HISTORY OF THE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB OF ANNAPOLIS

Details - *Development of the Club*

The Digital Photography Club of Annapolis began with an idea that struck Jay Alden as he sat through courses on digital photography being taught by Don Dement and Michael Alloy in early 2005. His premise was that digital photography demanded all the skills and knowledge of traditional film photography (e.g., *exposure* and *composition*), yet it added some unique requirements for the serious photographer (e.g., *taking advantage of on-the-spot feedback, storing and organizing digital image files, computer editing and printing of image files*, and *electronic sharing of photos*). Like Jay, many people were aggressively reading books and articles on the topic and attending courses to help gain the necessary technical competence that seemed to be becoming more and more complex every day. But, there didn't seem to be an available vehicle to meet with other people with the same pursuit, sharing experiences, discussing issues, gaining answers to burning questions, and generally just staying on top of this evolving technology. Sure, there were the typical camera clubs but they seemed to concentrate almost solely on traditional film photography, giving only limited time to the rapidly changing developments in digital photography. So the idea was formed – *why not a club devoted specifically to the demands and challenges of digital photography*?

Typically, it is a long arduous path between the conception of an idea for a new special interest club and its physical birth into the world. In the case of the Digital Photography club of Annapolis, the formation from conception in January 2005 to delivery in April of the same year took only four months. The idea for the club was bantered back and forth between Jay Alden and Don Dement in after-class discussion in Don's course on Digital Photography. Both came to the conclusion that the idea was indeed feasible and that the first step was to formally create a planning team. Jay developed a survey requesting people to participate in the planning of the club that Don distributed to his students. Jay also recruited Michael Alloy for the planning team; Michael who was teaching a different course on digital photography at Anne Arundel Community College, readily agreed. The survey drew quite a few people who were very interested in joining such a club, but only one person volunteered to join the planning team – Ed Bangs.

The first planning meeting was on March 2, 2005 with Jay, Don, Michael, and Ed in attendance. It is interesting that many of features of the current club were decided at that first 75-minute meeting. These included the ideas that the club name should include "Annapolis" (as opposed to "Chesapeake" or "Anne Arundel"); the club should meet twice a month with meetings including some non-traditional activities such as photo *challenges* rather than photo competitions, round-table discussions, and Q&A sessions. It was agreed that the club must have a website to provide member services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Governance issues such as types and terms of executive officers, investments, legal requirements, and operational policies were also discussed briefly.

The planning group met weekly several more times during the spring of 2005 to complete the details for the governance of the club and recruitment of members. It was decided to conduct four "pilot" meetings before a summer hiatus. These meetings would be used to tryout and fine-tune a variety of possible club activities in anticipation of an official start-up of the club in September of 2005. At this time, there were no club officers and no dues for attendees. It was pure experimentation.

The inaugural meeting occurred on the evening of April 13th at the Severna Park Community Center. Don and Mike recruited people who were attending their classes, a flyer announcing the meeting was dropped off at camera stores in the vicinity, and a notice was placed in the Club Notes section of the Capital newspaper. Fifty-one people attended this first meeting. The meeting included a discussion of the planning team's vision for the club, a survey of attendees as to their experience with digital photography and their hopes for benefits the club might deliver. Don also gave a presentation on the benefits of editing digital photos. The meeting was a "hit" and the Digital Photography Club of Annapolis seemed viable.

Three more club meetings were held that spring to help define the way meetings would be conducted. The last two of these meetings were held at the Annapolis Library on West Street. Each meeting of course included guest speakers, but several innovations were introduced. These included a set of small-group *round-table discussions* on different aspects of digital photography, a *quick-demo* on how to accomplish photo-editing task, a *showcase* of member photographs with comments from the meeting attendees, and a *challenge* in which members displayed photos they had taken recently in response to the topic of "Springtime in Annapolis." A members' website was also set up to allow discussion among members, posting of notes from meetings along with resources on digital photography, the calendar of club events, and display of photographs from speaker presentations, showcases, and challenges. The club was off and running.

Formulation of the club continued during the summer of 2005 with a series of planning meetings attended by quite a few people. Don led a Program Committee that included Michael Alloy, Virginia Carr, Mike DeLucia, Joanna Hanes-Lahr, Sandy Huberfeld, Kris Johnson, Judith Kirkhorn, John Leak, Charlotte Lubbert, Maureen O'Connor-Franz, Charles Phillips, Randy Voss, and Hank Renkiewicz. Decisions were made on such factors as meeting frequency, location and times; guest speakers; meeting events; field trips; and club governance. The formal kick-off of the club was scheduled for early September of 2005. A public-access website – www.digitalphotoclub.net – was also created to help promote the club to potential members.