
ADOBE LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CC:
MASTERING THE LIBRARY MODULE

A photographer's guide to managing your images with Adobe
Lightroom

ROBIN WHALLEY



Adobe Lightroom Classic CC: Mastering the Library Module
A photographer's guide to managing your images with Adobe Lightroom

By Robin Whalley

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Contact Robin Whalley

Email: robin@lenscraft.co.uk

Website: <https://lenscraft.co.uk>

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INTRODUCTION



WHY ANOTHER LIGHTROOM BOOK?

Although there are many Lightroom books on the market, there are few that directly address using Lightroom to manage an ever-growing library of digital images. And of these, even fewer approach the subject from a practical standpoint.

This book is different. It will guide you through what you need to understand to use the Library module well. It will help you decide which features to use and which you can safely ignore. It will demonstrate with examples how the features of the Library module can be employed. But most importantly, it will achieve this without being too lengthy, complicated or overly technical.

This is a book designed to help you work with Lightroom and overcome image management problems.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

It sounds like a cliché, but this book is for anyone who wants to use Lightroom to help manage a digital photo library. If you are

relatively new to photography or have only just begun to build an image library, this book sets you on the right path to managing images properly. At the other end of the scale, if you are a professional photographer with a huge library of images, it will help you achieve an efficient image management workflow. And if you are at a point between these extremes, or if you're confused, or just in a bit of a mess with your images, it will help you take back control.

You can take as much or as little of the information presented to build on your current working practices to enhance them with Lightroom features. This book is intended to be a practical guide and not a theory filled book that covers everything. Take what you need, when you need it and will serve you well.

LIGHTROOM VERSIONS

This book has been prepared and illustrated using Lightroom Classic CC version 7.2 which was released in February 2018. If you are using an earlier version of Lightroom it's possible some of the features discussed may not be available in your version, but this shouldn't be a barrier to you understanding the features in your version. You should also be reassured by knowing not much has changed in the Library module interface in recent years.

HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

Although you can use this book in several ways, I would suggest the first reading should be in chapter order. The information has been carefully sequenced to aid your understanding. This first reading should be used to acquaint yourself with the features of the Lightroom Library module. It's then recommended you make a second reading, trying to answer the question "how could I use the features of the Library module to better manage my images".

The book has been arranged into two sections.

- Section 1 is designed to explain how the Lightroom Library module works as well as its different features.
- Section 2 takes a real-world approach and is workflow oriented. It explains and demonstrates how you might employ the features explained in Section 1 to better manage your own photo library.

By approaching the subject in this way, you will have reference material you can refer to, together with practical examples that demonstrate the explanations.

ASSUMPTIONS I HAVE MADE

In writing this book I have made a few assumptions that you should be aware of:

- You already have Lightroom installed. This is not covered in the book.
- If you are using Lightroom CC or Creative Cloud, you are using the Lightroom Classic CC version.
- You have some degree of familiarity with the Lightroom interface and can switch between its different modules.
- You can import files (although we will cover this in detail) and have an existing library of images.

The book has been written, edited and proof read using British English. There are though occasions where the American spelling has been used. Typically, this is where the word refers to an Adobe feature, for example the Lightroom Catalog or Color Management.

COMPUTERS & OPERATING SYSTEMS

This book has been developed using both Windows PC and Mac computers. Most of the screen shots have been taken from a Mac computer to ensure their resolution and quality. Where the text in the book describes keyboard shortcuts, these are given in both the Mac

and Windows formats. Lightroom functions consistently across the Windows and Mac O/S.

TRADEMARKS

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DISCLAIMER

Whilst I have made every effort to ensure the information in this book is accurate, up to date and factual, it does represent my approach and views. Some may disagree with the information I present, but to the best of my knowledge there are no omissions or errors. If you find something that needs to be corrected, please contact me by email using robin@lenscraft.co.uk. I will then include any corrections in future versions of the book.

PART ONE



To gain the greatest value from this book, you need a good foundation and understanding of Lightroom. That's what this first section of the book is designed to do. It covers the essential elements of the Library module that will help you to manage your images efficiently.

Lightroom was designed around a workflow, a workflow which contains many common tasks that a photographer might need to perform. Part of this workflow involves the cataloguing and management of digital images so that you can easily find and share them with others.

