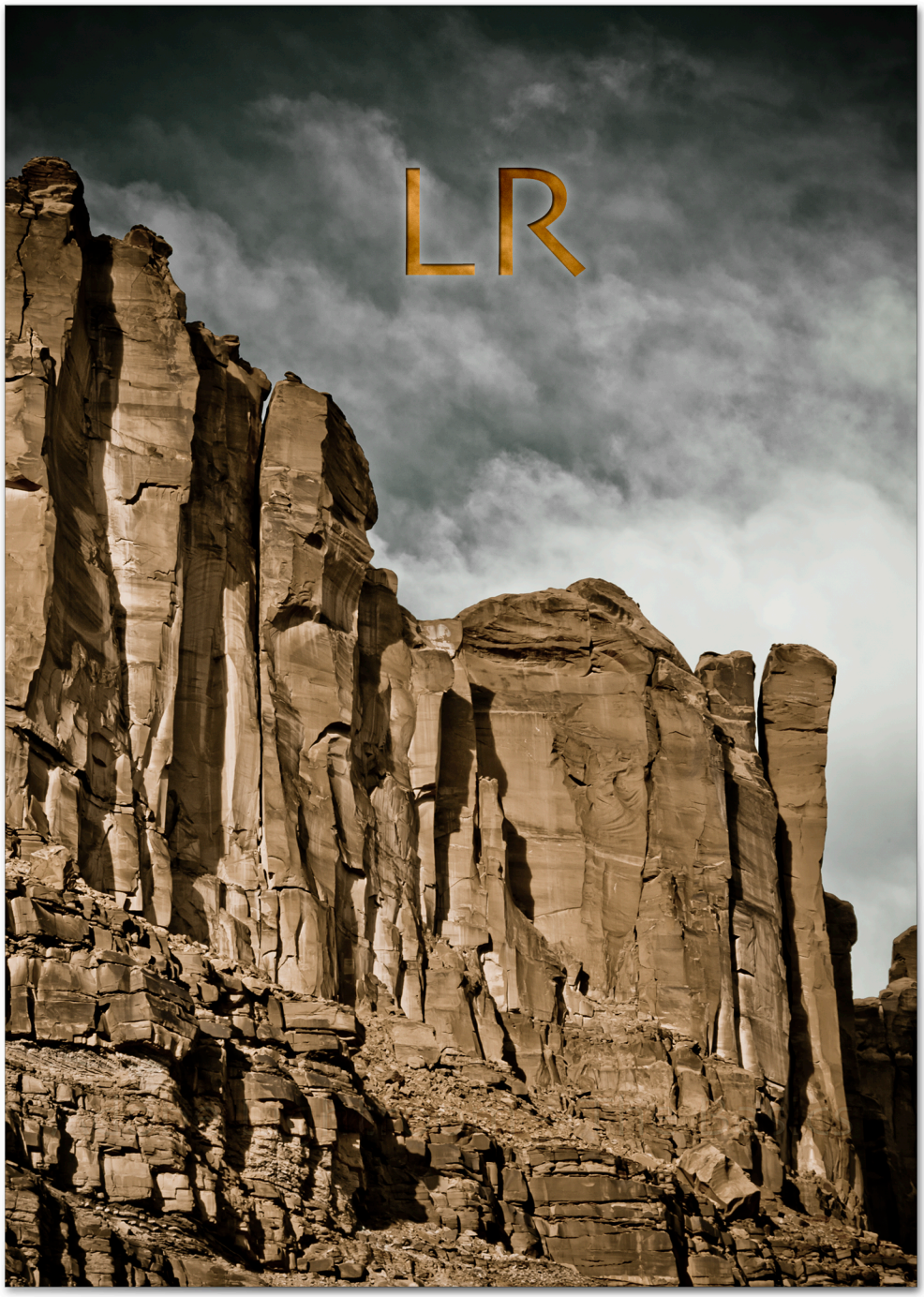
Adobe Lightroom



The Basics

Michael Maersch

Introduction to Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 3+, The Basics

An Instructional Guide for Classes

Michael Maersch

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Why Lightroom?

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom is both an image *processing* and image *asset management* program.

