

Kamloops Photo Arts Club - 17 November, 2010 – by Frank Dwyer

NOTE IF THE LINKS ON THIS PAGE DO NOT WORK – SEARCH GOOGLE FOR THE SUBJECT OR NAME. WEB SITES COME AND GO AND LINKS ARE SOMETIMES OBSOLETE.

Adobe CS and its variants, Lightroom, Aperture and the like are marvelous and represent the most popular programs for serious photography. There are legions of users, tons of resources and, both online and live, courses - but in my opinion there may be others suitable (and perhaps better in important ways) especially for beginning digital photographers. There are reasons why so many courses and books are available for the flagship programs – some of it market dominance but also the sometimes daunting complexity of the software – and of course marketing imperatives, that is the upgrade cycle.

BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE MANY CHOICES IN PROGRAMS OTHER THAN ADOBE PRODUCTS. I SUGGEST YOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE BE TO BUY WHAT YOU NEED, BUY WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD, MAKE THE BEST OF WHAT YOU HAVE - AND REMEMBER THAT EVERY UPDATE TO A PROGRAM IS NOT ESSENTIAL. BECOMING ACCOMPLISHED AT PHOTOGRAPHY IS SO MUCH MORE THAN HAVING THE LATEST SOFTWARE OF THE HOTTEST CAMERA. PHOTOGRAPHY IS AN ART AND DEPENDS MORE ON YOUR EYE, YOUR EFFORT AND DEVELOPING A CREATIVE APPROACH. FINALLY, ANY SORT OF SOFTWARE HAS SOME KIND OF LEARNING CURVE - TUTORIALS AND EXPERIMENTATION ARE GOOD WAYS TO LEARN. CONSIDER IT AN ADVENTURE. IF IT'S NOT FUN, ASK WHY YOU ARE DOING IT. THERE IS A CASE TO BE MADE FOR SIMPLY SHOOTING IN JPEG FINE (the camera processing engines are so good now) AND RESTRICTING YOURSELF TO CROPPING AND THE MOST BASIC ADJUSTMENTS. MOST OF US THOUGH, WILL GO FAR BEYOND THAT IN STRIVING FOR ARTISTRY.

Some terms:

D.A.M – Digital Asset Management – Coping with your image collection.

Cataloging – Having a logical and systematic method of organizing images so that you can readily find them in future.

Editing – The essential task of reviewing, considering, comparing and evaluating images. Culling bad shots is an essential part.

Raw Conversion – Software for converting images from the raw format (if your camera does raw) to a format useable for image processing.

Work Flow – the systematic series of steps you follow in taking your images through uploading to your computer and on through to the final images – that is output and archiving.

Processing – the software needed to ‘develop’ your image – that is to make the best of it.

NOTE Software may do some or all of these functions. There is considerable overlap. Some programs take a Swiss army knife (do it all) approach while others are more specialized. There are arguments for both approaches.

Alternate Software for Photography and Managing Your Photography Collection (D.A.M.):

Organizing photos < <http://www.digitalphotos101.com/organizing-your-digital-photos.htm> >

A basic outline of folder structure < <http://www.shortcourses.com/workflow/workflow1-7.html> >

The concepts of cataloguing/ databases < <http://www.shortcourses.com/workflow/workflow1-8.html> >

Picajet website < <http://www.picajet.com/en/index.php> >

iMatch website < <http://www.photools.com/> > iMatch is a very powerful pro tool. Some Mac users run it with Fusion or Parallels though it is not designed as a Mac program. Xee is a similar choice for Mac users

Photo Editing: The key function – examine – rank – cull. This is much facilitated by a powerful browser. Your editing program may already have an effective browser - but if not, you may wish to consider a better one. This is perhaps the most overlooked essential. Developing a good strategy for managing your image collection is crucial in the early stages – all the more so if you have ambitions to become a serious or professional photographer.

Photo Mechanic (Camera Bits) website < <http://www.camerabits.com/> >

Comparison of Win and Mac browsers < <http://www.impulseadventure.com/photo/flow-catalog-compare.html> >

A forum discussion about Mac browsers < <http://forums.macrumors.com/showthread.php?t=570812> >

Forum about best photo browsers < <http://www.thephotoforum.com/forum/digital-discussion-q/63725-best-photo-browser.html> >

RAW COVERSION: There are many good converters available, some with extensive processing capability. Choices include DxO Pro, Phase One, Bibble, Silky Pix and others. All of them are good, some are superb. DxO Pro and Silky Pix are my personal favourites. What you use is a highly personal decision. Adobe Camera Raw is a superb program but it is not the only one. DxO provides a polished work flow, and an amazing ability to correct the deficiencies of many lenses. Silky Pix (quick and easy) is wonderful especially for soft images, portraiture and flowers etc. Adobe Camera Raw and Phase One are much favoured by masterful photographers

DxO < <http://www.dxo.com/us/photo> >

SOFTWARE WHICH PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE TO PHOTOSHOP FOR IMAGE PROCESSING

Lightzone - Lightcrafts (for Mac too) < <http://www.lightcrafts.com/lightzone/> >

Lightzone is a wonderful, unique program with an intuitive workflow – it's easy to learn. Check it out.

Also **Picasa from Google is very worthy.**

Picture Window Pro – Digital Light and Color < <http://www.dl-c.com/> > Picture Window Pro is an amazingly powerful and complete program – check it out and consider the price. PWP provides a very photograph approach and offers near everything including excellent RAW conversion.

Also the GIMP and others may suit your needs – and your budget.

ELEMENTS IS A VERY CAPABLE PROGRAM, PLUS YOU CAN FIND PLUG-INS WHICH DO MUCH TO EXTEND THE POWER OF ELEMENTS – MAKING IT A NEAR RIVAL FOR THE MOST DESIRED SOFTWARE.

Elements Plug-ins – SmartCurve < <http://photoshop.pluginworld.com/plugins/adobe/990/easy-filter/smartcurve.html> > Free. Elements+ < <http://simplephotoshop.com/elementsplus/> > \$12.

OTHER ELEMENTS PLUG-INS THAT ARE FREE OR COMMERCIAL (Search Google to read about them and remember, you buy and use at your risk – I offer no recommendations – this is provided for information only)

VirtualPhotographer . Versatile, many filters, Free, last I checked <
<http://www.optikvervelabs.com/> >

For cutting out fine masks. Free. GML Matting (made by University of Moscow engineering students). <
<http://graphics.cs.msu.ru/ru/science/research/imageprocessing/matting>) Google other download sites to. For noise reduction. Hi ISO noise reduction. Possibly free, check the site and has other filters < <http://www.unicontel.com/> >

Focal Blade (great sharpening tool) \$79 from The Plug-in Site . The ultimate sharpening kid and easy to use.
<http://thepluginsite.com/products/photowiz/focalblade/index.htm> >

Find out about Nik Silver Efex Pro - an Elements compatible plug-in that is the most favoured and powerful program for black and white conversion/processing. If you are interested in the classic photographic art this is absolutely the finest program you can own. It is not inexpensive but it is a masterful tool. <
<http://www.niksoftware.com/silverefexpro/usa/entry.php> >

BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER AND TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT. YOU CAN FOLLOW THE HERD OR FOLLOW YOUR OWN PATH. FINDING YOUR OWN WAY CAN MAKE YOU UNIQUE, ADMIRER AND CONFIDENT. WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS.