



Data Media Storage Boxes

Small wooden boxes are a mainstay of woodworking craftsmanship. Historically they have been used for storing love letters, jewelry, or cigars, and often feature intricate and beautiful carving, inlays, and veneer work. The making of these boxes can be a discipline in craftsmanship, a study in beauty, and a joy.

The uses of small boxes change with time. One current need is for boxes to store computer data media such as floppy diskettes, compact disks, and tapes. Mass produced media boxes are boring in design, ugly in color, and are easily broken. Yet these boxes usually sit right out on office desks in prominent view.

The storage box must keep the disks handy but protect them from magnetic fields, dust, organic oils and vapors (such as paint solvents and even finger prints), mechanical damage, and ultraviolet light.

The information encoded on the disk or tape is often valuable and confidential so a lock may be needed.

Also the box must look good.

2. **General Arrangement**

Boxes for long term storage, or archives, usually have spaces for two columns with a central partition and a lock. Boxes for daily-use usually have space for only one column.

Commercial boxes usually have thin, hinged dividers that are a challenge to execute in a wooden box. These are important for daily-use boxes, and may be made from thin material fitted into slots in the box bottom or hinged with cloth and glue. These dividers are not as important in archive boxes because the disks are often stored in bundles.

The box lids usually have a depth of about one quarter the total height. This makes it easy to pick up individual disks.

3. **Sizes**

The Figure above gives a size table for the most commonly used data media. The dimensions given are the minimum inside width and height and make allowance for the envelopes or boxes normally used to protect the individual disks.

4. **Construction Techniques**

This is your chance to show off and to practice difficult craftsmanship. Since only a small amount of materials are at stake you can take some chances and practice new skills.

Some things you will want to try:

- **Exotic Hardwoods**
- **Chip Carving**
- **Ornamental Dovetail Joinery**
- **Inlay with wood, metal, and shell**
- **Incise Carving**

- **Veneering**
- **Gold Leaf**
- **Ornate hardware and locks**

5. **Interior Finish**

The interior finish is a problem. The disks will rub against raw wood, generating harmful dust. Sealing the wood will reduce dust, but this fills the box with paint vapor for many days.

I have successfully used both polyurethane and shellack. Whatever interior finish you use, the box must be thoroughly cleaned of dust and aired out with the lid open for several days before being put into use. Giving the open box several hours of fresh air and sunshine helps.

Lining the box bottom and sides with plastic sheet or laminate provides a tough-wearing surface but the glue may give off vapor for some time.

6. **Craftsmanship Challenge**

The computer is the tool of our age. Does it need to sit on lifeless surfaces surrounded by broken plastic boxes, disorganized papers, and coffee stains?

Here are opportunities for elegance and craftsmanship that will be greatly appreciated as gifts and sought after by successful executives.