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Introduction

An important aspect of your image file organization is your ability to do fast and efficient searching. Recall from previous discussions that metadata is “data about data.” All image files generated by digital cameras contain supplementary information that describes technical data about the image (exposure information) and the camera (manufacturer, model, etc). This is known as EXIF data. Image editing programs (eg; Photoshop Elements) also allow you to add custom data to image files - IPTC data. Along with image description and copyright information and others, you can add **KEYWORDS** to an image file. These keywords are the “key” to quickly organizing and finding your files.

Before haphazardly applying keywords to your image file organization, you need to give this some logical thought otherwise this aspect of your digital workflow becomes unmanageable and you stand the chance of abandoning it out of frustration. When I first started setting up my keyword list for early versions of Photoshop, my tendency was to create an inventory of all objects and aspects of the image. For example, this image of some abandoned storefronts in Socorro, NM initially had the following keywords assigned: socorro, NM, New Mexico, the southwest, abandoned america, desolation, buildings, doors, windows, sky, clouds, street, rural, and saloons. That’s just too much! Nowadays, I like to take a minimalist approach to many of my digital procedures, and keywording is no exception. I strive to assign the least number of keywords needed to find an image at a later date. Before creating and assigning keywords to images I ask myself, “Self, would I ever use this keyword to search for an image?” In the Socorro image, upon reconsideration, I realized that I will find this image in the future by searching on a combination of these keywords: socorro, NM, and buildings. Those are the only keywords I really need to fit this image search into my workflow. There is an exception to this suggestion if you photograph for stock agencies. For stock, you definitely should assign as many keywords as

possible to the images since you can't control or foresee what criteria potential clients will use when searching for desired images.

Finally, if you are serious about establishing a lean and mean digital workflow, don't put off assigning keywords to your images. The very best time to assign keywords is when you are transferring your images into your image manager software (Photoshop and other browser/catalogers). By procrastinating, you will quickly accumulate an inventory of images through which you cannot search using keywords, which defeats the purpose of using keywords in the first place. And just as important - be consistent in your keywording approach.