

Taming the Photographic Beast: Efficiency- Focused Lightroom Workflow Workshop October 15, 2017 by Leroy Schulz

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On October 15, 2017, 18 IACC members gathered at Woodvale Community League hall to learn more about Lightroom, from our presenter, Leroy Schulz. Leroy's agenda for the day included: Introductions, Software, Hardware, Process, Hands On, and Q&A.

Leroy had participants introduce themselves and provide background on their use and familiarity with Lightroom, and what they sought to learn about Lightroom in the workshop. Following the introductions, Leroy provided his introduction about his career as a professional photographer and his use of Lightroom as a tool in his workflow process.

Leroy had the participants download images taken at the workshop for exercise purposes. Participants followed Leroy's workflow steps, executing the following:

- a. Download Images
- b. Import into Lightroom
- c. Cull/Select images using flags (pick, unpick), stars, colours, or other tools in Lightroom.
- d. Apply edits (white balance, white balance, tone curve, clarity, saturation, etc.)
- e. Export image to desired output.

Overall, Leroy provided a plethora of information on file organization, process workflow for image editing, and general tips and tricks for dealing with the post-processing of images after a photo shoot. He demonstrated ways to be more productive and efficient, and spend less time editing, and post-processing.

Participants were provided with good information on "taming the photographic beast" in this valuable workshop. Leroy's insights, from a professional photographer's perspective, on how to deal with volumes of images – from file management to post-processing, and his easy-going manner and sense of humour made the day a great learning experience for all.

Workshop Details

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE

We began a discussion about hardware and software, and Leroy presented the idea that there is "no right answer" on hardware and equipment. However, in his experience he advised that some important features with hardware to consider, and he offered:

- **Fast processor** – CPU is important, and makes more of a difference than many other components you consider spending money on. Leroy commented that gaming and video focused computers will typically have high-end components, and the newest models (with the best features) will be the priciest. We had a brief discussion about graphics cards, and the option in Lightroom to disable your graphics card. In Leroy's experience, he found that it depends on many factors (memory - ram, processor - solid state drive, along with the graphics card) that will contribute to how quickly your machine runs.
- **Monitors** – Leroy advised to get an external monitor (if you use a laptop) if you can work it into your budget, and get the biggest you can. Leroy enjoys his 30-inch monitor, and finds that it affords him more screen space for editing than even a 27-inch monitor. Also, your panels in Lightroom fit on a bigger screen and eliminate the need to scroll up/down for panel options. Leroy uses I1 Display Pro for calibrating his monitor.
- **Back-ups** - this is key to everything you do. Leroy uses a Drobo system, and enjoys the redundancy built in that uses multiple hard drives. Leroy also commented that online storage could work cost effectively if you don't have a huge volume requirement (e.g. Dropbox).
- **Synchronization Software** – SyncBackPro is the software that Leroy uses to synchronize his backups between his Drobos. The software automates the steps to copy files, and you can set decisions in the software on how to handle the files, and can be integrated with online services (e.g., Dropbox), and you can also view a log-file. This software is available for PC, and MAC users would need to explore what an equivalent may be for MAC.
- **A few other tools to make you more efficient using Lightroom:**
 - **Graphics Tablet** – uses a slate and pen, instead of a mouse. It is very useful for re-touching (with touch sensitivity that can be learned, and is great when you get used to it) for free-hand sketching as well.
 - **Use Keyboard Shortcuts**
 - **ShuttlePRO** – intended more for video editing, that can be programmed for stars, flags, pick/unpick, and copy/paste settings in Lightroom. Leroy found it worked well, but it didn't work its way into his workflow.
 - **Loupe deck** – intended for Lightroom, set up with the core functions in Lightroom. It doesn't replace the mouse, but it's intended to be used in conjunction with the mouse.
 - **Use an external mouse with a scroll wheel (not your touch pad)**- this is a huge productivity tool. Leroy advised to obtain and use a mouse that fits well ergonomically in your hand.

PROCESS

Our next topic was a review of Leroy's workflow process in Lightroom including:

2. Download Images

Downloader Pro (software), which involves setting up a download directory, setting up folders for events (using a naming format with year – date, description), with many options and tokens in the software to get the images downloaded to his hard drive. Leroy advised to download to your fastest drive.

