



DAM

An Introduction to Digital Asset Management

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INTRODUCTION

Why Digital Asset Management is Important

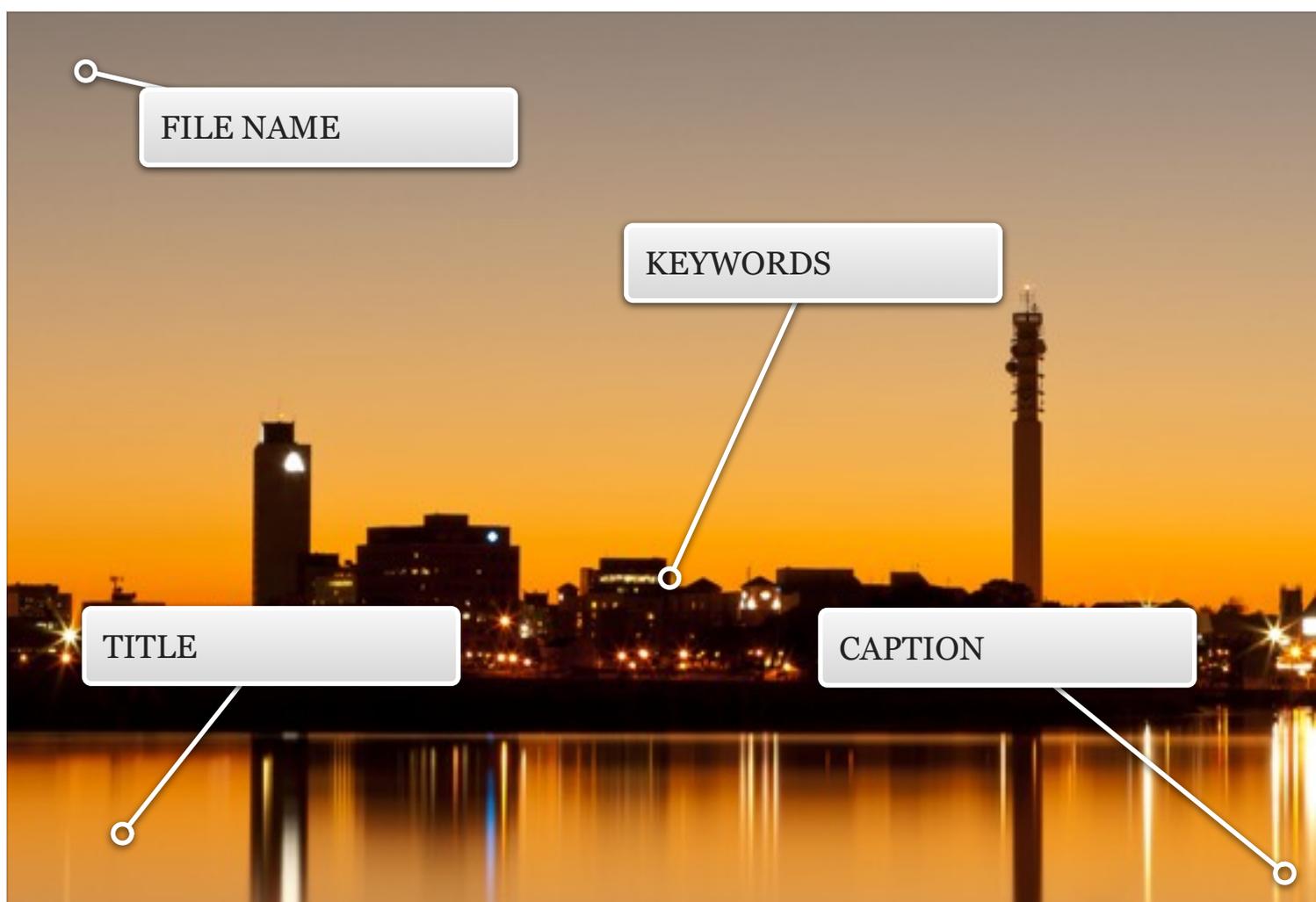
As new photographers our primary concern is taking pictures. We want to capture all of the wonderful moments and memories, and share them with family and friends.

At first, we may not have a lot of pictures so it's not hard to find the ones we want. But as our photo library grows we can spend hours browsing through tens of thousands of images in search of just one, perhaps with no way of identifying it except by sight. It can be a tedious and frustrating process.

When we do find that special photo we may not remember all of the details about the people and places it contains. How will we, and especially others, know what our photos are about if we don't jot down those details while our memories are still fresh? We've all experienced this with old family photos - faces captured for eternity but names lost to time.

Writing down all of the details about each and every photo in our library may also seem like a long, tedious process but Digital Asset Management software can automate many of the tasks for us. The programs won't do all of the work. However, once we have a system in place, we can reduce our workload, speed up our workflow, and shorten turnaround times between the shoot and web, print, or client.

And, years from now, we'll not only be able to find that special photo but also be reminded about who and what it contains and why we created it in the first place.



Digital Asset Management tools help us to identify our images and their content, and make them searchable within our libraries and archives.



