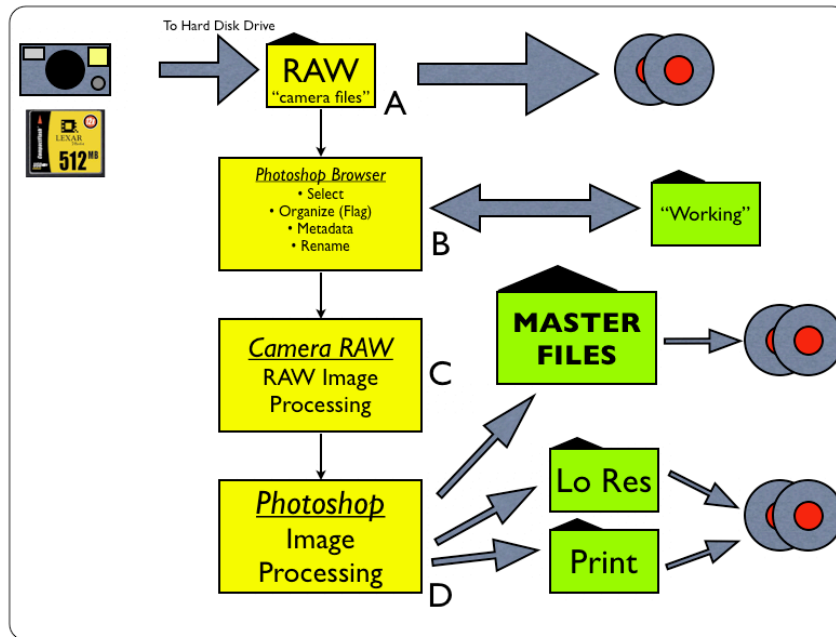


## Digital Workflow Revisited



The Workflow Flowchart

At the April 4 Instruction Night, we discussed the “Pre-process Digital Workflow.” This workflow relates in particular to all the actions you take from the time you release your digital camera’s shutter to when you are just ready to “process” your images in an editing program such as *Photoshop* or *Elements*. Many important steps occur during this phase of your total digital workflow, not the least of which are the safety and preservation of your valuable images. Remember, three things are certain in life - 1) Death, 2) Taxes, and 3) Your hard disk drive will fail sooner or later!

As is frequently the case when presenting technical matters, there was too much to cover and too little time! So, in this article I want to discuss a very important diagram that I only glossed over at the meeting. This diagram, the “Workflow Flowchart,” illustrates clearly (hopefully!) the major components of your digital workflow.

Your digital camera captures images and saves them as computer data files - what I call “camera files.” (see A in diagram) These camera files can be saved in either RAW or JPEG file formats, and some cameras also allow TIFF file formats. After transferring the files to your computer via a card reader, the preferred method, these files should be backed up (copied) to CD or DVD discs as soon as practical.

In the next step (B), you open the “camera files” into an image browser to allow you to select, organize, add metadata and rename your images. Recall that metadata - “data about data” - is not only information the camera records about your images, such as shutter speed, aperture, ISO, etc, but also information that YOU can add to the image files, such as description, copyright information and keywords. Examples of image browsers are the *Photoshop* or *Elements* Browser, *iPhoto*, *iView Media*, *ACDSee*, etc.

Once this initial image housekeeping is complete, the folder holding the images your browser is displaying essentially becomes what I call the “Working Folder.” This becomes your base of operations for all of your image processing. But remember, it’s a good idea to have the original “camera files” backed up as suggested earlier.

From this point on, you begin “processing” your digital images (if necessary!) in an image editing program like *Photoshop*. If you work with RAW files, you move them into a RAW image processing workflow (C) which consists of image editing within either Adobe *Camera Raw* or a dedicated raw file processor such as Nikon *Capture*. From there you may transfer the image into *Photoshop* in order to retouch and/or apply non RAW-specific changes such as the enhancements you make with filters. (D)

Of course, for JPEG image captures the RAW processing is bypassed and all editing occurs within *Photoshop*.

When you complete your editing in *Photoshop*, save your files to hard disk in the *Photoshop* “.psd” format. This preserve all layers, annotations, alpha channels, layer comps, etc. These are saved in what I call the “Master Folder.” For obvious reasons, this is a critical directory and must be backed up (copied) to CD or DVD disc without delay.

If you then make changes from the master files for specific output purposes such as low-resolution/resized JPEG files for email or web, or high-resolution files for printing, then you should consider saving these to disc as well. This will prevent you from having to re-purpose your master files again in the future.

Finally, notice that there is a good deal of redundancy in the data backup aspects of the workflow I describe. This redundancy is vital to the security of your images. Also, don't forget to SAVE frequently as you are working on your images within your editing application should there be a system freeze or power outage!

In future articles and Digital Special Interest Group sessions, we will further examine specific aspects of the entire digital workflow - from file transfer to image editing, and from raw capture to printing.