

Digital Asset Management

Monday, 11 June 2007

On June 3, 2007 I went to a very anticipated Nikon School seminar entitled, "Digital Photography: The Next Steps." The promise of the course, I thought, was that I'd learn how to manage my slowly but surely growing collection of images.

I was sorely disappointed.

Not

only will I never go to another Nikon School again, but I may never buy a Nikon camera thanks to the constant pandering of the "look what Nikon cameras can do, we're so cool" bandwagon. Years ago I went to a Nikon School and I learned a lot. Unfortunately, this time, I spent \$160.00 and got about a half-hour worth of instruction.

it was because of

this disappointment, however, that I made an earnest effort to really find out the information I thought I was paying for...

Since then I've begun to really dig into the next steps in my digital photography.

Not

only do I have my recent digital photographs to sort out, but I also have a few thousand negatives and slides (35mm, medium format, and large format transparencies) sitting in binders, waiting to be cataloged. Some years ago, my wife, and my friend Cheryl helped me to get somewhat of a grip on my cataloging. Unfortunately, the system that we devised back then, taking the advice from John Shaw's book, "The Business of Nature Photography," did not get good mileage, as it was hard to keep up.

So now, I'm starting over again, but I think that the categories we created back then can serve as my initial pool of keywords for this go-round.

I have approximately 45 Gigabytes

worth of images (both RAW files and JPGs) waiting to be keyworded and cataloged. Admittedly, this may seem daunting to most everyone who reads it, because it certainly is to me, but I figure if I can take it slowly, bit by bit (pun intended) doing a folder each weekend, then I can hopefully get my catalog fully established in about 3 months, not including the backlog.

One thing I did take away from the Nikon School was that you need to start right now. Not with the images you just shot yesterday, but with images you'll be shooting today and tomorrow. Forget about the backlog, especially since the system you create could be obsolete tomorrow, and you'll undoubtedly change it after about a month of really using it. That is, of course, when you do finally realize that the categories, keywords, directories and sub-directories you created are not exactly right. The speakers at Nikon School aren't the only ones promoting this idea.

In the week between Nikon School attendance (one fine Sunday), and the night I wrote this, I went out and bought a book by Peter Krogh, entitled, "The DAM Book: Digital Asset Management for Photographers." So far, the book is exactly what I'd hoped for from Nikon School. I could have saved myself \$130.00 and hours of terrible seminar time.

While I'll be reporting on the progress of my learning in other articles to follow, I will say that Digital Asset Management is not a new term. I've been working on the fringes of it for many years now, as it's a very specialized subset of "content management" which is a big buzzword in today's Net-centric business world, especially in Publishing. But one thing that I'll leave you with is that DAM requires some kind of specialized software that will help you winnow down and properly categorize your overflowing images.

So far, the two choices I'm looking at are iView Media Pro (which was recently acquired by Microsoft ... boo), and Adobe's Lightroom, which is, unfortunately, still in its nascent stages.

More on this DAM stuff later.