

ADOBE LIGHTROOM CLASSIC

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This is the first of several articles on Lightroom Classic. It gives an overview and gets you started with loading up your existing image files. The second shows how you arrange and keyword your images, and how to import, rank, sort and organise the images from a photographic session. The third gives a description of image development, including batch processing. This also details how to create Presets that will start development as you import your images, for exporting images for printing by your photofinishers, and for creating JPEG files for digital competitions.

Lightroom Classic is a cataloguing application with RAW image development capabilities, but it is not the only application that can be used for this. See the article <https://www.diyphotography.net/four-alternatives-to-adobe-lightroom-2019/> for a comparison with 4 other applications, including Capture One. Lightroom Classic is the most popular application, as is arguably the best for cataloguing, but it only available on subscription. The alternatives are purchased outright.

LIGHTROOM OR LIGHTROOM CLASSIC?

Lightroom is available in two versions, Lightroom and Lightroom Classic. This article is on Lightroom Classic, not Lightroom, and is the version used by most expert photographers on their main computer. Much of it is not applicable to Lightroom.

- Lightroom is Cloud based. The images with your edits are in Adobe's Creative Cloud storage. The Lightroom application can be on a computer, tablet and smartphone.
- An annual subscription to Lightroom is currently A\$171.41, which includes 1TB of cloud storage.
- Lightroom Classic is the new name of the original Lightroom. It is designed for developing images stored on your computer and connected hard drives. Internet connection is only necessary to download and update the application.
- Lightroom Classic is only available as part of an Adobe Creative Cloud plan. The Photography plan annual subscription is A\$171.41, which includes Lightroom, Lightroom Classic, Photoshop and 20 GB of cloud storage.
- Edited images in the cloud can be copied to your hard drive with Lightroom Classic and both copies synchronised.
- Experienced photographers use Lightroom Classic for most of their work and Lightroom and cloud storage when they are travelling.
- A separate article is available on Lightroom.

LIGHTROOM CLASSIC OVERVIEW

When you load Lightroom Classic onto a computer for the first time, it looks useless. You can't see any of your photos. Many give up at this stage – but read on, and you will find the secret!

Lightroom Classic needs to create a CATALOGUE file to work.

The first catalogue file is created when you **IMPORT** photos into Lightroom Classic. By default, this catalogue is in the Photos folder of the hard disk of the computer you are using. The catalogue is where Lightroom Classic stores your edits for each image file including:

- Its location in the folder structure
- A thumbnail sized image
- All the camera metadata (exposure, camera, lens, GPS, etc.)
- All the editing and metadata you add when you process the image in Lightroom Classic. (develop settings, keywords, star rating, colour codes, flags, etc.)

Because all this information is in your Lightroom Classic catalogue, the only way to access your edited image is in Lightroom Classic. To share your work with others: send a JPEG, load on a website, create a file that your photofinisher can print: you need to **EXPORT** images from Lightroom Classic. When you do this, **LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CREATES A NEW FILE WITH ALL YOUR EDITS APPLIED**. The original file is unchanged, whatever the file format. So, the RAW files and JPEGs you imported into Lightroom Classic from your camera are preserved. This is a really safe way of working.

YOUR IMAGE FILES

In the old days, we stored our photographs (mini-prints and slides) in shoe boxes, usually losing the negatives. Unless you have some organisation, you can't find your old photos. The good mini-prints, we put in albums – but most likely the negatives were lost, and the prints faded.

Today we store our digital images on a computer hard drive. Usually each digital image is one image file (JPEG, RAW, etc.). The images are represented as electronic data, which provided we don't corrupt or lose them, will exactly reproduce the original images. Electronic pictures don't fade like mini-prints, slides and negatives.

One of the best features of a computer is that it is easy to design your own logical file system as a structure of folders and subfolders. Whether you use Windows or Macintosh, you develop your own file structure for everything you create on the computer. My recommendation is to have your photo archive on one hard disc in one file reserved only for photos, with subfolders. This is duplicated on at least one backup drive. Your main computer drive is used for working files, that you transfer to your archive regularly. Being electronic, the archive is easily available, unlike the old days, where old images ended up in the bottom of a cupboard or in the attic.

The Macintosh comes with an application called Photos. Your iPhone images will be put into Photos by default when you connect the iPhone to your computer. The big 'but' is that the photos are stored in a single file library (Library.photoslibrary), and the only way to see the images is to open the Photos App. It is not accessible by Lightroom Classic or Bridge. I only use Photos as my portfolio. All the images in it are JPEGs, exported from Lightroom Classic sized to match my screen resolution. I can show my portfolio on my smartphone or tablet. Those with a Windows computer don't have this problem: photos are always as separate files and not a library.