As an image processing application it is similar to Photoshop, though its principal distinction is both dramatic and noteworthy: While image processing in Photoshop is a pixel-*pushing* edit process (you add or subtract pixels), *Lightroom instead writes edit instructions* that are stored within the image as metadata. Because of this, a single Raw file or TIFF in Lightroom can have unlimited variations of itself in color and/or Black & White without having to make corresponding *pixel versions* from the original image①. *This is extraordinary!*

Let me explain. **In Photoshop**, each time you want to save *a variation of an original* you need to save that version *as a separate image file*. Also, the accompanying history, the record of all you did to change that file (which Photoshop nests within its History window), is lost when you 'Save As' a new file and close-out. *Each variation of that original can be massive in size* depending upon how many layers are included and the effects you have utilized in the process – tens, to hundreds of megabytes worth of data in each layered PSD! However, *unlike Photoshop*, the versions of an original master file you save **within Lightroom** as either 'snapshots' or 'virtual copies' add almost-nothing to the size of the original image file. This is because *Lightroom is writing a text file, instructions to itself about how to render the image for export or to be viewed on-screen*②. What I find so fascinating here is that LR records every single task one goes through while developing each photo and then archives that history as part of each photo's metadata. So when you quit Lightroom and re-open the previously edited file again later the entire history of your earlier edit is still there within the Develop module's History panel!
At last, *you CAN go back in time*!

Lightroom will help you take all your digital images (camera captures and TIFF files you create scanning flat art) and build an organized database you can search through in a variety of ways. You will efficiently locate specific files in your collection after *you devise* a personalized system of analysis for your work. Lightroom allows *you* to assign pertinent keywords to describe your images. It also provides color labels, flags and a star-rating system you can utilize alone or in tandem with one, a few or all these file identifiers to narrow your choices and find 'the needle in a haystack' – even when looking through thousands of pictures.

So, who needs Lightroom?

- The professional shooting for print ads, portraits, weddings or other events – the individual who makes pictures as their career.
- The serious hobbyist who aspires to make remarkable images.
- The individual who is only now beginning to record what they see with a digital camera, whether they originally learned to process images in a 'wet' darkroom or not.

In other words, *everyone*.

Footnotes

① I mention only Raw and TIFF files here because even though Lightroom can open and process native Photoshop documents (PSD's) and JPEG files Lightroom affects a layered Photoshop file *globally*, as if it were a flattened file, and then exports the edit *as a flattened file*. Though you may choose to export from Lightroom as a '*PSD*', this Lightroom-generated Photoshop document will no longer have its original layers *individually* preserved!

JPEG images have so much of the original capture data eliminated by way of this format's ambitious image compression formula, one substantially limits their creative process by even considering these files for potential in serious digital-darkroom experimentation. *Get in the habit of shooting Raw files,* then export as sized JPEG's for use online or through Lightroom's Print module as a file for use by a print service that requires JPEG's instead of TIFF's.

② Metadata 'sidecar' files (text files 'attached to' an image file) are tiny by comparison to pixel files, the images themselves. They are merely *kilobytes* in size rather-than *megabytes*! ALSO NOTE: However-many versions of an original image you save as a **Virtual Copy** or as a **Snapshot**, they are all contained '*within*' the image file. This is because the Virtual Copy and/or each Snapshot (a 'snapshot' of your image processing history at the moment you save it as such inside the **Snapshots panel**) *both are simply metadata* – rendering instructions Lightroom saves in the sidecar file associated with the original master image file.

Strategy & Presentation

- I have bold-faced some words and phrases to make it easier for you to skim through chapters and quickly find application-specific terminology, features and processes. I have also included a glossary of terms in the Appendix, at the end of this guide.

- I have done my best to provide illustrations in these chapters that will help you visualize later what I have presented in class. However, the printed page – sometimes even those illustrations reproduced in book store publications – are not as detailed as I would prefer to see them so I have published nearly all the illustrations I include in this instructional guide online, grouped under each chapter's title. *SEE http://phoenixlightroomenterprise.com/classes.html and click on the book cover there.*

- These circled numbers – ①, ②, ③, etc. – I use for you to follow footnotes where applicable. Footnotes will be located at or near the end of each chapter where you find these symbols in the body text. *These circled numbers* – ❶, ❷, ❸, etc. – correspond to numbers I place within the screen captures I have made as chapter illustrations for subject details I am writing about.

- Throughout my writing about the five modules that make up Lightroom I will reference various links to web pages and PDF documents existing online for you to read, watch or download. This will assist in providing you additional content concerning the issue at hand.

- I will occasionally refer to Lightroom in these chapters as 'LR'.

- I use the terms "original" file and "master" file interchangeably here.

Lightroom is a complex application with a lot of little features that add to it's elegant user interface I will not have time to cover here. The purpose of my classes and this guide is to help you get off on the right foot, to have a clearer sense of what Lightroom is and (potentially) what Lightroom can do for you as a creative photographer.

