
Westlight®

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WESTLIGHT is...

One of the largest global full-service photographic agencies. As “the acknowledged leader in digital image technology” (according to *Communication Arts* magazine), we produce images for the future.

- Westlight is still the only stock agency to install its own professional Photo CD scanning system.
- Westlight is the only stock agency that invites the original photographic creator to monitor the scanning process and guide artistic decisions.
- Westlight was one of the first stock agencies to provide electronic imaging services to its clients.
- Westlight was one of the first sites in the United States to provide the Kodak Pro Photo CD custom service.
- Westlight was the first stock agency to release a CD-ROM of images in Photo CD format.

Making good scans for reproduction requires time, artistic judgment, and a demand for quality. Westlight's professional Photo CD scans are the result of years of research and a desire to establish new standards of excellence. We make the same quality demands of our digital scans as we do of our transparencies. Our Photo CD scans are carefully custom-controlled to preserve their integrity through all levels of the [Image Pac](#).

We have completed thousands of color separations from Photo CD. We currently have tens of thousands of prescanned images in Photo CD format. More than 2 million other Westlight images are also available for an overnight scanning service to qualified digital service clients.

Westlight has a 15-year tradition of producing unique graphics solutions that have become industry standards. Although thousands apply, only about 100 [photographers](#) have earned the privilege of being represented directly by Westlight.

In addition to shooting for Westlight, many of our photographers are regularly published in *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, *Travel & Leisure*, *Newsweek*, *Sunset* and *Fortune* magazines. Others have developed their own markets, capturing highly sought-after positions shooting for Fortune 500 corporations and internationally known advertising clients. Westlight is proud that our photographers are in high demand in the photographic industry.

We have one of the world's most powerful image databases, designed to analyze visual trends and project future needs. Our computer system tracks 2,200 subject categories from more than 50,000 image use transactions.

Westlight's seasoned photo editors offer guidance to desktop publishers. For small and medium-sized businesses that have desktop design and typesetting capabilities, direct access to Westlight's experienced staff can make the difference when producing high-quality, high-impact visual materials. Westlight's photo editors can guide new users of stock photography through the steps to economical high-quality production.

All images in the Westlight section of *Stock Workbook 7* or later are reproduced directly from Kodak Photo CD scans. In addition, the **Westlight Sampler catalog** is a perfect example of the use of Photo CD images for prepress. All of the more than 500 images in this catalog were separated from Photo CD scans. [Call Westlight](#) to order your copy.

Westlight Creative Services
2223 South Carmelina Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90064

[Specialized files](#)

[Global image network](#)



A Variety of Specialized Files

[BACKGROUNDS FOR ADVERTISING](#) ... The most versatile imagery available for advertising. Thousands of perfectly designed “backdrops” of virtually every suitable subject, our Backgrounds for Advertising collection contains the ideal “building blocks” with which to exercise your creativity.

[TEXTURES](#) ... Westlight introduced the idea of enhancing a product or presentation with the subtle elegance of natural and manmade textures. Marble, granite, mineral rock, tree bark, leather, wood and thousands of other texture images are available to help the designer convey every possible mood.

[PACIFIC RIM STOCK](#) ... In collaboration with photographers who live and work in the Far East, Westlight provides a dynamic array of photos covering Japan, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii, Tahiti, and other Pacific islands. It's the comprehensive stock collection for contemporary images reflecting the changing lifestyles and growing industries in this burgeoning region of the world.

[GET REAL](#) ... Real people in realistic situations are the hallmark of our Get Real collection. Inspired by the trend toward reality-based television, Westlight's contemporary files offer authentic, slice-of-life moments captured in a natural, photojournalistic manner.

SILHOUETTE SOLUTIONS ... The ultimate collection of graphically striking images designed to convey meaning through elegant simplicity. Silhouette Solutions provides an expedient answer to conceptual imagery problems that call for visual punch. Westlight's collection of contemporary silhouettes contains a multitude of color and black-and-white images.

COMPUTER GRAPHICS AND MAPS ... Westlight has an extensive photo resource containing thousands of ready-to-use hybrid images that yield a vast supply of fresh visual solutions. Westlight's portfolio also includes a broad assortment of maps designed to make powerful global statements. 📄

Customer Services

NEED IDEAS? We will gladly discuss your project requirements with you and help provide solutions to your photo needs. We're trained to listen carefully, turn words into pictures, and select the best images for your intended use. Having discussed our findings with you, we will send the images to you for review, usually overnight.

Your account will be personally handled by one account executive and one photo researcher who are eager to learn more about you, your business, and your ongoing photo needs. They also will be happy to answer any questions you may have about our CD.

