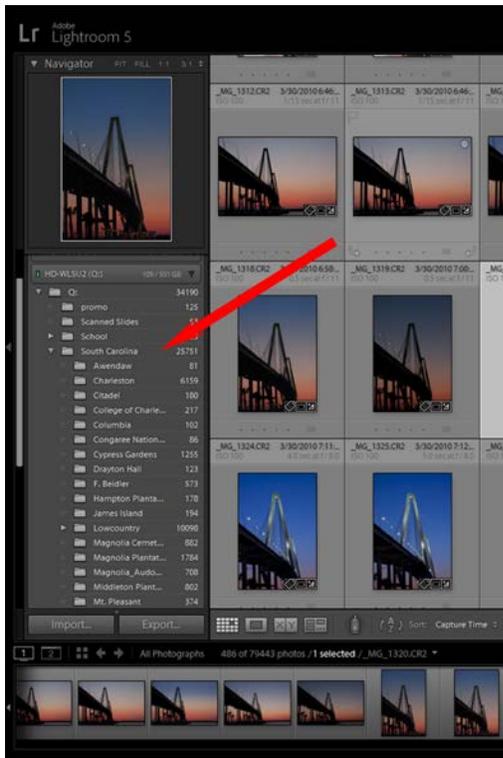


Organizing Image Files in Lightroom part 1

Organization of your image files is fundamental to your success in Lightroom. Let me say that a different way. Your success or frustration with Lightroom can be directly tied to how well your images are organized. All of the powerful and elegant editing tools within Lightroom are completely useless if you can't find the image you wish to edit. If it takes you more than a minute or so to find a specific image your file organization may be suspect. Lightroom gives us several quick, easy to apply methods of file organization that you should take advantage of and in this two-part series I'll be taking a look at each of them.



Images here are organized into folders by subject or location. If not handled very carefully this can lead to confusion and frustration.

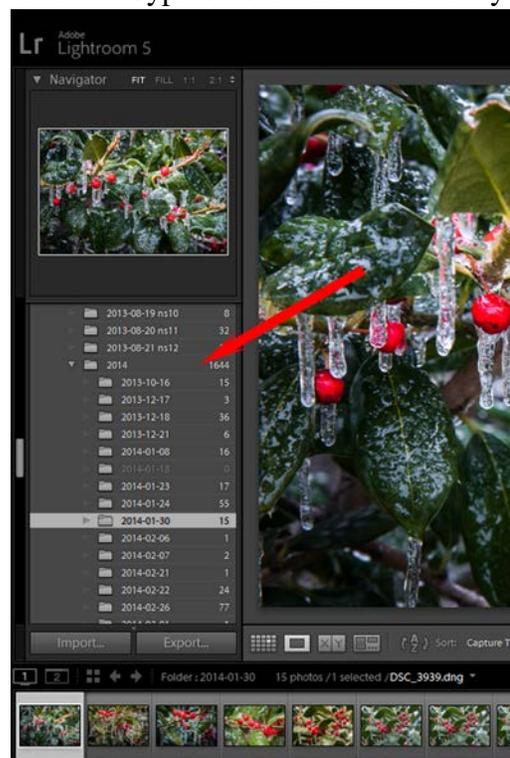
users this is how using folders leads down the path of confusion and frustration. After a while there's no organization at all just a bunch of folders with different names and various subjects!

In my opinion even worse than organizing by multiple folders is organizing by multiple folders according to the date images were shot. That may seem like a great idea in the short term but five years down the road are you going to remember the date you shot a specific image? In two years? Next week? Remember that Lightroom keeps track of all of your camera generated metadata including the date and time an image was taken. That data becomes searchable information that you can use to track down an image by date at any time whether it's in a folder by date or not.

First let's look at organizing by folders.

