is. And of course, I wonder if every year you need to buy another flash drive in order to keep your library up-to-date. Starts to get expensive I guess, unless you don't subscribe to the magazine itself and just buy the USB drive every so often.

FWW is not alone in the USB endeavor. Other woodworking magazines also offer flash drive archives. Recently, I got a 'junk' email offering "every issue of six best-selling magazines – cover to cover" all on one USB. The list includes American Woodworker, ShopNotes Magazine, Woodsmith Time-Life Books, Woodwork Magazine, Woodworking Magazine, and Workbench Magazine. The latest email blast was even offering magazines AND BOOKS on a single flash drive. You could save a lot of shelf space in your study or den, but you won't be able to impress your friends

Most of us, if we have USB flash drives at all, use them for file backup and for sharing photos. It's great to take advantage of silicon advances. In my working lifetime, the price of memory has declined by more than a factor of one million – maybe more than ten million - hard to comprehend really. You can now put your life history on a single USB drive, along with multiple magazine archives and more photos than anyone will really want to look at. But memory is really mundane. More impressive is the technology advances that have impacted woodworking

elsewhere: electronics/computer technology has impacted CAD/CAM, CNC machines, battery powered tools, and motors. We shouldn't overlook metallurgy either. Food for thought for another Bevel Cut article.