

## Lightroom Catalog Basics

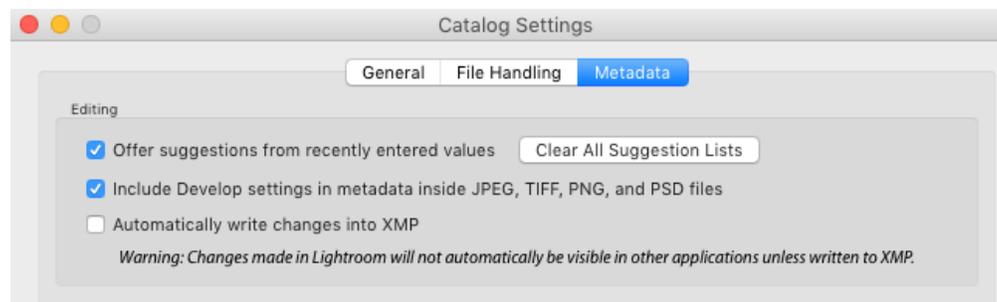
I thought I would discuss how Lightroom is different from other photography applications. First, I would recommend to those thinking trying Lightroom, download it and take advantage of the free 7 day trial. (If you don't pay up at the end of the trial, you still get to use everything except the *Develop* and *Map* modules. *Quick Develop* in the *Library* module still works, along with the ability to right-click an image and edit it in another application, then come back.) All Lightroom operations (except *Delete*) are non-destructive.

Although the Lightroom application resides in the *Applications* folder, the catalog (*.lrcat*), previews (*.lrdata*) files, etc. reside in your *Pictures* folder or external drive, in a folder named "Lightroom" by default. You are permitted to have more than one catalog, just use unique names. Your pictures can be anywhere, but logically, in your *Pictures* folder, or an external drive, and organized as you wish. Here is where the Lightroom Catalog needs to know which folders to manage. When you install Lightroom, you need to go to the *Import* function (bottom left corner of the *Library* module) and select all the folders in the left panel and *Add or Copy as DNG, Import*. (If they are where you want to keep them, don't *Move* or *Copy*.)

Now that the image folders are set in Lightroom, do not delete, alter, or move them using your operating system or file managers such as Adobe Bridge. The Lightroom Catalog keeps track of them and all changes to them. By default, Lightroom adds metadata (details and instructions) to the catalog when you edit the images. This where it gets tricky. If you tell another application to look at an edited raw image file, such as Photoshop, it sees the un-edited version. Unless you go to apps that are plugged into Lightroom (and Photoshop can be one, just right-click image, *Edit in...*), do an *Export*, edit outside, then *Import*.

If you shoot with raw, your image file, such as .NEF/.CR2, gets a sidecar/sister file with the same name, but .XMP, when edited. That's normally where the additional information/edits goes in most applications. If you choose to convert raws to Adobe's .DNGs, as I do, basically both of those files are in one, and about 20% smaller with lossless compression. Non-raws (JPEGs, TIFFs) include develop settings by default.

I prefer the belt and suspenders method of image edit recording. You can have Lightroom also save additional information/edits in the .XMP or .DNG file. In Lightroom's *Preferences>Catalog Settings>Metadata* tab, you will find the unchecked *Automatically write changes into XMP* choice (that includes .DNG too). The reason it is unchecked by default is an issue I recently ran into. (Non-raw files get metadata included because of the checkbox just above.)



I just jumped ship from the "O" brand to the "N" brand. In so doing, I doubled the megapixels of my raws (12MP to 24MP). I have a old iMac (16GB RAM) with 512 MB RAM in the graphics processor. I was fine before. Now, especially after working dozens of 14 bit images, I see delays in editing effects. The reason is I checked that box, so I doubled the CPU

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work of copying information by adding the image file to its tasks, both on the same drive. I have all edits automatically saved to the catalog and the (.XMP) .DNG file. That was okay with the small files, but not when I doubled them.

So, my other choice (other than have my club buy me a new iMac or solid state drive/SSD) is to uncheck that box and manually save raw edits if I want to continue to duplicate my saves. After editing images, re-select them as a group (or each one as you go) in Library (3 bars & down arrow icon), and press *Command/PC:Control+S* to save to the image files (or the menu *Metadata>Save Metadata to File*). The catalog copies its metadata to the .DNG image file, or .XMP sidecar. If you want to go back and save metadata to your previous .DNG files, select them and use the menu *Metadata>Update DNG Previews & Metadata* (and take a break). You can turn off warnings by going to the menu *View>Library View Options>Cell Icons*, uncheck *Unsaved Metadata*.

Lightroom loves multi-core, fast CPUs, and OpenGL 3.3+ GPUs with at least 1GB of video RAM. <https://helpx.adobe.com/lightroom/kb/lightroom-gpu-faq.html> . Photoshop loves mother board RAM if you do layers. Collections are kept only in the catalog. *Import/Export/Develop* type *Presets* are on your hard drive in the *Lightroom/Lightroom Settings* folder, but may be kept in the catalog with a checkbox in *Preferences>Presets*.

So, I recommend that you try checking the *Automatically write...* box, edit a couple dozen images and see if you have annoying delays. If you do find slowness, uncheck, and remember to do a *Command/Control+S* on selected raw images to save metadata in the image files. If you are careful (including regular catalog backups), you can turn off the *Unsaved Metadata* warnings and just keep metadata in the catalog only.

BTW, I recommend the *Adobe Photographer's Program* at \$10 a month. <https://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop-lightroom.html> . Also, the Adobe DNG Converter is free if you don't do Lightroom.