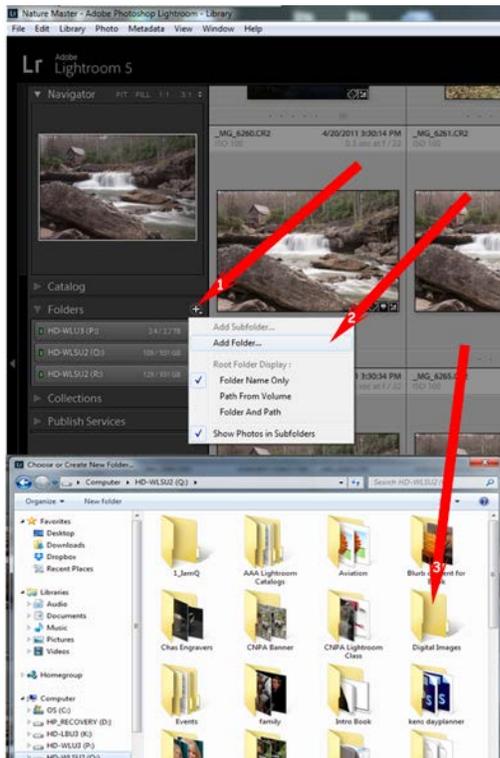
Everywhere on our computers files of all types are stored in folders. Documents of all types, recipes, letters, résumés, spreadsheets, articles, and e-books are all stored away in their (hopefully) appropriate folders. It only seems logical then that we store our image files the same way right? In my opinion folders, at least in the context of multiple folders, are one of the worst ways to organize your images! For some people it works like this; Your bird images are in a bird folder. Your deer images are in a deer or mammal folder. Your Cypress Garden images are in a Cypress Garden folder. Your Cades Cove images are in a Cades Cove or Smoky Mountains folder. Sounds neat and clean to this point right? So what do you do with a deer you shot in Cades Cove? It goes in the deer folder right? Is that what you did last time or did it go into the Cades Cove folder? What happens with a bird you shoot at Cypress Gardens? Bird Folder? Cypress Garden Folder? Do you

do it the same way every time? For some Lightroom



These images are organized into folders by date. Will you remember the date you shot a specific image?

I think the best way to organize your images, at least with regard to the folders they are in, would be to have all of your images located in a single folder and use other Lightroom tools, such as Keyword Tags and Collections, to help categorize and classify those images. Remember, just as you would walk into a Library and expect the books to be organized in such a way that you can find the one you need, so too your Library Module should make it easy to find the image or images you're after.



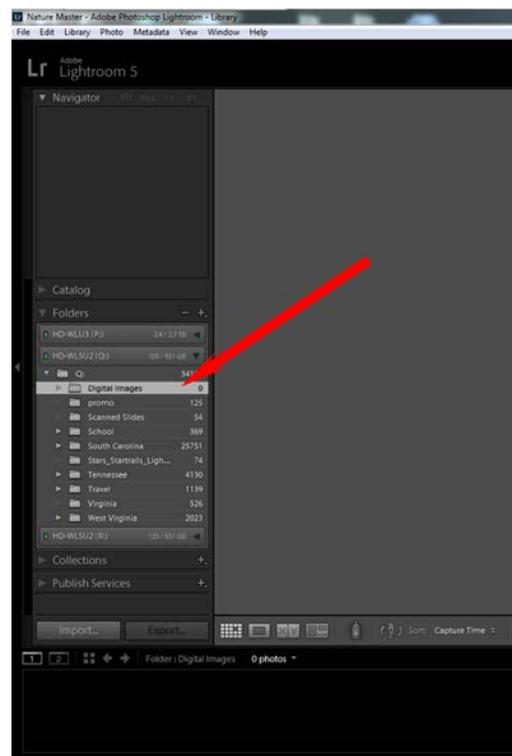
To add a new folder to Lightroom; 1, Click on the +. 2, Click on Add Folder. 3, Navigate to the new folder you created previously. Click Select Folder (PC) or Choose (MAC).

Lightroom will move those images to the new location as they are imported into the Catalog.