It is my intention to show you the elements of this software that make it unique as an image editor and asset management tool, then explain some of what others have not even pulled the sheets back on in their publisher-issued releases on this software. By far though, of the assortment available, I have found most-everything I read by *Martin Evening* to be presented clearly and with considerably more detail than most alternatives.

What I write here and present in my classes and seminars is based upon my own personal, *daily experience* with both Lightroom and Photoshop.

–mm

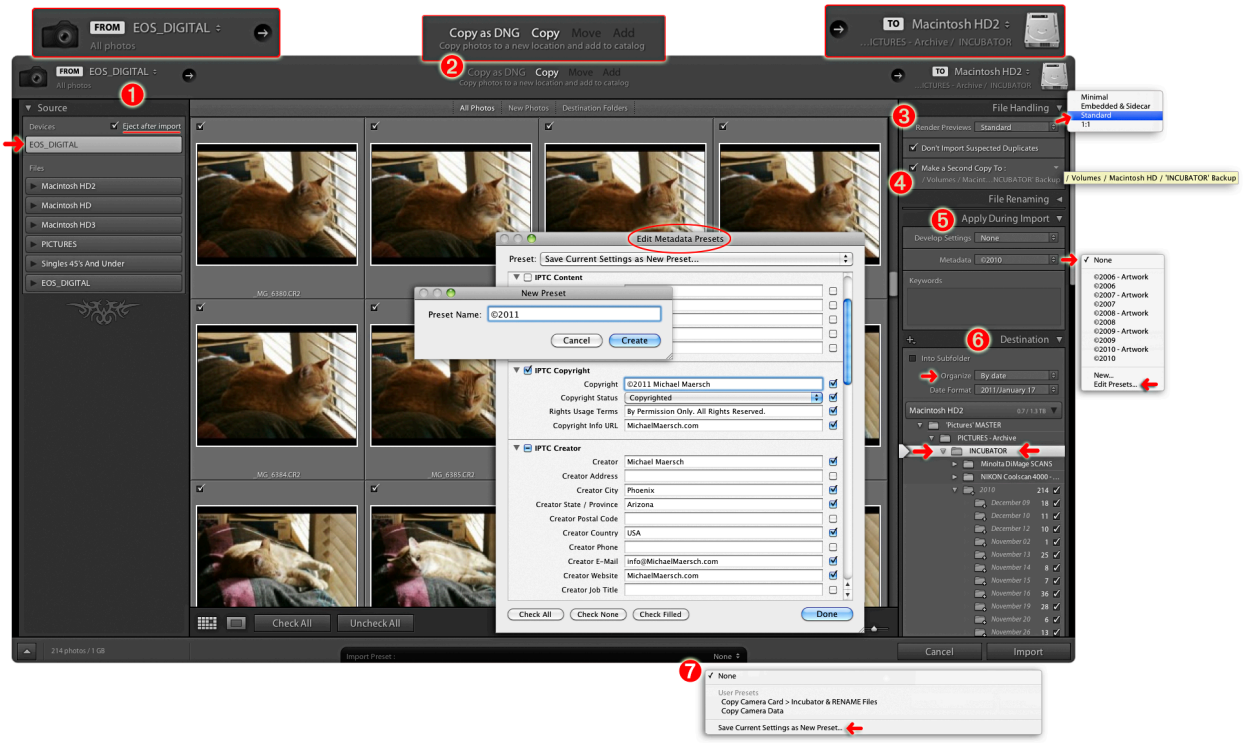
Import to the Lightroom Catalog

Import from card reader.

1) Plug the camera card reader into your computer. Slip your camera memory card into the device. Lightroom will recognize the card and open the Import dialog.

NOTE that even if Lightroom is not currently open if your *Preferences* are set up to '*Show* (the) *import dialog when a memory card is detected*' (under the 'General' **Preferences** tab) Lightroom will automatically boot and open the Import window for you.

2) When the Import window opens proceed as follows:



❶ Lightroom will recognize your memory card. By checking the '*Eject after import*' option here Lightroom will automatically eject your card – will de-couple your card from your System – after the import process is complete. NOTE that *it is always important for you to* '***Eject***' *your card before physically pulling it out of your card reader*. Removing your card from the reader device before accomplishing this may corrupt your camera memory card.

❷ In the middle of the Import dialog you will find your **import options**. When importing from a camera card I most often choose the '*Copy*' option. However, choosing the '*Copy as DNG*' is also a worthy option as I will explain more in class.

❸ In the '**File Handling**' panel I choose to have Lightroom render '*Standard*' *Previews*.

