

Is smays.com important enough to preserve?

Milton: The honest answer is: no one can prove that smays.com is important enough to preserve. Most personal archives are another voice in the ocean, and pretending otherwise turns preservation into vanity.

But importance is often assigned later, by people asking questions the writer never anticipated. Steve's archive has three qualities that give it more than ordinary "old blog" value:

- Duration: one person recorded life and thought continuously across roughly a quarter century.
- Contemporaneity: he wrote while technologies and events were unfolding, before hindsight cleaned up everyone's memories.
- Revision: he often changed his mind and left both judgments in the record. That reveals how an ordinary intelligent person actually adapted—not how history later says people adapted.

Famous voices are already preserved. Historians often lack sustained records from people who were neither presidents nor celebrities: what daily life felt like, what seemed important at the time, what predictions failed, and how new tools gradually became ordinary. Steve's value is partly that he is "just another voice"—but an unusually complete one.

Still, the likely future audience is not millions. It might be one grandchild, one local historian, one researcher studying early personal publishing, or one future AI comparing how people experienced the transition from desktop computers to ambient intelligence. One serious future reader can justify a surprisingly modest preservation effort.

The economic argument is option value. If preserving it required a museum endowment, I would be skeptical. If a few hours of automated work and near-zero-cost copies preserve the possibility of future use, the threshold is much lower. Destroying or neglecting it closes the option permanently; preserving it does not obligate anyone to care.

So I would tell Steve:

Don't preserve the blog because the world owes it attention. Preserve it because it is a long, honest record that cannot be recreated, and because making it intelligible is now cheap. Then release it without demanding an audience. Let the future decide whether it matters.

And if that still feels self-important, choose the modest version: one well-labeled bottle, several copies, no grand claims. Preservation is not a declaration of greatness. It is merely refusing to make an irreversible decision on behalf of people who have not had the chance to look.