PROJECT FILE STRUCTURES: WORKFLOW & ORGANIZATION FOR ANIMATORS

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A Note on Workflow: For most assignments animation students are expected to read and write projects directly to their personal hard drives. Working from the network or desktop, while tempting, are almost never good ideas. Working directly from your personal hard drive will help you avoid sluggish performance, broken links and lost project files. It will also give you a single parent file to help simplify the back-up process.

Taking the time to set up a *project file structure* on your hard drive for each class before you begin the semester will make backing up your work a simple task that may someday save your having to redo an entire project. . . not to mention just making your everyday workflow faster and much easier.
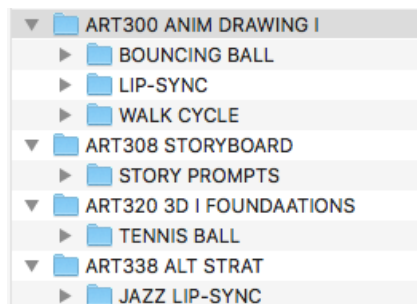
The industry standard is to have your digital files live in at least *three separate places* to guard against catastrophic mishap. I recommend the following:

- **Personal Hard Drive**
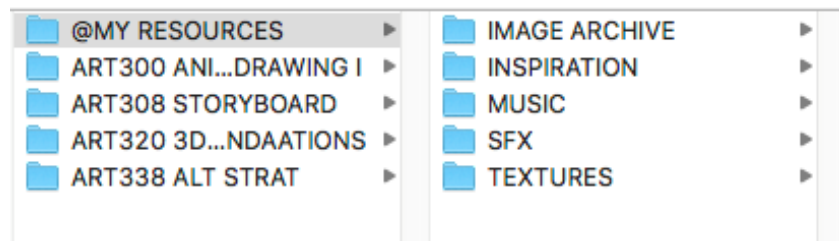- **Class Folder**
- **Cloud Storage**

1. Setting Up a File Structure on Your Personal Hard Drive

Personal Hard Drive Folder Structure: The following *project file structure* is recommended for your personal hard drive. It will help to keep all the assets of your projects in a safe, accessible and easy-to-back-up order.
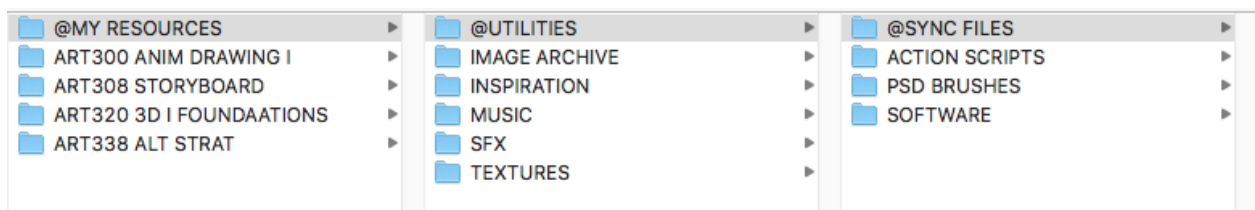
You want to create *class-base file structure*. A single folder for each of your animation classes. Inside each class folder will be a series of folders to help organize your work by project. Naturally the list of folders will grow as the class progresses.
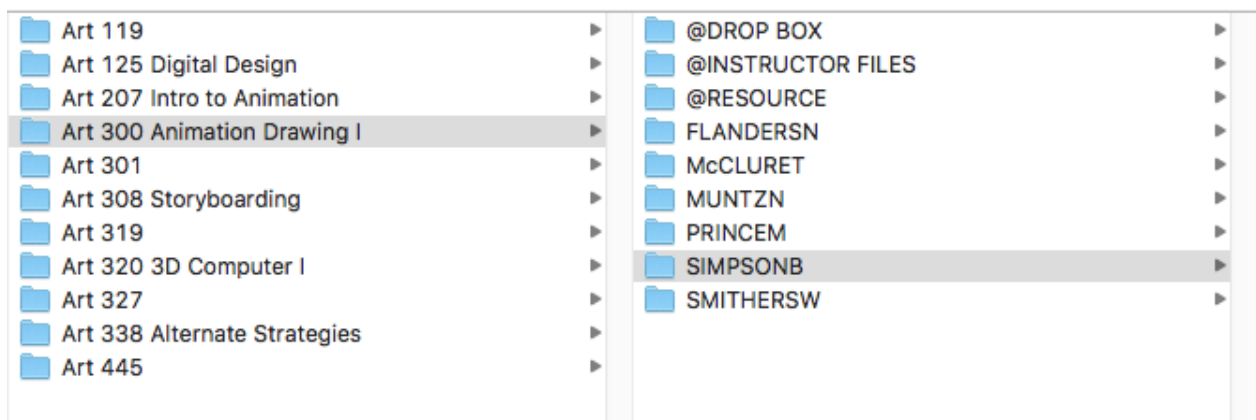
I also recommend a *Resource* folder for assets that span classes and projects like textures, sound effects, films and images.