DIGITAL FILES are available under special license agreement. Files are in Photo CD format. You will need appropriate [acquiring software](#) to use them and will require a [license](#) on file at Westlight. Reproduction is generally quite good on usages up to letter or A4 size from the [largest Photo CD file](#).

To obtain a price quote, just call **(800) 622-2028** within the U.S. or **(310) 820-7077** outside the U.S., and ask to speak to an account executive. (International clients will be referred to their local Westlight representative.) The world leaders in image services are here to help from 7:00am–6:30pm Pacific Time.

To get the most accurate quote, please be ready to provide the following information:

- The number that appears just below the frame of each image you would like to see.
- The size at which you plan to use the image.
- The press run or expected audience size.
- How long the usage will appear.
- What copy will accompany the photo.
- In what form you want to receive the image. If you want a digital scan, would you prefer to receive it on a Photo CD or SyQuest removable hard drive? We provide overnight delivery anywhere in the U.S. We also can transmit digital images directly to your computer by modem. Stock separations are available under special license with a 48-hour turnaround.
- If you already have a comp or rough sketch of your layout, we encourage you to fax it to us at **(310) 820-2687**. If you need help at the concept stage, call to discuss your project requirements and possible solutions.

If you want a larger selection, our researchers can assemble one from our library of 2.5 million images. Ask about variants and similars. A research fee may apply and will count against the future licensing fee. A refundable deposit also may be required to insure the safe return of the media. Your right to use the image will begin upon payment of our invoice, which will spell out the license terms. ☺

A Global Network of Agencies

In addition to the 2.5 million images at its home office, Westlight has a million images at other agencies throughout the world. Through careful analysis, Westlight determines what images will appeal to the various world markets. Our worldwide distribution network gives us the competitive edge in the international stock photography market.

Westlight affiliates are located in the following states and countries. [Call Westlight](#) for more information on how to contact your nearest Westlight affiliate.

Argentina
Australia
Belgium
Brazil
Canada
Denmark
England
Finland
France

Germany
Greece
Hawaii
Hong Kong
Israel
Italy
Japan
Mexico
Netherlands

New Zealand
Norway
Pennsylvania
Singapore
South Korea
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Taiwan



The Development of QUESTock™

Westlight QUESTock ushered in a new generation of visual communication tools. Using Kodak Photo CD technology, QUESTock allows for practical organization and use of millions of images. In so doing, it helps bring the massive resource of existing photography onto the information superhighway.

The Westlight QUESTock system of image classification is so innovative that it was nominated for the 1994 Computerworld Smithsonian Award for Business and Related Services.

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Why the QUESTock™ System Was Created

There has long been a need for efficient access to still photography. Photo research by traditional methods for professional uses has been an extremely labor-intensive process, calling for great skill and limited to a handful of experts. Photo libraries, like libraries of books, are organized mainly by subject, but except for strictly editorial uses, subject matter alone is not an adequate basis for requesting the images that will solve particular graphic and new media problems.

QUESTock puts control back into the hands of the end user. Most graphic professionals, before they request photography, already know a good deal about the images they need. They usually know whether they need horizontals or verticals to meet their layout parameters. For photographs that are to be backgrounds for products, they know which color schemes will clash with the packaging, and which ones will enhance it. They know what moods they are trying to create with their overall layouts, and what concepts they want the images to illustrate. They know approximate sizes at which the images are to be reproduced, and therefore whether the subject matter must be instantly recognizable in small format. They know their anticipated audience, and will therefore favor photos of people in certain age, gender and social groups.

No physical file can be structured around all these attributes and search criteria at once. Libraries of books have traditionally overcome this limitation by cross-referencing in card catalog systems. This type of solution has not been much help to image libraries, which store far more material per square foot of file space, and which must cross-reference by many more parameters than do libraries of books. A card catalog, even if it could be structured to take all parameters into consideration, would be so cumbersome and time-consuming to use that it would offer no practical advantage.

There has therefore been no practical means of streamlining picture research up to now. Skilled picture researchers in photo libraries look through files by subject and select images that meet their clients' descriptions. This has three basic problems: first, it is a slow and expensive process; second, it has considerable margin for error; and finally, it is not compatible with the needs of the superhighway architects.

Usually when graphics professionals call image libraries, they speak with research experts who are at least two generations removed from direct involvement in the photo research for their projects. There are numerous stages in this process during which the image user's needs may be misinterpreted.