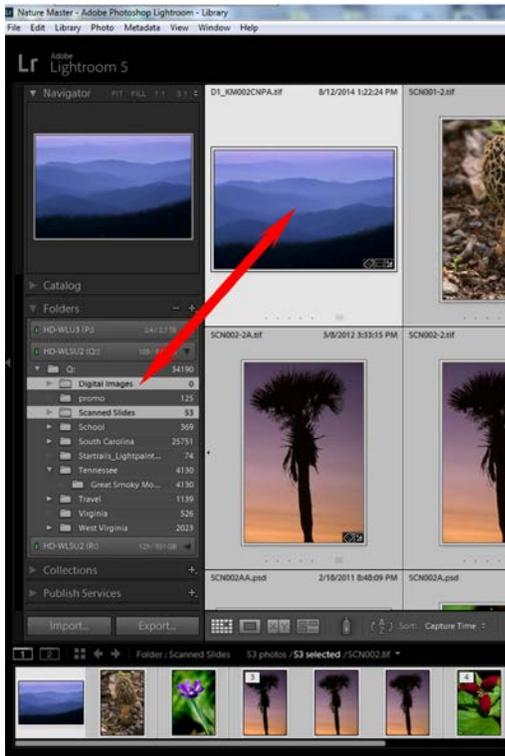
If you have been using Lightroom for some time and your images are in multiple folders and various locations and you wish to change to a one folder system it can still be done however the steps are a little different. Just as before you'll want to create a new folder somewhere on your system to move all of your images into. Create that folder using Windows Explorer or Finder on a MAC. Now, in Lightroom, go to the Folders Panel on the left side in the Library Module and click on the Plus icon (+). Select Add Folder and navigate to the new folder you just created and click on Select Folder (PC) or Choose (MAC)

Now that the new folder is showing up in your Folders list it's an easy thing to drag and drop your images into that folder. I would recommend going right down the Folders list (in Lightroom) and click on each folder in turn, select all the images in that folder either by clicking the first one and then shift+clicking the last one or using the keyboard shortcut CTRL A on a PC or CMND A on a MAC and dragging the images into the new folder. Incidentally, you should be sure to

If you are brand new to Lightroom, or you haven't been using it for very long, this organization is relatively easy to set up. You must first decide where on your computer your images will be stored. By default Lightroom is going to want to put them in your Pictures folder. If you have plenty of hard drive space this may work just fine but I highly recommend using an external hard drive for you image storage. It's much more secure and less vulnerable to attack from viruses and other malware than the internal drive. As far as Lightroom is concerned it doesn't matter. Lightroom will manage your images just fine wherever they are located. Once you have chosen the location for your images create a new folder in that location and name it something that's easy to remember. Scott Kelby says to name it "My Lightroom Photos Live Here" but I think that's a little overkill! Maybe something like My Digital Images or Digital Photos will suffice. Now when you start to Import images into Lightroom you need only direct the Destination Panel on the right side of the Import Window to that folder you named above. If those images are on your computer already be sure to set the Import Method at the top of the Import Window to "Move" in order to avoid duplication of the images.



The new folder will show up in the folders list on the drive where you created it.



Choose each folder in turn and select all the images in that folder using CTRL A (PC) or CMND A (MAC). Drag and drop those images into the new folder. Be sure to click and drag the photo not the border.

click and drag the photo itself rather than the surrounding border. You will get a rather ominously worded warning about moving images on disc. Just click Move and let Lightroom do the work for you. When the images are moved the folder name will gray out and the image count will be zero. You can then remove that empty folder from the list by right clicking the folder and clicking Remove from the menu. Once again, when you import new images be sure to direct the Destination Panel in the import window to the new folder.

I'll admit that a single folder system is not for everyone. If you have an intimate understanding of the way your computer organizes files and folders and if you fully understand the way Lightroom accesses and links to your images then you may be comfortable storing your images in multiple folders. I have however seen far too many cases of a multi folder system that was set up with good intentions degrade into a hopeless mishmash.

In Part 2 we'll delve a little deeper into further organizing and classifying your images by using Keyword Tags, Flags, and Stars. So for now work on your folder organization and get it cleaned up so you'll be ready to move on.