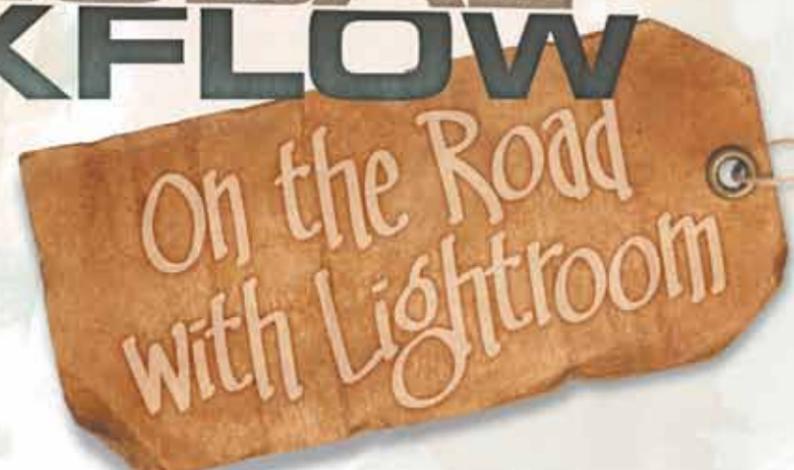


GLOBAL WORKFLOW

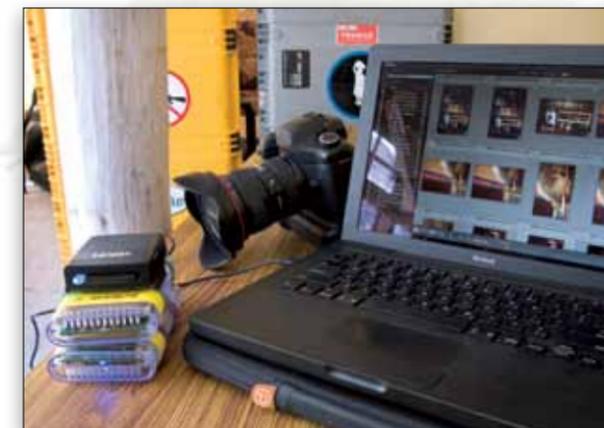


Between my personal projects, workshops, and freelance work for NGOs (non-governmental organizations), such as World Vision Inc., I spend a lot of time on the road. While traveling, how you handle logistics—and that includes image management and workflow—can make or break a trip.

When on assignment—as I am now for World Education Nepal—the days are long and often end by sending a handful of the daily selects to my clients back home. This means not only a long day of shooting but also the need to import, manage, process, and export images as quickly, and in as organized a way, as possible. Lightroom lets me do that in the simplest way imaginable. Let me show you how.

By David duChemin

After wrapping up a day of shooting, I return to my room at the hotel or guesthouse and put Lightroom to work. Generally, I shoot with two Canon 5D bodies, and a day of shooting will fill at least one Lexar 8-GB card for each camera. I remove the cards and immediately place them *face down* beside my laptop, which is connected to two 250-GB FireWire drives and a Lexar card reader. Beside that is my current digital wallet, a HyperDrive COLORSPACE O.



My travel setup

My entire workflow is broken down in the same way that the Lightroom modules suggest: import and management in Library, Develop, and then back to Library for export. The goal is to be consistent and organized so I save time and minimize mistakes.

Importing and built-in redundancy

First, import your images, card-by-card, to your primary drive (I use one of my OWC 250-GB external drives). If you're on a longer project, use the first import settings to create a metadata template specific to that project, including copyright, usage terms for the specific client, shoot location, and (at this stage) the broadest set of keywords possible. Then you can apply this template when importing subsequent images—saving time and helping to prevent oversights. (Creating Lightroom presets will make you more efficient over time.) When importing these images to a project-specific folder on one hard drive,



Caption, keyword, and rate images

Once the images are in your Lightroom Library, go through and caption all of them, as broadly as you can—it keeps things moving along if you select multiple images and place the same broad caption into the Metadata panel's Caption field. If you don't caption images, then now's the time to keyword them more specifically. (I know...you'll do it later; but you and I both know that later never comes.)