With the advent of Photo CD, more efficient digital storage, and image transmission services, there is now an opportunity to automate photo research, and to involve the graphics professional in the immediate process. With computerized photo files, complex cross-referencing can be done efficiently — something that has never been possible with card files. With the process thus automated, the graphics professional need not rely so heavily on photo researchers and their intimate knowledge of individual photo files.

Image users can now reduce their business costs substantially, because they can do their own photo research quickly and efficiently at their own computer work stations.☺

The Kodak-Westlight Relationship

In 1992, Eastman Kodak invited Westlight's president and new media director to its home office in Rochester. There, they were shown the latest in Photo CD technology and saw products that have since come on the market.

Kodak officially stated its reason for opening its doors to Westlight: "We view Westlight as a visionary company that has a unique grasp of our new products, the emerging digital CD-ROM technology, and the issue of electronic image management!"

Westlight had already been managing image information electronically for nearly a decade when Kodak selected us to be a development site for Photo CD applications. We had a reputation for leading-edge imagery, a research and development staff in the areas of image language and programming, some of the best-trained editors in the world, and a willingness to create a new standard.

We readily agreed to work with Kodak on Photo CD applications because we knew the future of stock photography was going to be digital. Photo CD is a unique technology that offers the whole graphics community easy-to-use, low-cost scans.

Westlight acquired a new professional imaging workstation for making Photo CDs. A complete Kodak scanning system was set up at the Westlight offices, and the Westlight staff quickly became experts in image scanning and electronic separating.

We worked together to produce some of the very first Photo CD products. Each company contributed its time and expertise. Kodak provided the CD foundation software; Westlight provided the images, search language, image grids, and menus. ☺

How QUESTock™ Was Developed

The major obstacle to automating picture research has not been technological, but rather linguistic. How does the graphic professional describe exactly what he needs so that a computerized retrieval system understands him? What was needed was a search language — a language in which each word used had the same meaning for people working in all aspects of communications and graphic arts; a language that was simple enough that a computer program could process the information received using that language; a language that allowed for the growth of an efficient, integrated “paperless” office and desktop uses of imagery.

With the QUESTock search system, Westlight has created a language that finally makes use of the possibilities afforded by information technology to the business of photo research.

Westlight had used computers to manage over 50,000 image requests and purchasing trends. The accumulated data and experience were the foundation of the QUESTock search system development. Our resource of millions of images was repeatedly edited and analyzed for content and usability, and then whittled down to the most representative of each major graphics area. The resulting group of images was dissected using research from tens of thousands of user requests to establish the most common repeated characteristics.

The carefully selected, proven base images were defined and given between 50 and 100 attributes each. This information was entered into a series of software applications, custom-built by Westlight's staff programmers, that continually re-analyzed each image against a series of comprehensive, proprietary thesauri that included concepts. In other words, the QUESTock system builds upon itself. Each new image added to the system draws upon the database of attributes given to the previous selected images.

Images entered into the QUESTock system are fully analyzed, resulting in thousands of keywords and graphic attributes that, in turn, offer an infinite number of possible combinations.

The net result allows for very quick image organizing that has proved to greatly increase the efficiency, creativity, and quality of print and multimedia projects. These categories draw on Westlight's 16 years serving the graphics arts industry, the combined experience of a staff of 10 image, language, and computer professionals, and 12 years of database information. Unlike any other system, subjective categories are reviewed by a committee of photo experts for consistency. ☺

A Generation Beyond Keywords

The first generation of image database products allowed for only keyword search and retrieval. And while keywords are vital to the process, there are far too many limitations. Westlight's goal was to create a language that would surpass the keyword barrier. By combining sets of keywords and graphics attributes into like categories we have eliminated redundant words, and created an environment that helps prompt the user for ideas even when one doesn't know what one needs. Plus, we have put all features on the mouse, further increasing usability.

No other image provider, before or since, has attempted to organize images in this manner.

Our ultimate goal is to provide the most comprehensive and accessible database of images in the world in a digital format. To this end we are currently reviewing new technologies that will allow tens of thousands of images on one CD, as well as various online delivery options. ☺

CD-ROM: Westlight simplifies stock image marketing through Photo CD Catalog

by Ron Eggers

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Stock photography is becoming increasingly important as more and more companies are relying on it as a source for their images. Shots that might have been generated on assignment during the high-flying 1980s are now frequently being selected from stock libraries.

The new emphasis on stock has had both positive and negative effects on photographers and photography. On the one hand, photographers, particularly photographers with large image libraries, are earning more from stock sales. On the other hand, much of the lucrative assignment work has dried up, which not only eliminated the income from those shoots, but has also driven fees down for those assignments that are still being made.