@MY RESOURCES ▶	IMAGE ARCHIVE ▶
ART300 ANI...DRAWING I ▶	INSPIRATION ▶
ART308 STORYBOARD ▶	MUSIC ▶
ART320 3D...NDAATIONS ▶	SFX ▶
ART338 ALT STRAT ▶	TEXTURES ▶

Inside the *Resource* folder, you will want to place a *Utilities* Folder to store various technical files such as sync files, photoshop brushes, software codes, etc.

@MY RESOURCES ▶	@UTILITIES ▶	@SYNC FILES ▶
ART300 ANIM DRAWING I ▶	IMAGE ARCHIVE ▶	ACTION SCRIPTS ▶
ART308 STORYBOARD ▶	INSPIRATION ▶	PSD BRUSHES ▶
ART320 3D I FOUNDAATIONS ▶	MUSIC ▶	SOFTWARE ▶
ART338 ALT STRAT ▶	SFX ▶	
	TEXTURES ▶	

Personalized Folders inside of Network/Class Folders: Once you have created a *class-based file structure* on your hard drive you can use *ChronoSync* to replicate each class-specific folder to a personalized folder inside each of your Network/Class Folders. Once set up you can use *ChronoSync* to back up all of your projects on a regular basis. More on this workflow in the *ChronoSync Tutorials*.

Art 119 ▶	@DROP BOX ▶
Art 125 Digital Design ▶	@INSTRUCTOR FILES ▶
Art 207 Intro to Animation ▶	@RESOURCE ▶
Art 300 Animation Drawing I ▶	FLANDERSN ▶
Art 301 ▶	McCLURET ▶
Art 308 Storyboarding ▶	MUNTZN ▶
Art 319 ▶	PRINCEM ▶
Art 320 3D Computer I ▶	SIMPSONB ▶
Art 327 ▶	SMITHERSW ▶
Art 338 Alternate Strategies ▶	
Art 445 ▶	

2. Best Practices and Daily Workflow

Daily Workflow: Once you have set up class specific folders on your personal hard drive and set it up to sync to its corresponding folder on the Class Folders network drive (*See ChronoSync Set-up Tutorials*) you can begin to actually work on your projects. :-) From now on the process syncing and backing up your files should be seamless but you will have to adopt some work habits to keep your files safe and organized.
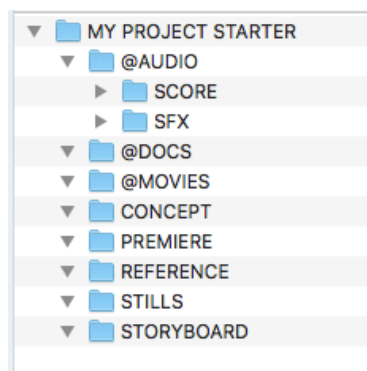
A. **Always work on your personal hard drives.** Get into the habit of working directly to the project folders on your hard drive. You will find it a much faster and cleaner workflow and you'll never have to remember what computer you started a project on.