❹ I will always '**Make a Second Copy To**' another drive during the import. This is to insure that if something goes wrong with my principal drive (the hard drive my Lightroom Catalog is on) while I perform edits in Lightroom, I have a second copy of my import to fall back on. NOTE the file structure in the yellow box adjacent to this panel. (The yellow box will pop up if you float your mouse cursor over the active 'Second Copy' window here.)

❺ In the '**Apply During Import**' panel I do not apply any '*Develop Settings*'.

Because we have a new year in effect now I need to create a new '*Metadata*' preset: By clicking on *the Up/Down-facing arrows* adjacent to the '*Metadata*' field its Presets dialog opens. I select '*Edit Presets*' from the list. Then the '**Edit Metadata Presets**' dialog will open. (*SEE large dialog floating above the Import window here*.)

In the dialog I will only choose to add information in both the '*IPTC Copyright*' window and, below that in the '*IPTC Creator*' window. Fill-in pertinent information for yourself using this example as your guide.

When you are happy with what you have completed in those two areas *click on the Up/Down arrows in the* '*Preset*' *bar at the top of the* '***Edit Metadata Presets***' *dialog*. Select '*Save Current Settings as New Preset*'. This will open another dialog, the '**New Preset**' window. I will title this new preset '*©2011*' and press the '*Create*' button.

With that accomplished the next time I import images into Lightroom I can select this '*©2011*' Metadata preset option from among those presented to me there. NOTE: If you have images you will be importing from previous years you will want to create similar presets as '*©2010*', '*©2009*', '*©2008*', *etc*. That way, as you begin to import images from other hard drives you have not yet included in your Lightroom *Catalog* you can select the appropriate Copyright metadata for those new imports!

Another important element to consider at this time is the addition of **Keywords**. Depending upon the content currently being added during the import process you may want to get ahead of the important process of keywording images by adding pertinent descriptive terms at this time. However, if you have a card, a thumb drive or a folder you are importing that have many images which do not all share the same keyword tags you may decide to wait until the images are in the Library module instead of adding any at this time.

❻ NOTE that in the '**Destination**' panel I have selected the '*INCUBATOR*' folder which is the first stop for conducting my initial editing processes in both *the Library module* and in *the Develop module*. Only after I have gotten rid of the garbage from my import (images I do not care to keep any longer), have

assigned pertinent *Keywords* and *Ratings* and tweaked my images in the Develop module as a good starting point for future experimentation and image development, only then I will move portions of this '*INCUBATOR*' folder into more appropriate folders I have created for organizing my work as I see fit.

NOTE as well that because this card holds a lot of images I shot over the course of many days (and months in this case) I have chosen to have Lightroom '**Organize**' my import '*By date*'. Again, once LR has imported all the contents of my camera's memory card, after I have conducted my initial edit, I can always move the images that reside *in each of these dated folders* into other, more appropriate filing folders.

❼ At the bottom of the Import dialog see the little black bar that resides there. If the settings we have made in this example provided is something you feel would serve you well with imports in the future then save it as an '**Import Preset**': Click on the Up/Down arrows on the right side of the black bar and in the dialog that opens select '*Save Current Settings as New Preset*'. A '**New Preset**' window will open. Descriptively name the new preset, hit the '*Create*' button and the import setup you have just created will be available to you there in the future.

The Library Module.

As your new images are being imported to the Lightroom Catalog they will be displayed in the Library module's *Grid view* layout. I do several things at this point straightaway.

First I will quickly run through the series and look for images that aren't worth saving at all.

1) While in the Grid view I scan for photographs that are either way-over or substantial under exposed. Though Lightroom's ability to regain detail in the highlights and pull detail from deep shadows is sometimes bordering on remarkable there will be times you'll be wasting time and end up frustrated with the results in the end. I recommend that if you have an image that is grossly over or under exposed and it is really, really important to attempt saving then go ahead, keep it and spend time trying to save it later. However, if you have several exposure versions of the same image get rid of the problematic ones.