The first chapter of this section helps you understand broadly what the Library module is and what it can do. It doesn't cover everything but will help you gain an appreciation of how it can add value to your work.

Next, we look at the Lightroom Catalog. The Catalog is central to Lightroom and without it, Lightroom won't function. Whilst you might think you already understand the Catalog, there's more to it than meets the eye. Failing to understand the Catalog is a major source of problems for people when working with Lightroom, so be sure not to skip this chapter.

Finally, we take a tour of the Library module interface. We will be breaking down the interface and looking in depth at the most important elements. You will then be ready to work effectively when we get into the Section 2 of the book.

LIBRARY MODULE OVERVIEW



As photographers, we can quickly build up a collection of images and the rate at which our collection grows seems to accelerate as photography and image editing develops. The Lightroom Library Module is Adobe's answer to helping you manage this growing library of photography assets, allowing you to sort, organise and control it.

The Library Module has been designed with the professional photographer in mind, but in a way that allows any photographer to benefit from its features. We should also recognise that Lightroom is designed around the idea of a generic workflow. But to gain the greatest value from Lightroom you need to design a workflow that you can implement, follow consistently and which allows you to take advantage of Lightroom's features.

The high-level stages of a typical workflow might include the following:

1. Importing – Where you would download the images from your camera and store them on your computer. This is supported by the features of the Library module.
2. Reviewing – To identify problem images for deletion and

identify your best images for further work. Again, this is supported by the Library module.

3. Cataloguing – So that images are easily and quickly found in the future. This is supported by the Library module.
4. Developing – Editing or processing of images ready for sharing with others. Supported by Lightroom’s Develop module.
5. Output – Exporting finished image as a file for sharing or making a physical print. This is supported primarily by the Develop and Print modules although the Library module includes Publishing Services which can be used to share images.

As you can see, the Library module is critical to being able to store, find and even share your photos.

Within the Library module the Import feature provides a flexible tool to transfer images from your camera onto your computers storage. But it can also import existing images from their current location and include them in Lightroom. Whilst this might appear a simple process, the Import interface provides significant flexibility and automation. This can include the automatic renaming of the images, applying keywords and even applying presets to the imported images. All these features can be integrated into a well thought out workflow to minimise mistakes and save you time. If you are a professional photographer, saving time is critically important.

With your images imported to Lightroom’s Catalog, you can begin the process of reviewing them. First you need to identify the rejected images which are to be deleted. Lightroom provides you with tools to quickly flag images as Rejected and then delete these in bulk. The remaining images can then be reviewed and rated to identify which you think are the best. Here Lightroom provides a Star Rating system where you can rate your images. By understanding which your best images are, you don’t waste time working on those you don’t need to.

It’s also possible to apply keywords and location information to your images to record where the images were captured, as well as what they

represent. The benefit of investing time in rating and keywording becomes apparent when you need to quickly find an image from thousand or even hundreds of thousands. Using the filtering options in the Library module you can perform complex searches across your entire Lightroom Catalog. It's possible to search hundreds of thousands of images in seconds to find any that match your criteria.

As you progress through this book you will understand how to achieve all the above and more. But first, you need to understand the Lightroom Catalog to avoid making some common and costly mistakes.

INTRODUCING THE LIGHTROOM CATALOG



Before diving in to use Lightroom and the Library module, we need to briefly discuss the Lightroom Catalog. Once you understand the role of the Lightroom Catalog, you will find a lot of common Lightroom problems and confusion vanish. In fact, many Lightroom operations begin to make a lot more sense.

The importance of the Lightroom Catalog cannot be over stated. Everything Lightroom does is built around the Catalog, so it's vital you understand it. In fact, the Catalog is so central to the operation of Lightroom it refuses to function without it. If you were to delete or rename your Lightroom Catalog so that it couldn't be found, Lightroom would create a new empty Catalog when you start it.

Fundamentally, the Lightroom Catalog is a big database that tracks your images and the work you do with those images. Each time you import a new image to Lightroom, the details of that image are recorded in the Catalog. Importantly, it's the details of the image that are added to the Catalog and not the actual image. The image remains separate to Lightroom on your computers disk storage.