B. **Sync after every working session.** ChronoSync keeps track of the date on each file and updates only what has changed since the previous sync. When ChronoSync detects a possible conflict, it will ask you if you want the newest version. Unless you have a good reason not to the answer will be "yes".

C. **Save dated versions of your working files.** Get used to saving dated versions of your project files. For instance, when working in *Premiere, After Effects*, or *Maya* I always tag a date to the end of my working files and "*Save as*" fairly often by putting a numerical date and letter at the end of the file name. This helps to guard against file corruption and massive losses due to mishap.

3. Various Examples of Organizing a Project File Structures

There are almost as many ways to set up a project file structure as there are projects themselves. The smart thing, is to adopt some underlying principles and implement them at the beginning of your projects. Over time your workflow will evolve and so will your file structures. Below are a handful of examples, each on increasing in complexity in response to the complexity and scale of the animated project.
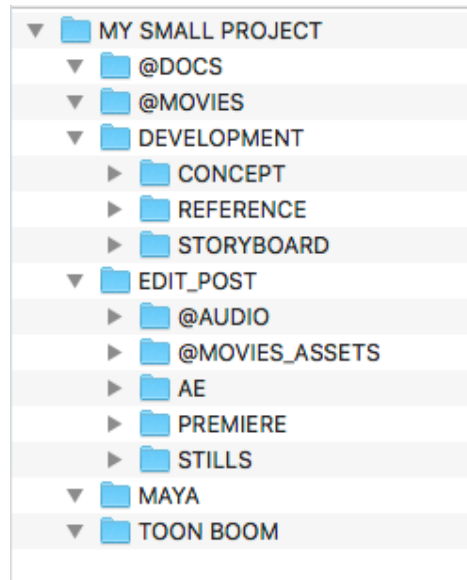
A. **Starter Project: This project structure starts simple but can grow and the project increases in size and/or complexity.**

I put the @ symbol to make certain folders rise to the top. Inside the @AUDIO folder goes music, tempo tracks, and sound effects. @DOCS is for schedules,

class notes, and story treatments. @MOVIES is where versions of the final product go as the project matures. The folders underneath that I consider working folders that will grow in number if the project grows.

B. **Small Project:** This project assumes a *Research and Development* stage as well as *Editing* and *Post-Production*. Might as well start with a structure that can handle it.

```
▼ 📁 MY SMALL PROJECT
  ▼ 📁 @DOCS
  ▼ 📁 @MOVIES
  ▼ 📁 DEVELOPMENT
    ▶ 📁 CONCEPT
    ▶ 📁 REFERENCE
    ▶ 📁 STORYBOARD
  ▼ 📁 EDIT_POST
    ▶ 📁 @AUDIO
    ▶ 📁 @MOVIES_ASSETS
    ▶ 📁 AE
    ▶ 📁 PREMIERE
    ▶ 📁 STILLS
  ▼ 📁 MAYA
  ▼ 📁 TOON BOOM
```

C. **Short Film Project:** A short film project that unfolds over a couple of semesters is a much different beast than a class project. It only follows that a project of this scale requires a different level of organization. The key difference here is that the ANIMATION folder is broken into scene-specific folders where all of the assets for each production scene is stored.

```
▼ 📁 MY FILM PROJECT
  ▼ 📁 @DOCS
  ▼ 📁 @MOVIES
  ▼ 📁 01_DEVELOPMENT
    ▶ 📁 CONCEPT
    ▶ 📁 REFERENCE
    ▶ 📁 STORYBOARD
  ▼ 📁 02_ANIMATION
    ▶ 📁 SCN01
    ▶ 📁 SCN02
    ▶ 📁 SCN03
    ▶ 📁 SCN04
  ▼ 📁 03_POST
    ▶ 📁 AE
  ▼ 📁 04_EDIT
    ▶ 📁 @AUDIO
    ▶ 📁 PREMIERE
    ▶ 📁 SOURCE VIDEO
    ▶ 📁 STILLS
```

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