OVERVIEW

Digital Asset Management

Above: Stephanie performs in DancEast's production of The Nutcracker

Like many photographers, much of my personal work has revolved around my children. I have photos of them from the time they were born through their various sports, activities, and special events. With a good DAM system in place, I can easily locate photos of them individually or together, and even narrow it down to special events such as birthdays or Christmases, or activities such as hockey and dance. In fact, I can even search on specific games or recitals to really narrow down the images I want.

Digital Asset Management is a strategy for organizing our photo libraries in a logical and consistent manner, describing the contents of each image, and making them searchable through a variety of words and phrases.

I've taught an Introduction to Photography course for several years. During that time, I've seen more than a few students become overwhelmed with the amount of work that goes into digital photography. After all, it's not just about pressing the shutter button.

Digital photography has many steps which, together, are referred to as a *workflow*. The workflow is a series of procedures or processes that photographers employ before, during, and after each shoot. Many photographers develop their own workflow based on personal preferences and the types of work in which they engage. However, they all share a few basic steps in common:

- **Plan**
- **Prepare**
- **Capture**
- **Organize**
- **Edit**
- **Output**

Digital Asset Management plays a major role in the *organize* stage. This is where we sort our images by date or subject, add captions to each image so we and, more importantly, others will know who and what each image contains, and add keywords and location information to make each image searchable.

Digital Asset Management is not only a part of the photographer's overall workflow but also a workflow unto itself. It includes various steps occurring at different stages of the process, and there is some overlap. DAM actually plays a role in all of the above stages.

The Digital Asset Management workflow includes:

- **File Management**
 - Capture - creating the image
 - Ingest - downloading the images to your computer/storage devices
 - Organize - using file names to distinguish individual images, and file folders to distinguish sets of images
- **Metadata**
 - Camera Information
 - Credit, contact, and copyright information
 - Image descriptions, locations, and keywords
- **Backup**
 - Creating multiple copies of files over different media and locations to minimize or prevent loss.

And the groundwork for creating a good DAM strategy, includes:

- adding copyright and ownership information to our cameras
- logical and consistent naming conventions for files and folders
- a logical system of folders and sub-folders
- general metadata templates containing standard information to be added to all of our images, and unique metadata templates for individual shoots
 - keyword lists with specific terms (controlled vocabularies) that will be used to tag our photos.

All of these topics will be discussed during the workshop. More importantly, the workshop will demonstrate how many of the above items can be performed automatically using DAM software.

It seems like a lot of work but, once the groundwork is in place, the DAM workflow is consistent and the effort required is minimal.



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SOFTWARE

Digital Asset Management

Above: PEI Rocket goalie Wendell Vye in action against the Moncton Wildcats, March 11, 2010

I've photographed Wendell Vye several times over the years at goalie camps and hockey games for four different teams. I know where I photographed him, so I can manually search my archives if I need a picture. However, it's quicker and easier to let the DAM software do the work for me. I simply enter a relevant search term, such as his name, and in just a couple of minutes the software scans my archives, locates any pictures tagged with the search term, and displays them for me in a brand new gallery.

Simple DAM strategies can be implemented using the free software that came with your camera. Specialized software offers more advanced functions and capabilities.

There are a number of Digital Asset Management programs available. Some are stand-alone programs (image browsers) that perform DAM functions and little else. Others are editing programs that incorporate DAM tasks into their complimentary functions.

The free software supplied with many digital cameras fits into the latter group, as do Photoshop and Lightroom, which most photographers end up using at some point. Lightroom's digital asset management functions are part of the Library module. Photoshop has limited DAM functionality on its own - the more advanced features are included in Adobe Bridge, which comes with Photoshop and is often the starting point in the editing process.

For this workshop, the demonstrations will be performed using Adobe Bridge. It can be downloaded for free - an Adobe CC subscription isn't required - and used even if Photoshop or Lightroom aren't available on your computer. It can become your primary DAM software if you don't have other options. Lightroom users will see a lot of similarities between Bridge and the Library module, so the lessons can easily be applied to both.

Participants should ensure they have the latest version of Adobe Bridge installed on their laptops if they don't have an existing DAM-capable program already available.



WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Digital Asset Management

Above: Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen signs a Federal-Provincial Agreement

A good Digital Asset Management strategy is especially important for event photographers and photojournalists. Images may have to be captioned, tagged, edited, and uploaded within minutes of a shoot, or even during the event. Having the DAM groundwork in place allows the photographer to concentrate on what they do best - creating images - while knowing they can still meet the tight deadlines imposed by their clients. Hobbyists may not have the same restrictions, but reducing the time spent on editing and organizing means more time spent shooting, with loved ones, or just relaxing.

*The workshop is
broken down into
morning (theory)
and afternoon
(practical) sessions.*

Morning 10:00 to 12:00

An Introduction to Digital Asset Management

File and Folder Naming Conventions

Writing Photo Captions

Keyword Lists & Controlled Vocabularies

Archiving Strategies

Lunch Break 12:00 to 13:00

***** Meals are not provided *****

Afternoon 13:15 to 17:00

Software demonstrations

Creating Folders

Renaming Files

Metadata Templates

Creating Keyword Lists & Controlled
Vocabularies

Automating Tasks at Ingest

CONTACT

Details about upcoming photography courses and workshops are available on my website:

<https://www.macdonald-photography.com/instruction.html>

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