Version Control

Version Control: The process of managing changes to your files over time (aka, revision control or source control)

Manual Version Control

A simple method to store the current revision is at the end of the file name. This way, files can be grouped by their names and sorted by version number:

- filename-v01.jpg
- filename-v02.jpg
- …

You can also use dates to designate version numbers, using year-month-day (20150930) to help your computer sort versions in chronological order:

- filename-20160402.jpg
- filename-20160407.jpg
- …

If the files you are using are created or edited collaboratively, incorporate names or initials so you know who updated which version:
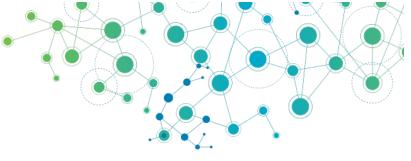
- filename-20160402-KES.jpg
- filename-20160407-WTC.jpg
- …

Software-Assisted Version Control

There are also software tools that can help you version your content. These tools store your content in such a way that they can remember its state from revision to revision. Usually, they also allow you to "check in" and "check out" your content, ensuring that revisions never happen simultaneously in two different locations (e.g., if collaborating researchers both attempt to revise the same file at the same time, or a researcher unwittingly tries to revise the same file on two different machines). Key differences between these software-assisted methods and the manual methods include:

1. You can only view and edit the working version of a file
2. When you change a file, you can save a revision and attach a short summary of your changes.

Research is active and iterative. You will edit and re-edit your research materials many times before finishing your thesis or dissertation. How will you know that you are working with the most current revision of your materials?

Resources (For more information)

- The digital humanities center MATRIX (Michigan State University) provides advice on how to structure file names based on oral history projects that is broadly applicable: http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/08/file-naming-in-the-digital-age
- Udacity offers a free online course on how to use Git and GitHub with interactive exercises to familiarize you with using the tools. https://www.udacity.com/course/how-to-use-git-and-github--ud775
- Another helpful GitHub guide is available from Hello World. https://guides.github.com/activities/hello-world/
- The Subversion community provides free access to the book Version Control with Subversion: http://svnbook.red-bean.com/

Source - Guidance Briefs: Managing Your ETD Research Files