Don't use Apple Photos to store all your images

My archive file of digital images – RAW/JPEG originals, TIFFs created using Photoshop and JPEGs is in one folder with subfolders on a hard drive. Currently this has 60,000 image files that take up about 2 TB, but my hero images may have several versions:

- The original image (RAW or JPEG)
- A master file TIFF (or PSD) file, with Photoshop edits, but at full size

- One or more versions of the master file as TIFFs or PSDs, sized and sharpened by Photoshop for printing at different sizes. (Not essential – can be quickly created from the Master file)
- JPEG's sized for club judging, competitions; or to match the resolution of my laptop screen that are copied into my Apple Photos portfolio.

RECOMMENDED IMAGE STORAGE

One 3 TB hard drive should store a lifetime's image archive. Add a second as a back-up.

BACKUP FILES

The great thing about digital files is that they are easily copied and the copies are identical. If my main hard drive crashes, is stolen or damaged in a fire, I lose everything on it. For safety, all the files you want to keep should be copied to at least one backup hard drive.

The practice adopted by professional photographers like Nick Rains is to have two or three backups, and they are not stored at one location in case the building burns down. The professional backs up daily or weekly on alternate drives. One drive is at the studio, the other goes home. Steve Parish's experience with flood damage causing the loss of millions of dollars' worth of his images was a powerful lesson.

My main drive is a Drobo, which holds 3 hard drives (it can take 5), each of 2 TB capacity (it will take larger hard drives). These drives are configured by the Drobo such that if one crashes, the other two have all the information. I just replace the damaged drive and it will sort everything out. Because of this configuration the total capacity is not 6 TB, but only 3.58 TB.

As insurance, I have a separate 3 TB hard drive, just in case my Drobo fails.

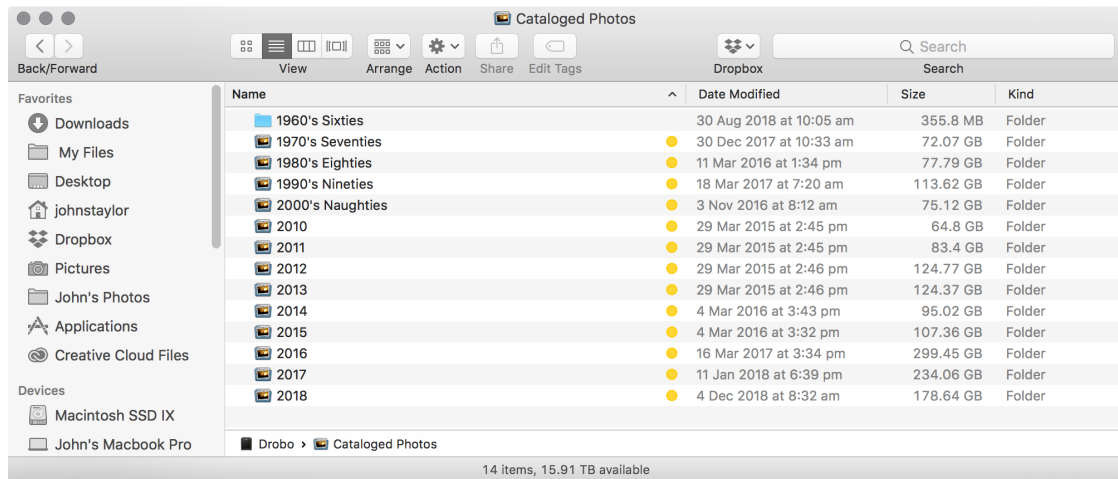
Cloud storage can also be used, but to store 2 TB on the cloud would involve some considerable ongoing cost. My preference is to avoid the Cloud, because I know where my files are, and I can access them without the internet. I am uncomfortable about having my files on some server I don't know where.

FOLDER STRUCTURE

It's up to you how you structure the files in your archive, but my recommended hierarchy is as below:

1. A single Photos File, or existing Pictures file in Mac OS or Windows. ("Catalogued Photos")
2. Subfolders by Year ("2018", "2017", etc.)
3. Then subfolders by Month ("2018-12"), or some other logical event ("Bali Holiday", "Portraiture workshop")
4. Then subfolders by Photoshoot "1938 Erskine". The sequential number ensures they are in the order I created them.

A photoshoot is a day's or session's images on one camera card. It is the photos I import in one go to my hard drive, and is a nice convenient number to edit in one session. It can start up with 300 or more images, but typically is about 50.



I use a single Laptop for all my computing. My normal way of working is to have one or two months of images on my laptop hard drive. Every so often I use Lightroom Classic to move these images to the archive drive.

While being organised is a great idea, you don't have to be. Lightroom Classic has some great features you can use to find images – star rating, colour coding, flagging, Collections and Keywording, but you will need to do some work to make it work.

