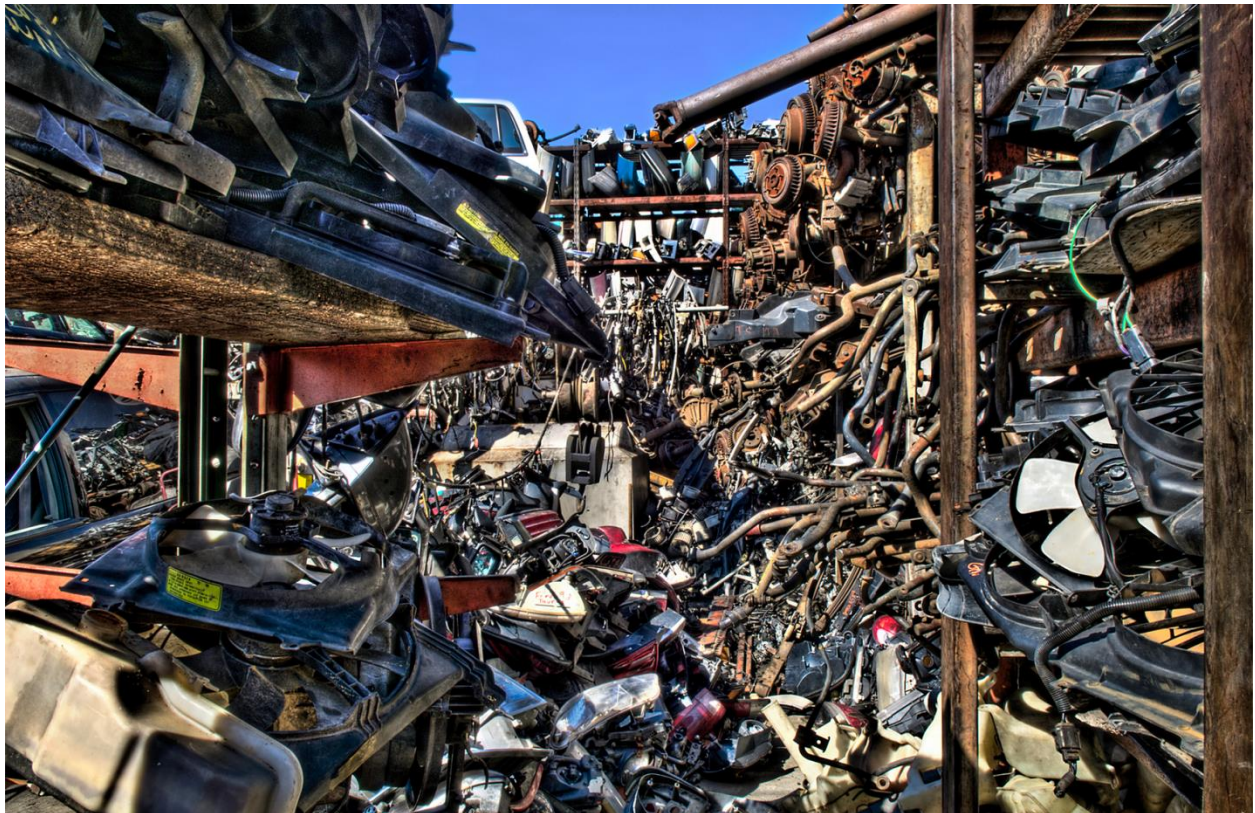


Storage of Materials, version 2.1

By R. G. Sparber

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Recently John Dammeyer of the gingery_machines Yahoo group asked about how to store materials used in a metal shop. This is my answer.

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A System You can Live With

Whatever storage system you come up with, you must be able to live with it. In other words, when you need to find something, it must always be where you expect it to be. This self-understanding can take time to develop. Let's say you store small bars of aluminum in one place yet when you need those bars, you always go to a different place. Then you must move the bars to where you naturally want them to be if at all possible. Retraining yourself is another option but can be a real PITA.

Know the Limits

Any storage system has its limits. If you overload it, then the organization breaks down. Sometimes this means moving boundaries so you can store less of one thing and more of another. Other times it means, sadly, saying "no" to a really good deal. But if you do not recognize these limits, your storage system will degenerate back into chaos and you will again be spending all day trying to find stuff or buying duplicates.

My Shop

This is how I organized my shop. It might be the absolute worst way to do it in your shop or it might be of some help. Only you can figure that out.



In the next town is a surplus outlet that sells used dormitory furniture from Arizona State University. By a great stroke of luck, I was able to buy nine identical dressers for \$70. Each dresser has 5 identical draws that run on fairly decent ball bearing guides. The inside of each drawer is steel. The enclosure is “flake board”. This arrangement provides 45 draws plus one consistent height for all bench mounted machines plus work space.

Each drawer is labeled. I used to just write on self stick paper labels from Avery® but later graduated to a label making machine. Those labels sure help when I’m having one of my Senior Moments or when my wife, Donna, needs to find something.



In this line up of dressers, I left a gap for my shop vac. On top you can barely see one of my two bench grinders. Out of sight are my two belt sanders.

The big storage cabinet is also handy but was there when we bought the house.

