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Key Learnings #4 – Reading Metadata

EXIF Camera Data

Remember the days when you would get your prints back from the drugstore and discover that your camera printed a tacky date on each one? Well, this hasn't gone away completely! Modern digital cameras – from the lowest end point-and-shoots to d-SLRs – feature a standard capability of writing vital picture and camera information along with the image itself onto the camera's memory card. This camera-generated data is called EXIF data *(Exchangeable Image File format)*. But, it's not just the date. There is lots of information written to the file, such as: date, camera brand/model, exposure information (aperture, shutter speed, ISO), exposure compensation, shoot mode, lens focal length, white balance, flash information, and lots more. Some cameras record all the standard EXIF data set, others just a simple subset.

EXIF data is very, very helpful when learning principles of photography – especially when learning about exposure. But, how do you view this EXIF data? The camera itself can display some of the data when you are looking at your pictures in "View Mode." Usually, there is a button or other control that enables the capability of the camera overlaying EXIF data when viewing the stored images. Check your manual!

Reviewing EXIF Data with Software

All modern photo editing software and photo organizers will display EXIF data as you work with each image. More sophisticated organizer applications,such as *Adobe Lightroom* and Apple *Aperture*, can search and sort by individual EXIF data items. For example, you can find all your photos based on specific camera, lens, ISO, aperture,etc.

Remember, you can only be shown EXIF data if your camera supports the capability (all modern cameras do). If you scanned an image, there is no EXIF data. Sometimes, if you edit a photo in a photo editor and save it out as a JPEG or GIF, any EXIF data will be lost.

Listed below are some sources for viewing your images' EXIF data.

For Windows PCs

- Do a file "Properties" within Windows XP and Vista to display some EXIF data
- All *Adobe Photoshop* products support and display EXIF data
- Photo Organizers/Viewers such as *Adobe Lightroom* **(www.adobe.com/lightroom)**, *ACDSee* **(www.acdsee.com)**, *Microsoft Expression* products **(www.microsoft.com/expression)** and others support and display EXIF data.
- There are many "freeware" and "shareware" programs that support and display EXIF data. One that was recommended by a student, and that I have reviewed and verified, is *PhotoFiltre*. This program is free for personal use and can be downloaded at **http://photofiltre.free.fr/download_en.htm**

For Macintosh

- Under the Leopard OS, if you select an image and go to **menu:FILE>GET INFO**, you will be able to view some EXIF data in the "More Info" section.
- Every Mac comes with *iPhoto* which has the capability of displaying EXIF data. The latest version, *iPhoto '09*, can display a more extensive number of EXIF items. For more info, go to **www.apple.com/iphoto**
- All *Adobe Photoshop* products support and display EXIF data
- Photo Organizers/Viewers such as Apple *Aperture* **(www.Apple.com/aperture)**, *Adobe Lightroom* **(www.adobe.com/lightroom)**, and others support and display EXIF data
- There are many "freeware" and "shareware" programs that support and display EXIF data. One small application that displays EXIF data graphically is *Reveal*. This program is free and can be downloaded from **albumshaper.sourceforge.net**

N O T E S

A Great Photograph ...

- *Has a central theme or idea.*
- *Focuses attention to a single point-of-interest*
- *Simplifies*