THE LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CATALOGUE

Adobe's Bridge, Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) and Photoshop are three applications that many use for processing their images. Adobe Bridge looks at your existing file structure and enables you to find and show a particular image file. ACR was designed for performing edits on RAW files but now can be used for all camera files. When you edit an image using ACR, the changes you make are stored in a sidecar file (.xmp) that ACR creates in the same folder as the image. Photoshop is used for final editing, and changes pixels permanently. While there are features like adjustment layers that delay permanent changes, once you resize an image or flatten it, and close Photoshop, the image is forever changed.

Each photo file is saved updated with the edits made by Photoshop, or in the case of RAW files, edits are stored in its sidecar file.

ADVANTAGES OF LIGHTROOM CLASSIC

- Lightroom Classic works differently. It never modifies original files – these are always preserved intact. Instead all the editing done in Lightroom Classic is stored in your Lightroom Classic Catalogue file. It is a really safe way of working, but only you, or someone who has access to your Catalogue file, can see the edited image.
- Lightroom Classic does the same as Bridge plus ACR, but with the addition that it controls your file structure and workflow. With the Bridge / ACR / Photoshop workflow it is easy to irrevocably change your original and master file. Lightroom Classic's inbuilt workflow should not allow this to happen.
- Lightroom Classic's cataloguing features: Flags, Colour Codes, Keywording and Collections, are best practice.
- Development in Lightroom Classic is intuitive and simple. Batch development speeds up development of multiple images.
- If you have a photo printer, its printing workflow is much less complicated than Photoshop's, enabling you to build a template for each print size and paper combination. It easily enables the printing of multiple copies of differing sizes on one sheet of paper and, output sharpening is simplified.

- Creation of files to share with others (JPEG or TIFF) is intuitive and can be automated (Export Presets).

YOUR FIRST LIGHTROOM CLASSIC IMPORT – THE IMPORT SCREEN

The first time you start Lightroom Classic, your photos have to be “IMPORTED” into Lightroom Classic to create your catalogue, and make the images accessible to Lightroom Classic. On the left-hand side of the Lightroom Classic Library window you will see a Panel called Folders. This is where Lightroom Classic will show your imported photos, but a fresh unused copy of Lightroom Classic will show nothing.

“Imported” is really a misnomer for your first import, because it implies you are transporting files around. You don’t actually move your files anywhere, or change them. This first Import is really Lightroom Classic building its catalogue of your existing images. RAW images are added to Lightroom Classic’s catalogue with the edits you did with ACR – it reads the sidecar files too.

Now click on the **Import** button (bottom Left hand corner) to **OPEN THE IMPORT WINDOW**. On the Left-hand side is a tab labelled Source. Click on this and you will see listed the Hard Drives your computer can see. Navigate to your file of photos on its hard drive, and click on this file. You will be able to see its file structure if you click on the flippy triangles. Ensure the box “Include Subfolders” is ticked.

Looking at the top bar, you will now see that you have chosen a source to import. In the centre of the top bar, click on Add, and you will see a message saying, “Add photos to catalog without moving them”.

On the right-hand side, you can set up options for **File Handling**, **Renaming** and **Apply During Import**. For your first import, you don’t have to worry about these now – look at these later. Click the **Import** button.

If your folder contains thousands of photos of several years of work, this first import will take some time. Go and water the garden, or make a hot drink, or both. Don’t worry! If you decide you don’t like Lightroom Classic, you can just delete the catalogue you are creating. Nothing is being done to your files. Having all your photos in one folder makes importation a one-step process. If you have several folders or hard drives it means you will have to repeat the import for each folder.

What Lightroom Classic is doing is mapping where your image files are and adding this information to the Lightroom Classic Catalogue. It is also incorporating any editing done using ACR. When you open an image in Lightroom Classic’s Develop module, the image is shown with exactly the same edits you did in ACR, and you can re-develop it if you need to.

You can use Finder or Windows Navigator to navigate to the catalogue in your Pictures folder. It will have a name Lightroom Classic Catalog.ircat. As you use Lightroom Classic to edit your photos, it will add the information to this catalogue.

Once the Import has finished, ensure the **Library** button is highlighted, then click on the Folders tab, and you will see your file structure. You can reorganise photos in this Folders window by dragging and dropping.

Click on any folder and the centre area will show thumbnails of all the images in the folder.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE. NOW YOUR PHOTOS ARE CATALOGUED. DON’T REORGANISE FILES IN WINDOWS EXPLORER OR APPLE FINDER, OR LIGHTROOM CLASSIC WILL LOSE TRACK OF WHERE THE FILES ARE. INSTEAD USE LIGHTROOM CLASSIC TO ORGANISE YOUR FILES.

This error can be recovered with some effort.

If necessary, you can import more photos in another folder by repeating this step.

CATALOGUED IMAGE FILES

The Lightroom Classic catalogue is a single file that tells Lightroom Classic where your photos are, and stores everything you do to an image (changing metadata and development) using Lightroom Classic or ACR.

