

Notes for short talks on Lightroom for DPCA - Don Dement 10/11/2016 10:38 PM

Getting started with Import: You must “import” image files into Lightroom before you can work with them in any manner. The basic import task is to copy your camera card’s files to your computer’s hard drive (choose internal or external), enter into the LR catalog the metadata from your camera, and make and store small image replicas for your visual information.

You can import files already on a storage medium (hard drive, network source, etc.) or those on a camera card. The Import task includes simply entering files from these sources into Lightroom’s database; but it offers much more, with extensive tasks that can be embedded into this single import activity.

Import only optionally copies files from a camera card. Instead you can drag those files from the card into a computer’s hard drive folder using any other method (Finder for Mac, File Explorer for Windows, and other transfer programs). Here, we assume you’re including this upload function in LR.

The Import window: for files on a camera’s card, insert it into a card reader that’s in your computer or on a USB cable. In the window at top right is a list of Lightroom’s “modules.” Click on Library if it’s not already selected. At lower left, click the “Import” button and a new window will appear.

In Edit/ Preferences/General, you can set LR to open this automatically when a card is detected.

On the left edge is a replica of your computer’s Finder (Mac) or File Explorer (Win) list of all types of stored files, including your image sources (disks, cards). Your source – card or disk - should show at the top left of this Import window; if not, click it in the list and it will appear at top left. The workspace will begin to fill with small “previews” of the stored image files.

If you’re importing from a card, at top left, check the “Eject after import” box to tell LR to disconnect the card from the computer’s OS after importing so you can pull it out without concern about corrupting files.

Across the top you will select what Lightroom is to do basically; and down the right side, what you want it to do during the import, and the most important “Destination:” where you want to store the files. So we start at the left side, go across the top, and finish on the lower right side.

There are four commands on the top line of the Import window. Lightroom will almost automatically select the right one based on the source type, and will gray-out unusable ones. If you’re importing from a camera card, you’ll be copying the files to your hard drive, and they will also still be on your card as a backup. If you’re importing files that are already on your hard drive, you’ll simply “Add” them to the catalog because they don’t need uploading.

If the image files were shot in JPG format, choose COPY.

LR can convert JPG files to DNGs, but to no real purpose.

If you shot in RAW mode, click either:

“COPY” so that the files will stay in your camera manufacturer’s proprietary format like NEF or CR2, etc. and LR’s edit settings and other data will be put into a new, separate “sidecar” file with the same filename and an extension of “xml”; or

“COPY as DNG” which first copies the proprietary files to your destination, then converts them - and will include your edit settings - into single, integrated files called Digital NeGatives or DNGs. The DNG is still a raw file, but in a different, open-source (non-proprietary) format.

To keep the original proprietary file, in Edit/Preferences/File Handling you can check that block. This doubles the size of the DNG. Otherwise LR will delete the original after the DNG conversion is done. Almost everyone does the latter.

In the middle of the screen will be a grid-like pattern with all the image files in your selected source. If the images are already in the catalog, they will be dimmed or won’t appear. By default, in the frame of each preview at the upper left corner will be a checkmark in a box. If you don’t want a file(s) to upload uncheck its box; or you can click at the bottom “Deselect all” then check only those you do want to upload.

If you use large cards with several shoots on them, LR has to check all those files against the catalog at each import. It will finish showing only your new ones and old ones grayed out. But after several shoots are on the card, this slows down the import. After you have backed up older card files, you may prefer to regularly format the card.

On the right side are four panels. A small gray arrow to the right opens a dropdown list. For now leave the default selections as they are.

The “File Handling” panel starts at the top with a Build Preview size list. For starters the default Standard will do for almost all needs. Next down, leave “Build Smart Previews” unchecked – more another time. This panel next lets you avoid duplicating photo files in the catalog, which is a wise strategic move. You can make copies later by exporting, but you will make, edit and use a single “master” file for whatever uses you choose as a final product.

In the next box you can instruct LR to copy the camera’s files to a second location. To protect against main drive failure, this location should be a separate drive. This saves originals in the camera’s alphanumeric, one-up-numbering file system. The files are not connected to the catalog and are not maintained, edited or organized by LR. Because of this it’s not a favored

user long-term backup choice, but it can serve the need to have an immediate backup that permits formatting the camera card for quick reuse.

Leave “Collections” unchecked for now.

The next panel is “File Renaming.” Checking the “Rename Files” box lets you choose a single name format for all files in this, or at your choice, a future, import. You can design that format, making it simple and flexible for your future files.

You can modify and create many naming conventions to save, and choose one at each import time. To do that, click the tiny arrow to the far right of “Template” and from a list that appears choose one that’s close to what you want. If you want to modify one, at the bottom of that list click on Edit. Save your work with a name that’s descriptive.

The Extensions option should be left at “Leave as-is.” It just selects the case of the extension, which doesn’t matter functionally in Windows or OS. Just below this you’ll see a sample of the first file in your new naming style.

