



Peninsula College Continuing Education – Digital Photography

Week 3 – Digital Workflow

- Learn and practice the basic digital workflow - Acquisition, Manipulation, Archiving, and End Use Delivery
- Institute file management to make your digital studio work for you

Digital Files

When you are working with digital files you need to have a firm understanding of the intended use of an image, this affects what kind of file you will be using throughout the process. There are four stages an image can go through: Acquisition, Manipulation, Archiving, and End Use Delivery. We will review these stages as they pertain to Photoshop Elements.

Acquisition

Always start with the best, the biggest, and the brightest. You can't fix everything, so it is important to obtain the best quality image from the very start. You will gain your image through a camera, video capture, or scanner.

You want them to be lossless to retain a high fidelity. Keep the best color / grayscale

information available, 24 bit color / 8 bit grayscale.

Keep the gamma / color calibration information of the acquisition device.

Best saving formats for the acquisition are TIFF, PNG, SPIFF, and Raw because they can be read by most programs, support metadata, and lossless compression.

Metadata - Electronic information about electronic information. (data about data) It is used to facilitate the understanding, characteristics, purpose, and management usage of data.

RAW - an image output option available on some digital cameras. Though lossless, it is a factor of three or four smaller than TIFF files of the same image. The disadvantage is that there is a different RAW format for each manufacturer, and so you may have to use the manufacturer's software to view the images.

Some software does not read RAW files, check if yours does before shooting everything in RAW.

Manipulation

When you are working with an image manipulation and editing software (Photoshop Elements is a proprietary software), you can read and edit standard image formats. But, if you want to increase your ability to edit an image, you need to save a version as a Photoshop File with the extension .psd. You can continue to work on that file with all the layers and fun stuff; compared to a standard file you will lose that ability to make changes easily.

Once proprietary formats are used for editing and final editing has been achieved, you need to save an archival master or delivery image as a non-proprietary format. Always keep your original edited image file (.psd) just in case you need to return to it. Trust me.

Archiving

The archival master should be at the highest practicable resolution, in keeping with the storage facilities available and the same acquisition resolution and format you started with, like TIFF or PNG. You want your archival format to hold metadata associated with the image. The format should be lossless, best color / grayscale, and a standard format that is readable by most image editing software.

You should end up with two types of archived images: an archival original which is the unedited acquisition file and an archival master the edited file.

Delivery

Your delivery file formats are dependent on the end use. Is it for print publication or electronic publication like web, video, or mobile phone?

If you are working with a professional, it is best to work with them directly to give them exactly what they need. Find out the needs of the equipment, the color and resolution capabilities, what kind of storage device they need for delivery, the image use, and the nature of the image.

Don't be shy about consulting with those doing the production; it is your stuff get it done right the first time.

Basic print publication formats are JPEG, PNG, TIFF, or GIF.

Basic electronic publication formats are JPEG, PNG, or GIF.

Watch out for RGB and CMYK Modes. Ask which is right for your project.

File Management

If you define a means to organize your files from the get-go, it will be much easier to find them when you need them.

There is software that can help manage your image files, but you still have to name the files something you recognize, place them in categories, write tags for them, and maybe place extra notes in the files.

Tagging Photos! Just do it!

Tag - an appropriate keyword or term associated with or designated to a piece of information, like a picture, to describe the item and facilitating keyword-based classification and searching.

Organizing digital images by tags, keywords, and categories helps you find your files while searching. This doesn't mean you will stop using the hierarchical folder concept to keep your files in easy to find place, it just means you are adding extra data to your files to make searching easier. Tags don't just help you; they help anyone looking at your images.

Adding tags is a different process with each application or website album. The tagging process seems overwhelming, so do it in short sessions and remember to do it as you upload images. It is worth it. I have a Word files that contains all the names/descriptions of the tags I use so that I am not reinventing the wheel every time I sit down to tag images. That way – I can cut and paste instead of typing in things over and over.

Remember that as you export or email photos, those tags you write are embedded within the file. Watch your language!

Big Brother is watching you! :-D

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