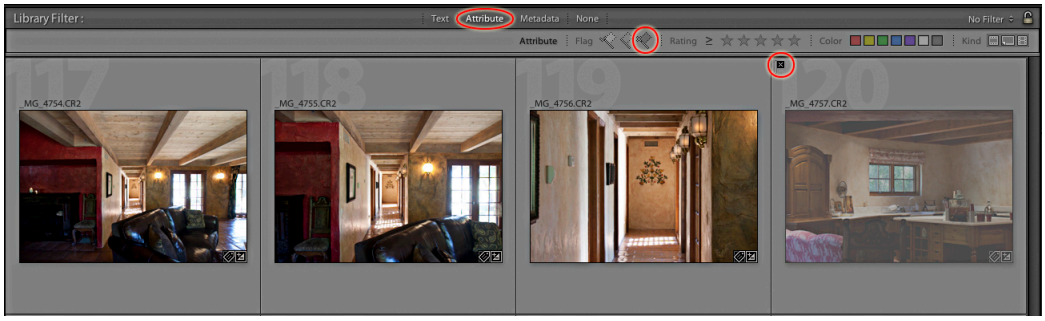
Now is a perfect time to make the point about shooting Raw files with your camera (if that option is available to you) rather than shooting even a 'high resolution' JPEG. Many folks transitioning from the quality point-and-shoot digital cameras available today are a bit intimidated faced with this new image capture option when acquiring their first digital SLR camera. Don't be. Raw files are image files your camera makes which capture *the full range of luminance* (variation in the light, from shadow to highlights) and color that exists at the time of exposure. It is truly a digital 'negative'; in my opinion, potentially better than capturing the image on film!

JPEG files are extremely compressed versions of what is there in front of your camera. That compression algorithm strips out SO MUCH potentially useful digital information recording quality of light and detail that if you find you have overexposed by just a bit or underexposed just a little too much during a run-and-gun shooting session you will never regain detail in those blown-out highlights or blocked-up shadow areas. These images are as useless as images where your focus was off or your subject matter moved while you were shooting with a slow shutter speed. Always shoot Raw only. JPEGS are for uploads to the Internet or for print files to some imaging services (like Walgreens and other low-end print services).

When you see something you do not intend to keep select it and press the '**X**' key. This will assign a black '**Reject**' flag to the image. If you need to take a closer look at the image before condemning it press the **Space-bar** on your keyboard and the image will be transported into the '**Loupe view**'. The photo will fill the content window. Look it over. Consult your Histogram (at the top of the right column of the Library module). Can the image be 'saved'? Is it worth keeping?

Press the '**G**' key to return to the Library's **Grid view** again. Continue looking over the rest of your images there.

2) When you are through deciding which images deserve the black flag ('X' for 'Reject') move up to the **Library Filter**. (The Filter bar is normally hidden. It is best, when not in use, to have it out of the way.) Press the 'backward slash' key ('\') to hide or reveal the *Library Filter*.



The Library Filter open above images in the Library's Grid view.
NOTE that the '*Attribute*' filter group has been selected.

Select the '**Attribute**' filter and a strip illustrating all the Flags, Ratings (stars), Color tags and file types (small icons to the far right of the series). Click on the third flag visible here, the one with the little 'X' at the top of it. This will show you all the reject photos in the folder you are working on, the images you assigned the 'black flag' flag to when you hit the 'X' key during your edit.

Press **Command** + **A** (Mac), **Cntrl** + **A** (PC) *to select all the images the filter has displayed.*

Now press the 'Delete' key. Lightroom will open a dialog asking what you want to do.



Select the '**Delete from Disk**' option here. When you have decided something is not worth saving to your Lightroom Catalog it is really not worth saving or having around at all.

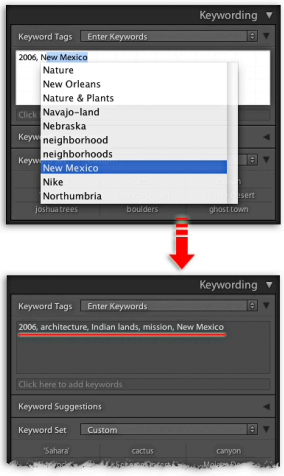
3) Next let's attend to **rating our images**. Lightroom provides us the ability to assign between 1 and 5 stars to each image. This leads to some pretty convoluted methods behind rating images but I have stripped my rating process as follows. (You may decide upon a different way of doing things.)

- I only use three ratings: **1 star** = I want to work on this image more.
- **3 stars** I assign to images I want to work with in a serious fashion *sooner rather than later*. And…
- **5 stars** I assign to an image I intend to print or use as a portfolio piece.
- All the remaining images without stars still have potential for something some time in the future.
- Easy to remember keyboard shortcuts for *Ratings* are: the number '1' = 1 star, the number '2' = 2 stars, etc.

4) Don't forget to assign **Keywords** to each image. This exercise is essential for helping us better manage our ever-expanding Catalog of images over time.

Select the first image of your new import. Think of a word or short phrase that describes the picture.





Previous pages are just a taste of the complete text with illustrations.

More, as with my References, upon request.

Michael Maersch