“Which of my photographs is my favorite? The one I’m going to take tomorrow”

~ Imogen Cunningham

Photo Mechanic
getting your photos from the camera to the computer and beyond
http://www.camerabits.com

College of Communications
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Introduction

Photo Mechanic is a simple tool for organizing editing and captioning images.

The application will allow you to quickly edit large groups of photographs and select and organize your favorites. You can caption photos, even transmit directly from within the program.

This tutorial is designed to quickly get you familiar with the key features of Photo Mechanic. It is NOT designed to detail every single feature of the program.

It is specifically written for Photo Mechanic 5 and is current as of August 2016.

This tutorial will look at these key features of Photo Mechanic:

1. Set Photo Mechanic Preferences
2. Import photos from a camera to your computer or harddrive
3. Sort and edit photos
4. Caption photos
5. Copy or move photos to a different location

NOTE: This tutorial was written for the Mac OS. The program should be very similar on a Windows computer.
Photo Mechanic Preferences

Configured properly you can use Photo Mechanic quickly and easily to import photos from a camera’s SD card, sort and select your best images and then edit in Photoshop or another image editing software application.

Open the Photo Mechanic Application. You’ll probably see an empty ‘contact sheet’

Note the contents of your computer on the left. This is one way to navigate in Photo Mechanic as we’ll discuss later.

For now, go to the top and select Photo Mechanic 5>Preferences...
**Tips & Tricks**

![Photo Mechanic Preferences Window]

**Note** there is a dropdown menu for different sets of preferences. Many of the settings can be configured to your personal choices and are pretty self explanatory.

Under **General** I suggest checking 'Show Ingest dialog' under 'On Mount of Camera Disk:'

This will automatically open the Ingest function when you connect to a camera or card.
You can explore the many preference settings and make changes that fit your workflow.

But for the most part, starting out, you can simply use the defaults.

One other setting I recommend:

Under ‘Launching’ set the default application to whatever photo editing software exists on your computer – Photoshop for example. This will allow you to automatically open an image in Photoshop directly from Photo Mechanic.

Watch a 2:13 video on setting preferences
Getting Photos from your camera to your computer

There are many ways to get your images from your camera to your computer. You can simply plug in your camera or insert your card and then open the folders and drag the images to your computer.

Photo Mechanic provides a way to make that process quicker and seamless AND allow you to add information (metadata) at the same time.

Using Photo Mechanic’s Ingest function you can copy image files to your computer while at the same time renaming the files, apply caption information and even copy to two places at the same time. (Allowing you to back up your files to a second hard drive for example)

INGESTING

Open Photo Mechanic
Attach your camera or insert your card into your computer or card reader.
If you set your preferences, the Ingest window will open automatically. If not, go File> Ingest from the menu.

From the Ingest window, you will set some options and then click ‘Ingest’ and Photo Mechanic will copy photos off the card to your computer.

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Metadata is ‘data about data’.
For photos it means attaching information about your photographs, digitally, to the image file.
You can add caption or copyright information to every file, automatically, in Photo Mechanic.
Metadata is search-able - making it a powerful tool for organizing your photos.

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Tips & Tricks

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created August 2016
1. Select the card you want to ingest. NOTE if you have other hard-drives connected to your computer they will show up as well. MAKE SURE you select the camera card.

2. Choose a destination - This can be anywhere on your computer or external harddrive. IF you want, you can select a secondary destination as well.

3. In general, use the default ‘ignore - copy all photos into same destination’. This puts all your photos in one folder.

4. Select the option that works best for you. I often put photos in a dated folder, but sometimes I want them in a folder with a name.

5. You can rename your photos - Check the sequence box and then ‘Set (seqn) var’ to choose a number sequence.

6. Click to apply a caption to all your photos using the stationary pad. You can then add to individual captions later as needed.

7. Click Ingest to start

Watch a 3:22 video on ingesting in Photo Mechanic
IPTC Stationary Pad

You can add a bulk caption to all your images at one time (returning later to add specifics to individual images)

In the Ingest window, select IPTC Stationary Pad and make sure the ‘Apply IPTC Stationary Pad to Photos’ is selected.

Why Do This?

1. Will save you LOTS of time later on
2. Makes all your images immediately searchable.

Description/Caption:
Enter the basic facts of the assignment and your photo credit. Use AP style for captions. Always include where and when the photo was taken as well as background and context.

City, Location, State, Country
All of this is searchable later and can be useful
Tips & Tricks

Date
Date the assignment was shot. Change this from 'Today' if necessary.

Photographer, Credit, Copyright
Extremely important to have your name attached to your images.

TIP
‘option G’ will create the copyright logo

Email and URL
scroll down and enter your email and website if you have one.

Working With Your Photos

Once you’ve ingested your photos you can begin to edit.

