

Photo Books Project Proposal

Background

The creativity and ease with which consumers can create photo books exemplifies one of the advantages of digital photography. When consumers are exposed to photo books they love them, however there is an overall lack of awareness that is preventing increased market growth. Most consumers are either unaware that making a photo book is even possible, or assume it takes specialized skill and/or equipment that they do not possess.

Photo books represent two essential solutions that the industry needs: 1) they are printed; and 2) they provide a physical backup for a consumer's favorite images. They can quickly replace the traditional photo album as the cornerstone of consumers' approach to preserving memories. Photo books present an excellent opportunity for consumers to save their images in a human-readable format that is independent of any electronic storage/retrieval system and is therefore not exposed to the myriad of technology migration issues that confront electronic systems.

What is a photo book?

Photo books are bound books containing photos and text that are produced through mass customization. Photo books may also be produced through various kits designed for home book production. Some challenges for photo book production include longevity, stability and non-standard output formats. In order to promote photo books as a means for long-term image preservation, definitions and test methods are needed to specify the longevity of any photo book. Photo book longevity depends on the stability of the printed pages and on the durability of the binding. Some books may have good image print stability but may not meet the binding requirements for extended-term use. For example, perfect binding may be considered suitable for medium-term use, whereas a stitched binding is best for extended-term use.

Photo books may also be used for commercial applications, gifts, one-time uses and other applications that do not have the same requirements for extended-term or medium-term use. Moreover, while it was not not "mass customized," we all remember what could be called the original photo book, the school yearbook.

The objectives of the I3A Photo Book Initiative are to:

- Increase consumer awareness
- Develop standard definitions and classifications
- Develop specifications, testing and best practices for image preservation
- Develop standards for templates and output formats

There have been recent discussions within the ISO photography standards committee, TC42/WG5, *Physical properties and permanence of imaging materials*, regarding a new project on photo books. Any standards developed through this Initiative would be developed in accordance with ISO standardization methods and are intended for eventual ISO standardization.

Primary I3A Photo Book Project Contact

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Project Overview:

There are four primary components of the Photo Book project envisioned. Each one may be conducted independently, or they may be grouped together depending on the needs and desires of the companies seeking to become involved.

1.) Awareness

- Define and execute a program to increase consumer awareness of photo books
- Potentially leverage SaveMyMemories website
- Drive consumers to photo book providers & resources
- Promote the advantages of photo books as a human-readable solution for image storage and preservation

2.) Define photo book terms and definitions

- Types of binding, covers, paper etc... used to produce photo books
- Define use cases (e.g., casual, general event documentation, special event documentation, long-term storage)

3.) Specifications/Classification/Testing

Specifications for photo book

- Binding requirements
- Paper requirements
- Printing type
- Printing quality
- Physical durability
- Image permanence

Classifications by use case [possible photo space application]

- Casual use (i.e., general event and/or special event)
- Single use (i.e.; throw-away)
- Life stage events/long-term storage

In addition to the classifications above, it is helpful to note that photo books are useful for keeping records of activities, events, or time-periods; documentation of family history; and as a technology-independent means of preserving memories.

Develop Best Practices

- Preserving images & memories
- Creating photo books
- Storage and handling

Testing

- Test methods for image permanence [possible reference to ISO 18948 Draft 2]

4.) Templates and tools

A separate group could complete this portion of the work. The project group will make a determination during the course of the project and future work itemized at that time.

- Standardized formats and templates for output of photo book pages and elements
- XML-based code for describing photo book elements (images, text, graphics, etc)

Each element may have certain attributes associated with it, such as the expected orientation and rotation of the picture. Advanced attributes might provide the user application with additional guidance, such as preferred image characteristics (brightness, contrast, etc.) or information to show the consumer during the photo book design process. These examples illustrate one way to provide a template; other mechanisms may be determined to be more suitable.

The end-result enables a mechanism for an application to determine how to combine user-provided content with creative stock content, to produce a final product. The output representation is implementation dependent: some implementations may represent the product as a photo book before final product formation, others may use an intermediate format such as PDF, and others may directly produce a rasterized representation used in producing the final product. The successful conclusion of this project will result in a mechanism that vendors of content authoring tools can incorporate into their products, and that content creators can easily use in creating template content.

Targeted Communities:

- Photo book suppliers & retailers
- Photo book software vendors
- Photo book fulfillment providers
- Printing equipment vendors
- Scanning equipment and services vendors
- Binding equipment vendors & buyers
- Mobile imaging – vendors and carriers
- Online photo-sharing websites

Benefits to Participants:

- Driving photo book market growth by increasing awareness
- Promotion of a product category that provides a human readable storage and preservation solution to increase both commercial and at-home printing
- Creating more opportunities for consumers to use the millions of digital images captured each year, increasing their value
- Influencing International standardization efforts in accordance with Initiative Group member direction by providing a foundation for photo book technology

Benefits to I3A Members:

- Providing a rallying point and leadership in driving market growth for photo books
- Helping create awareness of solutions for consumers' need for image preservation
- Gaining and representing a new market segment, leading to future opportunities to serve members
- Leveraging and improving the SaveMyMemories.org website

Benefits to the Industry:

- Increased digital image use and printing
 - Gifts, Promotions
 - Storage (creating a human-readable record of images on other media types)
- Growing the value of digital imaging
- Development of human-readable, long-term storage – no dependence on other devices
- Delivering standard tools/templates that encourage photo book creation and lower production costs for providers