For example, let's imagine you have a RAW format photo called "Photo Number 1.RAF" held on your computers drive in a folder

called “Photos”. When you import this photo to Lightroom, it’s details are imported to the Lightroom Catalog. As part of the import process, a thumbnail preview of the image is generated, stored in the Catalog and used in the Library module display. The image file remains in the “Photos” folder with the same name.

If you were then to right-click the thumbnail of the image in the Library Module, a popup menu would be displayed. Here you could select the option to “Show in Explorer” or if you’re using a Mac “Show in Finder”. This causes the file explorer to open and display the image RAW file held in the “Photo” folder. This is possible because Lightroom holds details in its Catalog of where the original image file is stored together with the name of the file. The thumbnail image you see in the Library module isn’t the image, it’s a preview created when the photo was imported.

To prove this point, you could rename the photo to “Photo Number 2.RAF”. Soon after making this change you will see an information symbol (exclamation mark) appear to the top right of the thumbnail in Lightroom. You can see an example of this in the following screenshot.

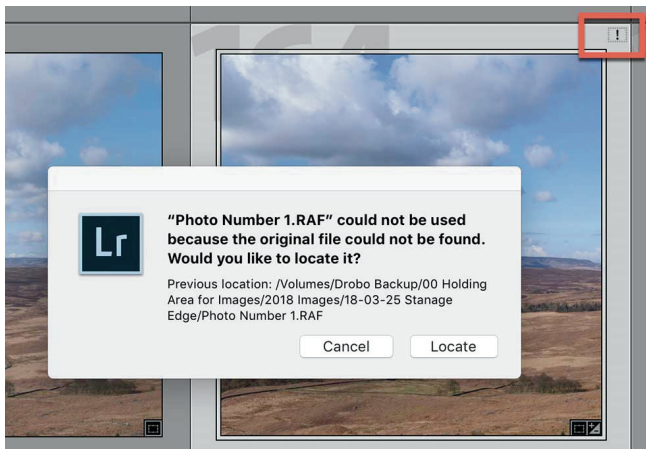


Figure 1: A missing photo in the Lightroom Catalog

When you click the exclamation mark icon, Lightroom displays a

dialog as shown above. You can then use this dialog to locate the missing file. Clicking the Locate button displays the “File Explorer” on a Windows PC or the “Finder” window on a Mac. It’s then possible to use this to select the “Photo Number 2.RAF” file, updating the link in the Lightroom Catalog. Once the link is updated, the exclamation mark icon is removed.

Tip: *It’s possible you may already have experienced something like this if you have renamed or moved an image outside of Lightroom. When you do this, Lightroom suddenly can’t find your image and reports a problem. To avoid this problem, always rename and move images within Lightroom using its tools. Lightroom will then continue to track the image files and update its Catalog.*

All the actions you perform in Lightroom to an image are tracked in the Lightroom Catalog. If you add keywords to your photos, guess what, the keywords aren’t added to the image but are held in the Lightroom Catalog. When you edit an image in Lightroom, the adjustments you make aren’t applied to image. Instead the adjustments are held in the Catalog until you export the image. Only then does Lightroom apply the changes to the image. This is how Lightroom achieves non-destructive editing and why the Catalog is so vital.

So far, we have discussed the Lightroom Catalog as it were a single entity, but it isn’t. Whilst there is a Catalog file, it relies on other files and information to function properly. You can see these files if you look in the folder where your Lightroom Catalog is held. To open this folder, on a Windows PC, select “Edit | Catalog Settings...” from the menu. If you’re using a Mac, select “Lightroom | Catalog Settings...” from the menu. You should then see the “Catalog Settings” dialog as shown below.

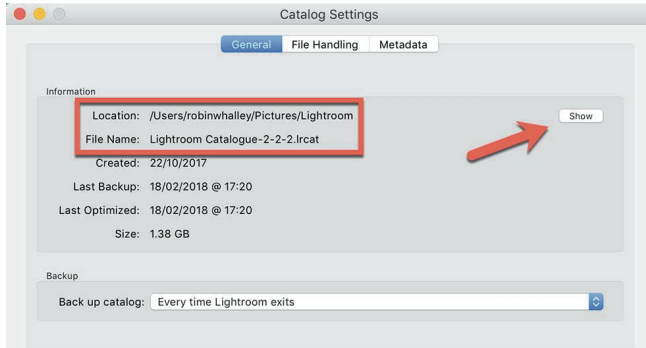


Figure 2: Location of the Lightroom Catalog in the Catalog Settings dialog

Here you can see the name of the Catalog file as well as its location. Clicking the “Show” button will open the File Explorer (PC) or Finder window (Mac) to show the folder. When you open the folder, you will see the Lightroom Catalog file together with the additional files required for Lightroom to operate. If you have been using Lightroom for some time, it’s likely you have a significant investment of time in the editing, importing, tagging and keywording images. All your investment is locked up in these files, so you should ensure your Catalog is backed up periodically, together with your photographs.