Next, get rid of the absolute rejects (blinks, missed focus, totally blown exposures) by using the Arrow keys to move through your images and pressing the X key to mark each reject. When you're done, double-check the rejects, and remove them from your primary drive (Command-Delete [PC: Ctrl-Delete]) to keep your working library free of clutter. (Don't sweat it if you screw up because you have two copies of all your files sitting on your other drives.)

Now, pick your selects. For me, it's on a purely binary basis—it's either a select or it isn't—and I use 5 stars, pressing the 5 key as I scroll along, or nothing at all. You could just as easily use the Pick flag (P), but 5 stars works for me. That's your first edit. Where there are similar competing images, select all of them, view them in Survey view (N) in the Library module, and make your final decisions there. If it's a clear decision, just downgrade the less-powerful image to a no-stars (0) rating; if it's one you want to revisit later, give it a 4-star rating.

Set your filter (Library>Filter by Rating) for five stars and place those 5-star images into a Collection (Command-N [PC: Ctrl-N]). In the Create Collection dialog, name your collection (name, date, and place works for me). And now you can work exclusively from this collection, avoiding the other images entirely. When you get back and you're sitting in front of your home workstation with a color-calibrated display, you'll have more time to go through them all. But right now, you're concerned about daily selects and keeping everything moving, without mistakes, in the most efficient means possible.

Moving on to Develop...

Leave the Library module and take your images to the Develop module (D), where things become more art and less science. I assess images on an individual basis and make changes that will bring the images into rough alignment with my vision. What I need at this point is to create JPEG thumbnails that my client can look at, not images that are press-ready. Your needs and your workflow might be different. Understanding your needs before you create your process is really important when you don't have much time.

At this stage, I use the broadest strokes possible: Where color balance is off, I'll correct it by eye; otherwise, I generally tweak exposure, bring blacks in, recover lost highlights, and push fill. Which particular changes I make depend entirely on what my vision is for the image. For example, if it's a gentle portrait of a mother and child, I'll treat it differently than a vibrant image of children in bright colors playing soccer. So, as with the creation of a systematic file-management workflow that depends on your needs and those of your client, your image-development workflow depends entirely on your vision for individual images; there's no set formula. The point of a workflow is that it's efficient, you understand it, and it works for you.

I do, however, create and use Lightroom Develop presets, but even those should be merely a shortcut starting point for each individual image. I've created several presets based on preferences developed in response to my own shooting style and vision. And I've tweaked some of the existing Lightroom presets, such as Creative - Direct Positive, which I love but it pushes the blacks and the exposure too much for me, so I dialed it back and created a new preset called New Direct Positive. Again, it's just a shortcut to get the image to where it needs only small tweaks.

Export copies to client

Once you're finished tweaking your selects, you may be finished; however, I generally send copies (small) to my client back in North America. I return to the day's collection of tweaked selects, Press Command-A (PC: Ctrl-A) to select all the images, and then Shift-Command-E (PC: Shift-Ctrl-E) to bring up the Export dialog.

Because I've already created an export preset specifically for this (called "Thumbnails to Client"), I just click on it in the dialog, and it automatically puts the images into the right folder, in the right format, at the right size. Now all that's left is to Zip the folder and email it to my client (then go to bed for a few hours before I get up and do it all over again). [To learn how to create an export preset for email, turn to page 100.—Ed.]

Back home

When I get back home, I'm left with a couple of hard drives of images to transfer to my home workstation. Export As Catalog is an easy way to do that. To ensure none of your work gets lost, select File>Export As Catalog to one of your drives and then import to your home drives using File>Import from Catalog. Just exporting your images as DNG files won't preserve your collections and you'll lose your virtual copies, too.