“Apply During import” offers optional activities that can be time-savers. A Develop Settings list can include presets that make automatic “adjustments” – changes – to all your importing images at once. These presets are first created or chosen from LR’s default list in the Develop module, then are included here at your choice.

Realize that these will be applied to every image being imported, so you should choose only those that are relevant to all photos. Later in Develop, you can make preset selections for individual or groups of images.

“Metadata” likewise offers a list of presets for all files – not the images, but the text descriptions – that are included in each file. You can write your own information (name, copyright, locations, much more beyond the camera’s EXIF data) into the header of each file (not on the image). Click on the tiny up/down arrow, choose one, then at the bottom click Edit Presets to show the template.

In the “Keywords” box is where the entire batch of photos being imported can be given descriptive keywords to permit finding them by selecting date taken, location, or a myriad of keywords of your choice, and in combinations. Keywords for individual images can be added later, and your import choices can later be modified or removed.

Making best use of the “Apply During import” entries is beyond the scope of this description, so for now leave the default “none” selected in each list.

The next panel, “Destination,” tells LR where to store the source files. A small gray arrow to the right will open your Finder or Explorer list for you to select from. Again, if you’re importing from your hard drive, this panel won’t appear because the files are already in your chosen destination.

You can scroll down and click on an existing folder name to select it – the name will turn white. If your new images belong in a subfolder, there are two ways to create one. You can right-click on a folder and choose “Create New Folder,” or scroll up to “Into Subfolder,” check the box first, then type in the name of your chosen new subfolder for these photos. In this case you will see that subfolder name appear below in the tree, dimmed gray and with a +. This certifies that LR knows where to put the files.

“Organize” lets you choose to put the files either into One Folder that you define, or By Date where LR creates folders with the image(s) shot date as the folder title. The former is most popular; but By Date tells LR to find each image’s date when taken, make a new folder by that date and put those files in it.

The By Date method simplifies record-keeping when information such as contracts, tax statements or travel notes need to be in the same folder as the photos. But it can make folder searches more difficult because few of us remember the exact dates when photos were taken. If you search on characteristics other than folder titles this won’t matter.

When these selections are made, you will see at lower left in this window a file count and overall file size of the intended import. If disk space is low, this lets you know whether the destination can hold all the import’s files.

The selections you made are “sticky” and will be shown the next time you open Import.

To start the actual import, click on the Import button at bottom right (or on Cancel if you were just testing). This window will close, returning you to the Library workspace, and the Import task will begin.

The import and each running task will be represented in Library at the upper left by a progress bar and when clicked, will show its name. You can stop one with a click on the X at the bar’s right end, where the X will first turn red then disappear as the task is abandoned. You can also begin work on the first files, although slow because your computer will be very busy.

Anytime you think you may have a crash, check this progress bar. If it’s moving at all, LR is still working on a task. If it doesn’t move for several minutes, there’s a problem. You can cancel that task or close and restart LR. The program has been writing all your changes into its catalog as you go, so there’s no manual “save” function for you. A restart should put you back right where you were.

You can run as many tasks like this as your computer can handle, but it will slow down while doing multiple tasks. It may progress quicker if you first stop other programs you may have running, including long jobs such as background security scans and bulk backups.

“Previews” (small reproductions) of your images will be shown in the central Library workspace. They are available in two places at this time. First, click at the top left under the panel “Catalog/Current (or Previous) Import.” This is a temporary locator that repeats the actual hard drive folder but with only the recent files. To go to the actual folder, right-click on any image and select “Go To Folder.” This shows all files in that folder, and assures you that the files are where you designated before importing, and where you will be selecting them for work and viewing. The entries in Previous Import are updated for each subsequent import.

The Previous Import locator can be valuable when you are adding files to an existing folder because it will show only what has just been added, regardless of how you’re viewing the actual folder. Right-clicking on an image is also valuable when you have a long folder list with several drives, and perhaps with similar names.

If you like the way the import was conducted, you can save that set of entries you made in an “import preset” to use all the settings again with only one click. To do this, open the Import window. In the black bar at the bottom is an upward indent with the word “none” as a placeholder. Next to it is a tiny up-down arrow – click it and a selection list will appear. Click on “Save Current Settings as New Preset.” Give it a short name you’ll remember and add your initials at the end to set it aside from other selections, then close it.

This “none” selection was the default and new import presets you chose to use were not “sticky” until LR CC version 2015.7. So for previous versions you may have to choose one each time you import. To delete a preset here, choose it first and the list will then show a delete option.

You have just learned how all LR presets are made: first set up controls as you like them, test the activity, then create a preset so you needn’t ever enter that string of commands or text again.

Presets mimic “actions” in Photoshop, which are scripts of commands to be executed sequentially. Most LR commands need not be sequential but the idea of saving a set of commands is the same.

Lightroom’s presets are one of the bases of its capability to save work time by a single click.

These notes have given you a quick view of the power of setting up the Import process to suit your own needs. There is quite a bit more to know about Import. You can find information in online tutorials at Adobe.com and in experts’ blogs, such as jkost.com and others.

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