LIGHTROOM INTERFACE ELEMENTS



The Lightroom interface is very well designed and packs in a lot of functionality. This can though present us, the user, with a problem. With so many options it's easy to become overwhelmed by options or to miss useful/time saving feature. In this chapter we will take a closer look at the Library module interface and explore some of the most useful features. This won't though provide total coverage of every feature, only those that you are likely to use.

Here is a screenshot of the Library module interface.

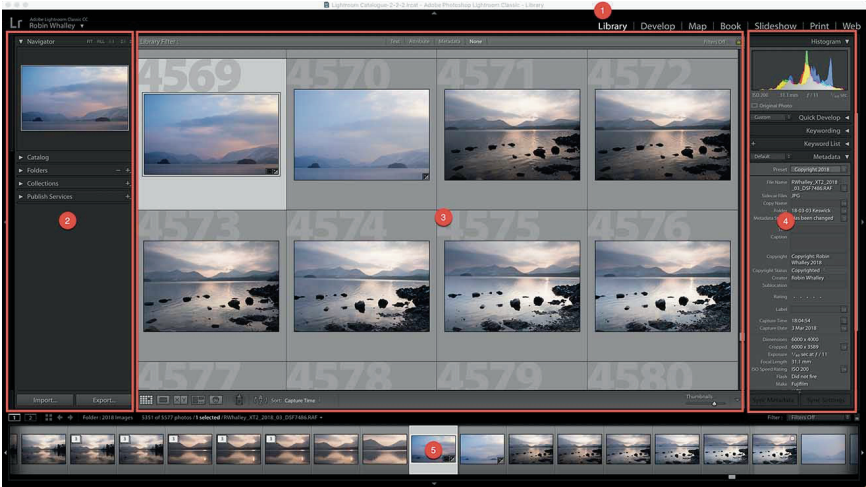


Figure 3: Overview of the Library Module interface

This has been divided into five numbered areas as follows:

1. The Lightroom module menu. Use this to switch between the different Lightroom modules such as Develop, Print and the Library module.
2. Organisational panels to help you manage the images in your Catalog.
3. The Library module window allowing you to view an image or group of images in your Catalog. Along the top and bottom of this section are tools to help you filter the images displayed in the window.
4. Information panels to display and edit information about the selected image, for example metadata and keywording. Unlike the organisational panels on the left of the interface, the information panels relate to a single image.
5. A filmstrip displaying image thumbnails and information for the currently selected Folder or Collection.

We will now examine sections 2 to 5 in greater detail.

THE ORGANISATIONAL PANELS

These panels are on the left side of the interface and are titled Navigator, Catalog, Folders, Collections and Publish Services. They sit within a larger side panel which can be resized or temporarily hidden. You can see this section of the interface in the screenshot below.

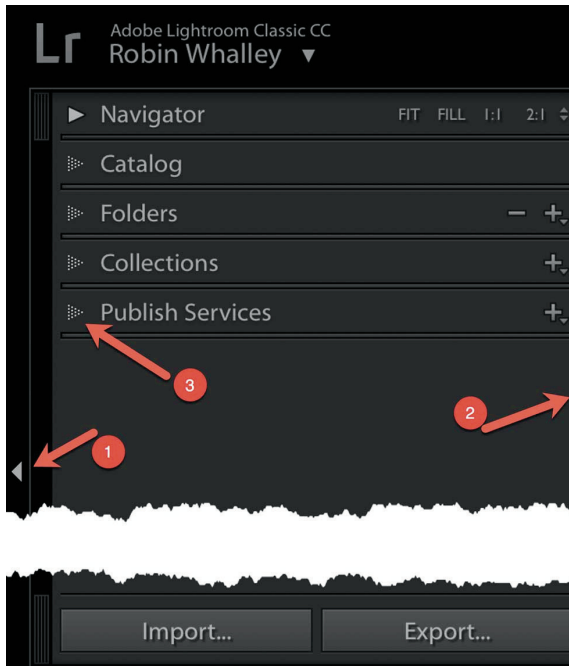


Figure 4: Organisational panels in the Library module

To the left of the illustration numbered 1, is a small arrow. Click this to hide the entire panel, increasing the space available to the central Preview Window. If you place your mouse over the panel when it's hidden, it will temporarily show the panel. Click the arrow a second time and the panel is displayed again.