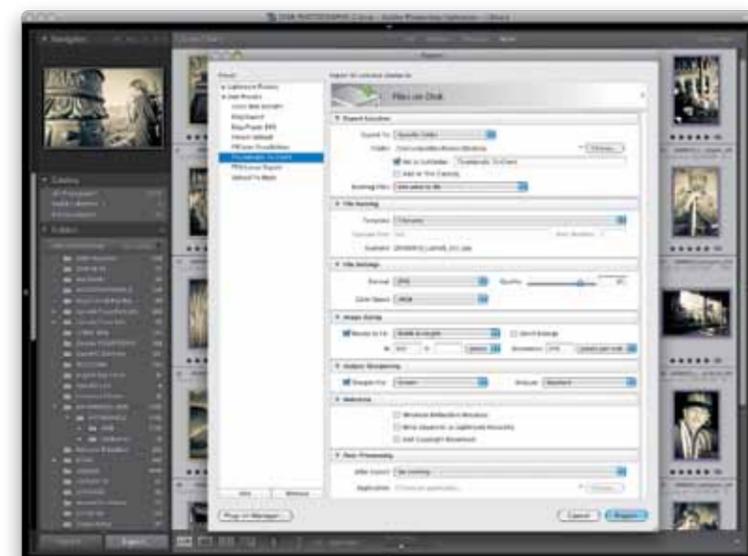
It's now, once the files are imported to my current catalog structure and I'm getting ready for more serious postproduction, that I use other powerful Lightroom features, including Sync. My travel workflow and my home and studio workflow have significantly different needs driving them, so they look entirely different.

The key to a good travel workflow is recognizing your needs, being as efficient and organized as possible, and building (paranoid) redundancy. The ability of Lightroom to create presets in all modules makes this much simpler. Keep it simple, repeatable, directed by your needs, and back it up, back it up, back it up.



David duChemin is an assignment photographer focusing on the international NGO (non-governmental organization) community and what once upon a time was called travel photography. Telling stories with his cameras for more than 20 years, David's first book is about expressing your vision through the passionate photography of people, places, and culture. Within the Frame: A Journey in Photographic Vision (New Riders/Voices That Matter) is due in June.

ALL IMAGES BY DAVID DUCHEMIN



My Top 10 TRAVELING MUST-HAVES

1. Two of everything, including cables, hard drives, and cameras
2. Some kind of digital wallet, such as the HyperDrive or Epson P-5000
3. Small toolkit, Leatherman tool, duct tape
4. Sensor cleaning gear, soft cloths, and protective filters for all lenses
5. Hoodman screen loupe (I love mine)
6. Polaroid Pogo printer—it opens doors and creates smiles—but bring extra batteries
7. More batteries and CF cards than you think you'll need
8. Rain covers for all packs and gear—if they have light gray or white on one side, you can use them to protect from harsh sun and heat
9. A sense of humor and lots of patience—you're not in Kansas anymore...
10. Respect and love for the people you're photographing. I don't know of any place in the world where people like being treated as objects. A smile, kind gesture, backing off when they say no, and leaving people with something to say "thank you" to (see 6 above) will go a long way to making the world a better place. ■

choose Backup To in the Import dialog to automatically back up to a second drive. This creates redundant backup and prevents loss of data should a hard drive fail or theft occur. When you're tired and jetlagged, it's amazing how you can overlook a simple backup, so build it automatically into your workflow.

Once the first card is imported and backed up, consider putting it straight into a digital wallet (like the HyperDrive or Epson P-5000) to create an exact copy, while you're importing the second card on your laptop. When the second card is done, place it into the HyperDrive to copy, then check all three drives to ensure all of your files are there. Now put the cards back onto the desk face up, ready to be put back into the cameras and formatted.

Tip: Placing cards face down to indicate full, and face up to indicate ready-to-shoot, is a good habit to get into. Label-side down means they need charging or downloading; label-side up means they're good to go—less second-guessing or mistakes when distracted. That's also why I copy my files to three places—it's a healthy paranoia.

Clients pay photographers to come back with great images, and a hard-drive failure or theft shouldn't prevent you from meeting their expectations. Having three copies of all your files allows you to put two drives in different places and give one to a producer or travel partner for safekeeping. The HyperDrive also has built-in recovery software in case you accidentally format a card. (This happened to a client on a recent workshop in Ladakh, India. Within 30 minutes, we had all his files back—and a few extras—and he was happily shooting again.)

My watchword on the road is "redundancy." I carry two of everything: power cables, FireWire cables, cameras, etc. As a matter of fact, one of my Canon 5D bodies died while in Ladakh and one of our clients lost a laptop. For every piece of essential gear, you must have a backup plan in case of failure. Most of us don't carry two laptops but you could use a HyperDrive. And if you carry extra memory cards in your pack, you can shoot for a few days without clearing them.