With stock becoming increasingly important, stock agencies and photographers alike are looking at innovative ways of marketing images. Stock image houses have traditionally sent full-color catalogs of their prime images to clients several times a year. Because of the cost involved in the production and distribution of printed catalogs, many agencies have cut back on the number of issues they produce and the total number of copies they are sending out.

As the shift to stock accelerates, agencies are looking towards technology to increase their marketing capabilities. Agencies are beginning to utilize digital imaging more effectively to get their images into the hands of photo buyers. In the process, they are changing the way images are being distributed and utilized.

One of the firms in the forefront in making that transition from paper-based image catalogs to electronic image marketing is southern California-based [Westlight](#). The agency has broken new ground in electronic image marketing with the shipment of the first [Photo CD](#) Catalog disc available commercially.

Owner Craig Aurness explained, "Photo CDs are the wave of the future. They're already beginning to take off. They're going to become the dominant format for reproduction for all people needing images for catalogs, magazines, brochures and textbooks, because they are so cost-efficient." Within three years, he sees more than 80% of the market being served directly by Photo CDs.

“CDs will work for the vast majority of four-color work,” Aurness said. [Prepress](#) requirements and color separations will be impacted in particular. To illustrate that point, Westlight is in the process of publishing a traditional [paper-based image catalog](#). All the images in there were taken from Photo CDs and all the prepress work handled digitally. “It’s 100% Photo CD-separated. And it covers how it was all done,” Aurness said. “It was specifically designed to stimulate Photo CD reproduction. The whole idea is that we want people to not just order images, we want them to order high-res Photo CD files.”

Aurness, who used to shoot for *National Geographic* and *Sunset* magazines among other publications, started Westlight in 1978 with another photographer, Chuck O’Rear, out of a spare room in his apartment. Since then, the company has grown to be the largest stock image library on the West Coast, serving corporate and editorial clients as well as some 26 other stock agencies worldwide. The company now occupies a 10,000-square-foot industrial building near Santa Monica.

Aurness has been into technology since the early 1980s, developing a sophisticated database to track image usage and earnings. With it he was able to see which images (and which subjects) were selling well, and which images (and subjects) weren’t. That’s relatively simplistic now, but for the early ’80s it was state of the art. “It allowed me to track sales very closely. I could quickly see what was selling.”

Aurness has been investigating the advantages of Photo CDs since 1992, when Westlight started a [joint project with Eastman Kodak](#) on the then new Photo CD Catalog format.

“We haven’t found a better bridge than Photo CD to take our still imagery into electronic media.” Aurness points to the fact that most people get the majority of their information from television. They’re glued to monitors. The growth of [multimedia](#) and other electronic image delivery systems will have a major impact on still photography and stock sales. Aurness wanted Westlight to get in on the ground floor of these emerging opportunities, but how to get there took some time to investigate. “The graphics community had to bridge into the monitor environment. So we knew we had to transfer our library into electronic data. If we didn’t put our images out electronically, in five years, we wouldn’t be here.”

Kodak provided the technology and foundation software, such as Shoebox and [Browser](#), Kodak’s image cataloging and accessing software programs. Westlight provided the images, sophisticated [search language](#), image grids used to display the selections and interactive menus.

The agency also developed its own proprietary search language, Questock™. It consists of a copyrighted set of 300,000 locators that serve as navigational tools designed to provide quick access to specific images. Each photo on the CD has 50 to 100 graphic attributes that make it easier to pinpoint a particular image.

In order to graphically represent the search procedures, Westlight developed a multicolored chart to help image buyers to navigate in Questock and find precisely the images they need for the concept they have in mind. This “Ideas to Images” chart with its myriad of little boxes and color-keyed categories is a little overwhelming at first, but it doesn’t take too long to figure it out. It looks somewhat like the floor plan of a large office building, but without corridors. Each doorway from one box to another is a logical link.

It starts with the category “Image” in the upper left-hand corner, with categories across the top being: [Component](#), [Dominant Color](#), [Environment](#), [Horizon Line](#), [Lighting Angle](#), [Lighting Look](#) and [Point of View](#). Categories going down are [A-Z Major Subjects](#), [A-Z People Doing](#), [A-Z Power Concepts](#), [Keywords](#), [Location](#), [Style](#), [Setting](#), [People](#), [Sound Value](#), [Read Easily Small](#), [Copy](#), [Action](#), [Mood](#), and [Layout](#).

Each individual category leads on to more choices. For example, under the Horizon Line are the options Top, Middle, Bottom, Angle/Tilt, and Other. Under the People category there are such options as [Posed or Candid](#), [Models or Real](#), [Clothing](#), [Age](#), [Gender](#), and [Number](#), with the last four choices leading to additional sub-categories indicating the type of clothing, age ranges, etc.