You can also extend or contract the width of the panel area by clicking and dragging its edge, numbered 2 in the illustration. Click and hold your mouse button on the edge to drag the panel left and right, changing its size.

Within the overall panel, you can collapse the individual control panels for example “Navigator”, “Folders” etc. You can do this by clicking the small arrow numbered 3 in the illustration.

Tip: *If you’re working on a computer with limited screen space, you can operate the panels in “Solo Mode”. This is where expanding one panel causes the other panels to automatically collapse.*

To switch to the Solo Mode, right click one of the panel titles with your mouse. This displays a small pop-up menu shown below where you can select the mode.

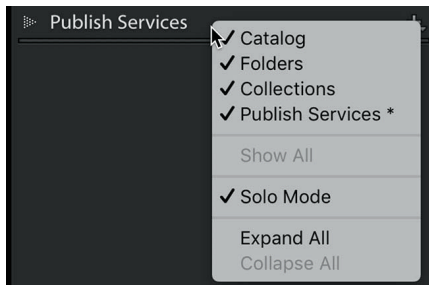


Figure 5: Controlling the view of the Organisational panels

In the above screenshot you can see the Solo Mode option with a tick mark indicating it’s active. Notice also that the other panels in this part of the interface also have a tick marks to the left. You can click these items to toggle the visibility of the panel off and on.

Navigator Panel

The Navigator panel is an aid to help you examine the main image preview for the selected image. You can see the panel in the screenshot below.



Figure 6: Close up of the Navigator panel

The Navigator displays the currently selected image as a thumbnail. If the preview is magnified so that it's larger than the display area, you see a box appear in the Navigator (indicated here by the red arrow). The box indicates the area of the image currently displayed in the main preview. You can reposition this viewing area by clicking on the thumbnail in the Navigator. You can also reposition the viewing area by clicking and dragging the box in the Navigator.

Typically, “the box” will be displayed where an increased magnification level is selected. You can see these at the top right of the Navigator panel, outlined here in red. The options in this screenshot are:

- **Fit** – The image preview is resized to fit in the available screen space both horizontally and vertically. This may leave space in the preview window to either the top and bottom or to the left and right of the image.
- **Fill** – The preview is resized so that the image fills the entire preview area. This can cause areas of the image to be hidden.
- **1:1** – Here the preview image is magnified to 100%. Depending on the dimension of the image and the available

screen resolution, this will probably cause parts of the image to be hidden.

- 2:1 – This magnifies the image to 200%.

The final magnification option in the Navigator (2:1) can be configured using the small icon at the far right, showing up and down arrows. Click the icon and a range of magnification options are displayed. Click one of these to select it, after which it's displayed as an option in the Navigator window.

Catalog Panel

The Catalog panel allows you to “filter” the images that can be displayed in the Preview Window. For example, there is an option to select “All Photographs” or just those in the “Previous Import”. You can see a screenshot of the panel below.

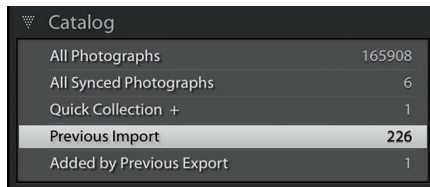


Figure 7: Close up of the Catalog panel

When you click one of the items in the list, the Library preview grid is filtered to only show those images. For example, click the “Previous Import” item and only those images that were imported as part of the previous import are displayed. The number to the right of the collection is the number of images in that collection.

The list you see displayed in the Catalog panel can change. Some of these items are permanent Collections of images and are always be present, but others may be temporary. You can remove the temporary items from the list by right clicking and selecting to remove.

Depending which of the Collections you right-click will determine what options are available if any. For example, right clicking the “All

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