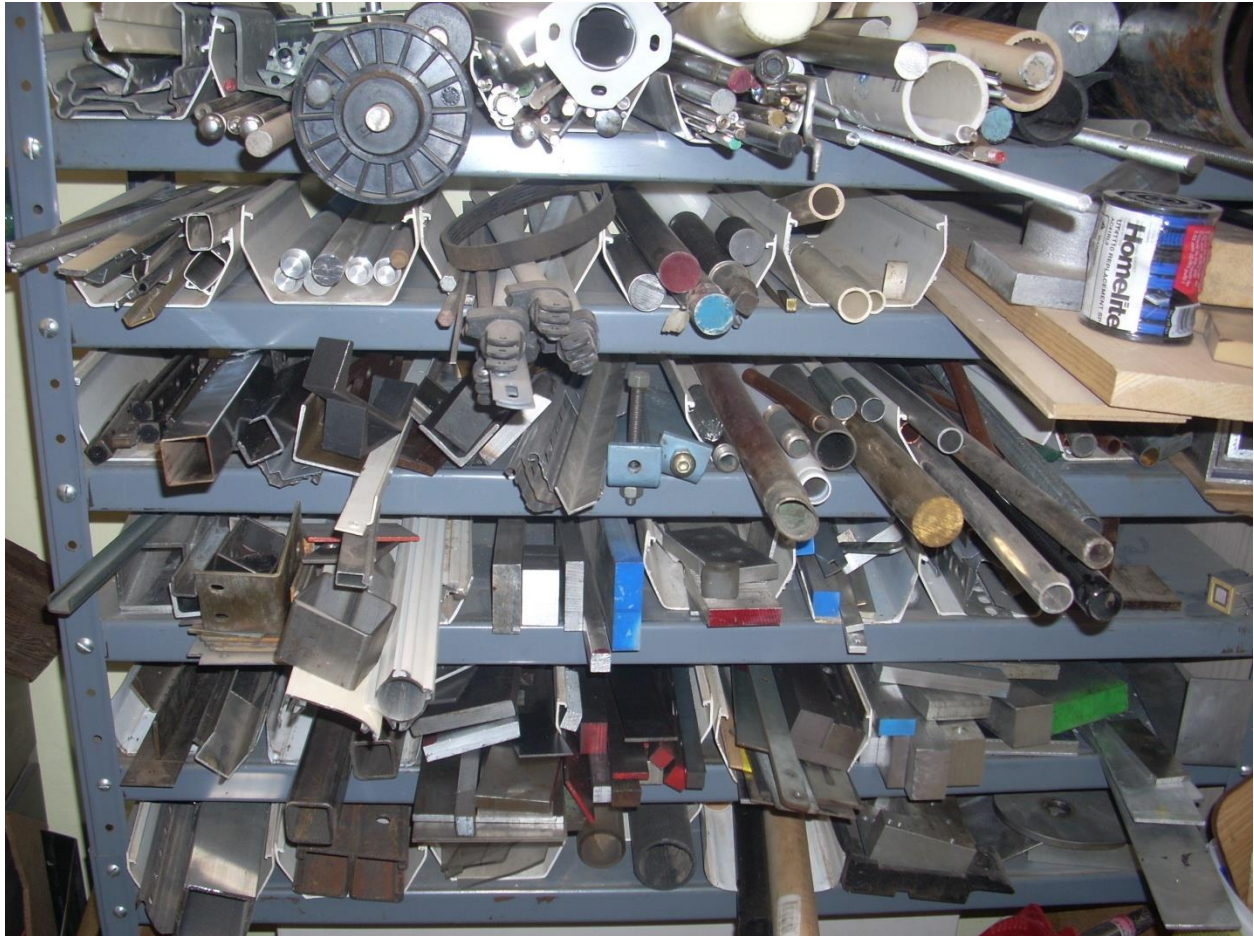
Some draws hold tools and instruments, some have materials.



Here is my collection of small scrap aluminum mostly sorted by round, rectangle, plate, and formed pieces. Sharing the drawer with these yogurt cups is a collection of sandpaper just stacked up.

In the drawer below it is a similar collection of large yogurt cups full of bits of steel.

I store bits of metal up to about 2" here.



If the metal is more than 2” long but less than about 16”, I put it in this rack. The rack has extra bracing on the sides since the weight here is substantial. At the moment the organization has degraded a bit but I will soon get tired of searching and sort it back into sensible groupings.

I am using plastic PVC rain gutter to hold each group plus store some bar stock between these rain gutters. Below these shelves are heavy blocks of metal.

Note the spool of Weed-Whacker plastic filament. This was put there when I was in a hurry and it just sat. On my next “neat freak” sweep, this will go into the lawn care shed where it belongs.



If the bar stock is longer than about 16" but shorter than 4', I put it in this vertical rack. Note the safety chains around each group. The chain mostly keeps things from falling out. The rack was made from welded bed rails. The horizontal members are lag screwed into the studs in the wall.



Here is where I store bar stock longer than 2' but less than 10'. This is a space between my shop wall and the garage door. Others things migrate into this space like folding chairs but, at the moment, it is still usable. When it gets bad enough, I will have to find better places to store the non-shop stuff.



The lunchmeats we buy come in these sturdy plastic containers. The key here is to first have a lot of one size container and then figure out how to best use them. They just lay in one of the drawers.



For about a year, Donna and I were addicted to Altoids® candy. The boxes are perfect for holding washers and nuts of all sizes. I also store boxed bolts in this drawer. The label maker got a great workout here.



My cutters and some attachments go in conventional plastic drawers. These draws are expensive and delicate but they sure do hold a lot.



Just so you don't think I have it all under control, here is my container storage above my collection of plastic drawers. Periodically this stuff rains down on me so I'm careful not to put anything heavy up there.

Storage Idea from Glenn N.



Glenn N. from atlas_craftsmen Yahoo BBS pointed me to these pictures. I have duplicated them here with his permission so those who are not members of this BBS can see them. Glenn wrote:

“I went vertical with a similar idea using ABS drain pipe sections.

Plywood bottom, 1X4 sides nailed to the plywood and the pipe with an air nailer.

Glenn”



I welcome your comments and questions.

Rick Sparber

Rgsparber@aol.com

Rick.Sparber.org

