

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE DIGITAL IMAGE WORKFLOW AS CAVE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Kevin Downey
PPA Master Photographer
Principle of Lascaux Digital Studios,
Florence, Massachusetts.

Abstract

The documentation and inventory of caves is usually seen as primarily geographic data collection, which is a location and map of the cave, perhaps with some notes regarding features. This has been the most fundamental tool for planning and resource management. For the past several years the standards and accuracy of cave inventory and cartography has been steadily increasing. At the same time the quality, capability, and usefulness of photographic documentation and the use of digital database management tools has vastly improved. Many techniques for relatively low impact in cave photography have produced vast amounts of visual documentation. In many cases these materials are not utilized, or are underused, in cave management. A discussion of current, real, and potential uses of well organized, high quality image database is presented. Some ideas for standards and methods for organizing and incorporating digital image management are explored. The uses for a visual archive of cave resources is really only limited by imagination and of course the interest and enthusiasm of those involved. At present, there is an unprecedented volunteer base of motivated photographers working in caves. The prudent management of this volunteer resource is also a logical and important tool. The nature and format of visual documentation is also a very fast evolving area. The nature of the cave, the setting, and the management goals should be reflected in choices of methods, materials, formats, archiving, and the standards for both the photographs and photographers.