3. Import Images into Lightroom

Leroy demonstrated the import function in Lightroom, and review options for import, including: Copy as DNG (Leroy doesn't use this option), Copy, Move, Add; Leroy typically uses ADD (since his photos are already downloaded).

Build Previews (top right panel) – Leroy likes to build the preview when you import, and selects the option for Standard previews. Setting the previews to Minimal will save time, if needed. Leroy uses also Build Smart Previews which is helpful if you're using Lightroom Mobile, and synchronizing between the two. The Smart Previews does add a little more time to the import step.

Don't Import Suspected Duplicates – Leroy checks this

Add to Collection – Leroy doesn't use this much during import

Develop Settings – Leroy advises use of these if you can apply a "recipe" of settings that can be helpful to apply pre-set adjustments to the files.

Metadata – can be used to set copyright; Leroy uses some basic features for the metadata setting.

Keywords – Leroy doesn't use these much, but they can be used to search (using keyword search) for specific images.

Progress Bars – are on the top left to indicate ongoing tasks in Lightroom.

4. Editing Process Flow

There are many ways to cull and select images using a variety of the selection tools in Lightroom. Leroy provided an overview of initial steps, and commented that he finds the arrow keys on his Loupedeck are a little slow so he uses his keyboard for these steps:

Culling Images – In the **LIBRARY MODULE** (which is faster than the **DEVELOP** module) Leroy uses **flags** to pick images, and will use **star (#)** ratings depending on the volume of the shoot, and the need to differentiate image quality. For a portrait shoot, Leroy may view one image at a time, unlike a real estate (where focus may not be an issue and he'll use the thumbnails to view images faster). Use keyboard shortcut "**I**" to turn on image **information** to display on image. Use shortcuts (**P=pick, X=reject**) to initially select images for further review. Although Leroy doesn't advocate deleting images, he advised that you could reject the image, and then delete them in a batch.

Filtering Images – Leroy uses the filter tool, to select images for further editing and review. He has set up filter presets to allow him to cull the images into manageable volumes. There are a variety of filter options just above the filmstrip that allow you to select specific images. The star filter has >, < or = criteria that can be set in the filter.

Image Collections – Leroy uses collections to manage selected groups of images. These sets of images within the Lightroom catalogue, and a collection is a way of grouping a common theme of images. For example, Leroy has a Real Estate folder, a wedding folder, and others. Leroy does clean up his collections periodically.

DEVELOP MODULE

Leroy set up a demonstration (with his Loupedeck plugged in) of steps he may use in editing.

Apply Presets – these can save a lot of time, and if they weren't applied on import, they can be useful to efficiently apply settings to a group of images. He uses the **Sync** (bottom right panel) to choose which settings to synchronize in a batch.

Check White Balance – colour correct for white balance (use eyedropper on something white). Can click on a slider, and then use the mouse wheel to adjust the slider.

Correct Horizontal (Crop tool – "**R**" keyboard shortcut) – use the auto setting for correct horizontals, especially for landscapes, or alternatively, in the **Transform** panel, on Auto, to correct, and it works well.

Tools: Adjustment Brushes, Radial Filter, Gradient Filter, Spot Removal Tool - use these tools to colour correct areas of shadow, harsh lighting artifacts and tones, to cool specific lighting in a shot. You can use the “Show Selected Mask Overlay” for where your adjustments are being applied. You need to click “new” to add another adjustment.

Virtual Copies – Leroy demonstrated how to use virtual copies of an image. These virtual copies allow you to have one image, but each copy allows you to apply a different set of edits (crop size, B&W, etc.) that may be desired by a client. You can export and deliver several copies of the same image, but each with its distinct edits in each version.

Match Total Exposures (in Develop module, under settings) – is not a flawless tool, but it can help correct several similar images, with varying exposure.

Tone Curve – use lights on the Tone Curve (right panel) to bring some vibrancy to an image.

Export

Once the images editing has been completed, Leroy advises to have some export presets to expedite your images. Leroy went through some of the features in the export function to consider setting as a preset - you can set options for size, resolution, renaming conventions, file format, sharpening options, watermark, metadata etc. Leroy also uses plug-ins in the export dialogue to enhance his exporting process.

Within the export dialogue, Leroy uses the custom text in file naming, and some shorthand in naming conventions (for low resolution, high resolution), output sharpening, etc. or all.