Not all the sub-categories are specifically detailed on the chart. Some, such as the A-Z Selections, have dozens of sub-category choices. Power Concepts has hundreds, while there are thousands of Keyword choices. Separate listings for sub-categories with numerous alternatives are provided. Other charts, such as a menu diagram and a subject index, further help both in navigating the program and with image selection.

Search routines in other image database programs rely primarily on keywords and captions as selection criteria, which means the user has to know what those keywords are or what the captions might be before being able to structure a query. “Knowing keywords requires memorizing something. If you can’t come up with the keyword, you can’t find what you’re looking for,” explains Aurness.

Keywords and [captions](#) can also be searched on with Questock, but if the user doesn’t have a clear idea of what keyword is applicable or what the caption might be, he can still readily find the appropriate images. “We’ve created a prompting system, eliminating the need to remember keywords or captions.”

With Questock, if a client needs a certain shot or a certain type of shot, he can easily hone in on precisely the image he’s looking for without being hemmed in by arbitrarily assigned keywords or hindered by limited selection criteria. Very elaborate searches can be built by stringing [multiple search criteria](#) together. Once the search menu has been brought up, simply click on the required attribute (which corresponds to a main box in the colorful chart) from the left-hand column and then select the appropriate additional information that pops up (which roughly corresponds to the sub-categories) from the right-hand column.

Logical operators such as “and,” “but” and “or” can be used within individual search criteria to narrow or expand the selection list as needed, and a number of search criteria can be strung together to structure extremely precise requests, all without ever touching the keyboard.

The Questock search system goes beyond simplistic description objective criteria. It goes into concepts, activities, moods and other subjective criteria that help define the image and its possible uses, as well as such technical considerations as depth of field and motion blur. The interesting thing about the process is that while two individuals might describe the images they are looking for in different ways, they can still come up with the appropriate images.

Such extensive selection criteria is increasingly important as the number of images in a collection grows. The larger the library, the more difficult it is to find the exact image to fill a need. Questock returns the process to a manageable task.

Once the search has been conducted, the program displays how many finds it came up with out of the total number of images on the CD. Those images can then be viewed as a contact sheet, or as low-res individual images. If too many images are found or none are matched, search criteria can be edited. It's a very logical process, allowing even neophyte computer users to find the images they are looking for.

A separate info window can be accessed for each image. It details the links between the various major categories and sub-categories appropriate for that image. One image with a high-tech subject matter that was accessed, for example, had 27 specific categories that defined the image, its content and its graphic arrangement and potential applications. ...

Westlight is not marketing Questock independently of its images, but the company is making the system available for its clients and potential clients. Active clients can utilize Questock, including adding their own images on a [hard disk catalog](#), at no charge beyond the \$39 that the CD cost.

Potential clients can license the language for \$50 per year. "We're saying that you can download some of those images on the CD onto your hard disk, and with Kodak Shoebox start editing attributes with your own attributes to the images, making a large database." The company supplies very good documentation to support its computerized imaging endeavors.

It's important to remember that the images on the discs are not clip art which one buys all use rights for and usable for whatever purpose the buyer has to mind. Many companies are selling Photo CDs with unlimited use rights, Westlight does not, and has no plans to. Even though the discs are purchased, [use rights](#) are not.

The images are simply thumbnails to be used for selection purposes. With the written approval of Westlight, they may be used for [comps](#), but nothing else. Each of the images has Westlight's watermark in it to minimize the potential for unauthorized use. For now, the actual images are still sent out as transparencies. The plan is to deliver images digitally to the vast majority of clients.

So far, Westlight has 20,000 of its more than 2.5 million stock images digitized, with more images being added every day. The company has its own Photo CD generation system to input its images. Getting images ready for digital distribution isn't cheap. It costs Westlight between \$20 and \$50 to scan in each image and add the descriptive information.

There is a variety of ways these discs are being used, Aurness said. Westlight, for example, is making multiple CD sets for the agencies it serves around the world. It's also giving CDs to some of the photographers it represents. Those are only the first few steps, though. As clients become more informed about electronic photography and digital image delivery, Aurness said, the clients will be asking for the final images to be delivered digitally.

Ron Eggers is a contributing editor with NewsWatch Feature Service, covering computer applications, technology, photography, electronic imaging and visual communications. His articles have been criticized by numerous newspapers and consumer magazines, as well as a wide range of trade, technical and specialty publications in North America and Europe. ☺