Photo Mechanic calls the page of thumbnails a Contact Sheet. The term comes from the days of film. A roll of film would be cut into strips and placed directly on a piece of photographic paper in the darkroom, usually held flat, in contact with the paper, with a piece of glass. This single print would show rows of images from a single roll of film. Photographers would select their favorites and then make full-size prints of just those images.

Typically each folder of images can be displayed as a single contact sheet and can contain dozens, hundreds even thousands of images.
Tips & Tricks

It is always quicker if you can learn keyboard shortcuts on the computer. The keyboard is faster than using a mouse or trackpad.

For Editing in Photo Mechanic:
‘T’ - will tag or un-tag a selected photo or photos.

Control 1 - will add one star. (Control 2 will add two starts, etc.)

⌘ 1, ⌘ 2, ⌘ 3, etc – will add a color class to a photo or photos.

Here's an example of a Contact Sheet with my dog once again the model. You can have multiple Contact Sheets open at once. Notice the tabs at the top.

Open new folders of images as Contact Sheets by going File>Open Contact Sheet or by navigating to the folder using the navigator at left.

Notice how a few images are marked with tags, ratings and color classes.

Tags The small check box in the lower right of each image
Ratings One to five stars below each image
Color Classes Eight different colors that can be applied to a photo

You can use these in any combination as you select and edit your photos. This allows you to quickly edit a large collection of photos as you choose the best images.
Rollover any image and you’ll see the following:

The arrows at the top allow you to rotate a photo

The ‘i’ button will bring up the caption window

The magnifying glass will give you large preview of the photo
**Tips & Tricks**

- You can select multiple photos in a contact sheet. Use the Shift key to select a group all in a row, hold the key and select the first and last to select them all.

Hold the Command key to select photos that aren’t in a sequence.

The ‘i’ button brings up the caption window.

If you applied a caption at ‘ingest’ it will be here. You can make any changes or additions you like. If you are captioning multiple images use the ‘Save and’ buttons to advance through your selection.

If you have a caption you want to apply to more than one photo click the ‘copy’ button go to the next photo and click ‘paste’.

You can save a caption for future use or load a preexisting caption using the buttons at the bottom.
Tips & Tricks

The magnifying glass brings up a large preview image

The large view allows you a close look at your photo.

Information on the right includes your camera settings - this can be helpful to see what worked or what mistakes you may have made.

The zoom function will allow you a very close look at your image - to check for sharpness for example.

The histogram is useful to see if you exposure is accurate.

At the top are a series of buttons. Notice you can bring up the caption in this view. You can also open the photo in Photoshop or another image editing app.
Photo Mechanic has a spell checker built in. Use it. Spelling matters. Also always double check the spelling of names and places and other proper nouns. Mistakes are embarrassing to your subjects and to you.

With practice you can learn to quickly edit and sort and caption photos in Photo Mechanic.

Some photographers will edit in a series of steps. Say for example you shot 200 images at an event. They might go through and tag 20 of them as ‘favorites’ using either the tag tool or color coding them.

One strategy would be to copy those 20 into a new folder. DON’T move the photos, copy them. This leaves a complete, untouched set in one place.

From there, they may ultimately select the one or two images they want as their final selection - depending on the final use.

Again, copy those images to a new folder. Making copies means you always have an untouched original in case something goes wrong.

**MOVING/COPYING PHOTOS**

1. Select the photos you want to copy to a new location. If you’ve tagged or color coded or rated them, you can choose to view that selection.

   For tagged photos, use the dropdown menu at the top of the contact sheet and change ‘All’ to ‘Tagged’

   You can also go Edit>Select Rated, or Select Tagged, or Select Color class.

2. Highlight all the selected photos

3. Go File>Copy/Move Photos... (⌘Y)
Copy/Move

The Copy/Move box looks more complicated than it is.

The above settings will work in most situations.

1. Uncheck the Apply IPTC Stationary, otherwise your caption will be overwritten by your default caption.

2. Uncheck Move photos (delete originals). UNLESS you have a good reason for deleting the originals you want to make a COPY

3. Check Always pick destination.

Click ‘Copy’ and you’ll then be asked where. You can create a new folder anywhere you like and Photo Mechanic will copy the images to the new destination.

Watch a 9:20 video on editing images in Photo Mechanic


**Tips & Tricks**

- Photo Mechanic has some other interesting features you can explore on your own:

  1. Email photos directly from the app
  2. FTP photos directly from the app
  3. Export photos as web galleries
  4. Apply GPS coordinates to photos for mapping.
  5. Code replacement - a system for using codes for captioning. Popular with sports photographers who caption a lot of photos on very tight deadlines.

That’s an overview of Photo Mechanic’s basic functions for editing and organizing your photographs.

With a little practice it can be a great tool – you’ll work faster. Which means more time for other things like taking more photos! (or playing video games, hanging with friends, sleeping or studying for other classes)