ORIGINAL IMAGE FILES ARE NOT CHANGED AT ALL BY LIGHTROOM CLASSIC.

If you require a developed image file, (eg. a resized JPEG from your RAW image) to share with others, you *Export* the file. The original is retained unaltered, and the revised image will be added to the catalogue.

You can make Lightroom Classic create a sidecar file for each image file with all your edits as ACR does, but you don't have to.

Lightroom Classic allows you to edit a photo in another application (Photoshop). The revised photo with a new name will usually be added to the catalogue.

Lightroom Classic only imports photos (eg. RAW, JPEG, TIFF) and movies. It won't see other files.

Once you have imported photos from a connected drive into Lightroom Classic, the drive and the photos in it will be visible in Lightroom Classic's library, even when the drive is disconnected. It is possible to edit photos, that is develop them or change the metadata, even if the drive containing them is disconnected. Look up SMART PREVIEWS in Lightroom Classic's help.

To share your edited photos with others, you have to send them an EXPORTED file.

IMPORTING FROM APPLE PHOTOS

Sadly, Lightroom Classic cannot directly import photos from a Photos library. First you have to export them from Photos to a folder on a hard drive. You can import this folder into Lightroom Classic and organise images later.

CATALOGUE OPTIONS

Lightroom Classic will work with more than one catalogue. Use Help to find Lightroom Classic's online help to find how you do this. The reasons you might want more than one catalogue are:

- Using both a desktop and laptop for your photos, with different catalogues. You use the laptop when you are away from home and transfer your images and edits from laptop to desktop when you are home. The catalogues on your laptop and desktop will be different. You can transfer photos from one catalogue to another. Connect the two computers together with a compatible network cable. On the desktop computer, MENU: File > Import from another catalogue.
- To separate personal and business photos
- One catalogue for your photos, and another for club photos.
- When you have a separate backup drive of your image archive, you have a separate catalogue for the backup, so neither has duplicate images.

DUPLICATE IMAGES

Lightroom Classic can find duplicate images and give you the option to choose one and discard the other. This is great in that it can avoid the confusion having two or more copies of the same thing, all of which end up being edited differently. When you click Import, on the right-hand side, one option is Don't Import Suspected Duplicates. I keep this on.

If you work with a laptop, because of its limited hard disk or SSD space you will keep your photos on a plug-in hard drive. If you work away from home, a small file of images copied from your camera cards can be kept on your laptop and transferred to your main hard drive, when you get home. Just drag a file of images from one folder or drive to another. Your catalogue can include both your laptop hard drive and your main hard drive.

BACKING UP YOUR LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CATALOGUE

Your Lightroom Classic catalogue is a single file, eventually holding many hours of your work. It would be a tragic loss if it disappeared.

Lightroom Classic by default is set to create a back-up of your catalogue on a weekly basis, when you quit Lightroom Classic. The default location of the backup is the same drive as the main catalogue, which is no good if this drive fails. I have my Lightroom Classic catalogue on the computer hard drive, and my backup on my hard drive containing my archived images. If either disk fails, I still have the catalogue.

In the Lightroom Classic menu, select Catalog Settings. In the Information Box, you will see the location of your current catalogue and its file name.

Below this is the Backup box, which will have a drop-down menu. Use this menu to select how often a backup is done.

Select "When Lightroom Classic next exits". Now quit Lightroom Classic, and you will get the Back Up Catalog dialogue box. Backup Folder tells you where Lightroom Classic will back up the catalogue. You can change this by clicking the Choose button, and navigating to where you want the backup to go.

Now you have the option of Skipping the back-up operation or backing up.

Every time that you back-up Lightroom Classic, a new backup is added to the files. Every now and again, in Windows or Finder, navigate to your folder of back-ups and trash the old ones.

WHAT IS NEXT ...

Hopefully this will give you confidence to explore Lightroom Classic further. Take time to look at Adobe's Lightroom Classic training and videos you will find by clicking the [HELP](#) button. See the articles listed below for further information. They are all on the club's website:

- Lightroom Classic Library Module – Sorting, Keywording, flags, colour codes, collections finding an image.
- Library Develop Module – Developing your image, local controls, developing multiple images at the same time
- Working with Cloud-based Lightroom
- Automate Creation of Screen-Sized JPEGs
- Presentation of prints for judging

Things you should look up in the Lightroom Classic help are:

- Restoring your catalogue from a backup
- Renaming files and folders
- Lightroom Classic Maps module
- Lightroom Classic Slideshow and Books modules

Thanks to Nick Rains and Nick Melidonis for their help introducing me to Lightroom Classic.

REFERENCES:

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 4 FAQs, Stan Sholik, Wiley

Adobe's extensive help files and video tutorials.

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