Here’s my new database for my Brown and White transferware collection. I’m finally getting organized. I created it because my word processing program just provided me with loose sheets of paper that I would need to (four letter word) file. An Excel spreadsheet, while sortable, isn’t flexible enough. What I needed was something searchable (like Google), so I could find any dish instantly. Or find all the pieces that were made by a particular maker. Or find all the pieces that have the same border. And then, of course, I want to sort them by pattern name and version number. And I want to print out that group as a list. And export the list, complete with pictures and source prints, to a pdf file; so I can share them with someone else in the Transferware Collectors Club.
So, I need a custom database because I want a file that is:

- searchable by collection number, TCC Database number, pattern name, maker or anything else.
- searchable for groups of items (i.e. FIND all brown, Ridgway, teapots).
- sortable by pattern, color, mugs, tureens, teacups, you name it.
- transformable into a list of related items.
- printable as a single item or a list.
- customizable with pictures, source prints, dates, notes.
- exportable into files that are shareable with others.

**YES, DATABASES ARE COOL**

![Database Layout](image)

**Fig. 2:** Layout of my database.

And learning how to use the software isn’t quick and easy. But, the TCC Database is a great guide to get you started, because it already has 95% of the fields you want in your database. So here is **layout 1** of my database. See Figure 2 (i.e. this is the structure behind each record I will create).

As you can see from Figure 2, I added and modified some fields: I wanted my own unique “Collection Number,” so I could turn a plate over, search for the number on the back and
immediately find it on my computer. I wanted four big picture fields and a line for the approximate date of manufacture. I added fields for price, currency and purchase date.

One of the first orders of business was to design my collection stickers. I went online to Avery.com and chose a small round label just under 1/2” diameter. I used brown and green type and gold stars, so I couldn’t confuse 6’s and 9’s. Then I had Avery pre-number them, so I couldn’t accidentally duplicate a number. These are my sweet little labels, printed by Avery.

![Fig. 3: My labels.](image)

Since I’ve just started this database, I know that I will be adding, changing and expanding the fields as I go along. But, for now, I’m ready to start creating records for every piece I own.

**I HATE TO TYPE**

Now for the best part. Although I’ve created my database from scratch with FileMaker Pro 14 software for the Mac (but it will also work in Windows, of course), I don’t have to re-type information from the TCC Database to my database; I merely copy and paste, whether it be pictures or text (see Addendum for how to copy and paste). Here’s a quick demonstration:

- To create a new record for my “Chinese Pastime” soup bowl, I click on the new record icon in my database. ![Fig. 4: New record icon.](image)
- FileMaker automatically numbers this new record with the next sequential, unique number.
- Now I search the TCC Database and find the “Chinese Pastime” patterns. I compare the versions and see that I’ve got version “01.”
- Then, I copy and paste the TCC Pattern Name and Version Number into my form.
- I type in the color, a description, and add measurements.
- Finally, I copy and paste the maker, pottery dates, location, source print and notes.

If, by luck, my dish is already in the TCC Database, I can even copy and paste the pictures into my record! In all, I’ve made room for 6 pictures: four for the dish and border, one for the back stamp and one for the source print. Remember now, nothing in
my database is final FINAL. I can always edit, update, resize and add. If I get better, sharper pictures, I can drop them in anytime. I just look at the back of my plate to find my collection number, type Command F for FIND, enter my number, hit enter and paste in my new image.

SORTING, WHAT IS SORTING?

![Table of patterns and versions](image)

Fig 5: Sorting example.

Why do I want to sort? The TCC Database is sorted, so why is this different?

Figure 5 is a list of pots I sorted by manufacturer, pattern name and then version number. And this is what’s amazing ... just by looking at my list I can see that I have a pattern (#21) that has no TCC assigned name or number. That means, I will send pictures of my footed cup to the TCC editors for researching, naming and numbering.

I can also see that I have seven patterns with no known maker.

I have two “Chinoiserie Ferns” — one’s a jug and the other a bowl. If I were to buy a teapot in this pattern and enter it in the database, my new sorted list would put the teapot right under the two other pieces and I would instantly see that I have three pieces in this pattern.

Looking at my “Chinese Pastime” dishes, I can also see that I have three pieces in the TCC Database identified as version #01. I have a version #02 and #03. But I’m missing version #04. Something to look out for!
Lists can be customized. Maybe you don’t want a thumbnail picture. Maybe you’d like to know what patterns are missing source prints. All doable. And more. Furthermore, I can tell you, in the first three weeks of working with my database and entering information from the TCC site, I have learned so much about my dishes!

ADDENDUM

How to Copy and Paste

No more re-typing. This is a useful technique to know no matter what software you are using.

**First:** With your cursor, press and *drag down* on the text (or picture) you want to copy in the TCC Database.

It will change color. See Figure 6. Keep practicing until you can select just the block of text you want. Lift up on the cursor. Your selection will look like this:

![Fig. 6: Copy text.](image)

**Next:** find the EDIT menu at the top of your browser’s screen. Click on it and choose COPY. See Figure 7.

![Fig. 7: Edit menu. The COPY command is highlighted.](image)
**Voila!** The sentences you copied from the TCC Database now appears in the text box of your FileMaker database. See Figure 9.

**No more typing!**

**Credits**

Article compiled by David Hoexter.
Images and content provided by the author, Susan Ferguson.

If you have a suggestion for or would like to contribute to the TCC Database Discoveries series, please contact us at [webadmin@transcollectorsclub.org](mailto:webadmin@transcollectorsclub.org).