1 Getting Started - About Version Control

**About Version Control**

What is version control, and why should you care? Version control is a system that records changes to a file or set of files over time so that you can recall specific versions later. Even though the examples in this book show software source code as the files under version control, in reality any type of file on a computer can be placed under version control.

If you are a graphic or web designer and want to keep every version of an image or layout (which you certainly would), it is very wise to use a Version Control System (VCS). A VCS allows you to: revert files back to a previous state, revert the entire project back to a previous state, review changes made over time, see who last modified something that might be causing a problem, who introduced an issue and when, and more. Using a VCS also means that if you screw things up or lose files, you can generally recover easily. In addition, you get all this for very little overhead.

[**Local Version Control Systems**](https://git-scm.com/book/en/v1/Getting-Started-About-Version-Control#Local-Version-Control-Systems)

Many people’s version-control method of choice is to copy files into another directory (perhaps a time-stamped directory, if they’re clever). This approach is very common because it is so simple, but it is also incredibly error prone. It is easy to forget which directory you’re in and accidentally write to the wrong file or copy over files you don’t mean to.

To deal with this issue, programmers long ago developed local VCSs that had a simple database that kept all the changes to files under revision control (see Figure 1-1).