

The DAM Book, 2nd Edition

Krogh, Peter, 2009, 496 pages. O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, CA.

<http://shop.oreilly.com/product/9780596523589.do>

Print ISBN: 978-0-596-52357-2 | ISBN 10: 0-596-52357-2

Reviewed by Mike Morris and Bert Broekstra

Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG)

<http://www.frpcug.org>

This book is eligible for the User Group discount from O'Reilly

Rating: Fourteener*

In the interest of full disclosure:

1. This book was provided at no charge to the reviewers under the O'Reilly User Group Program.
2. This review was written by Mike Morris with contributions from Bert Broekstra. Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the author.

In his Introduction, the author, Peter Krogh states that "This book is written for people who are serious about their photographs." He also says "The approach described in this book is not for the casual photographer." Once you start reading the book, the full implications of that statement become clear.

The book is an extraordinary source of information on how to manage many digital photographs—or any "digital assets," including audio and video files, which he mentions only briefly. This is not a book about photo editing—by Photoshop or any other photo editing software application (although he talks about Non-destructive, or Parametric Image Editing in chapter 2).

The key elements of this book, in our opinion, are:

- Chapter 3 Metadata
- Chapter 4 Organizing and Naming Files and Folders
- Chapter 7 Ingestion Workflow

In fact, "workflow" is the primary lesson we obtained from this book. Each of us established different workflows to suit our needs, but both were based on careful study of the author's recommendations. For example, my colleague uses the raw format a great deal, whereas I do not (yet). I developed a workflow for the scans of many very old family photographs. That

workflow includes metadata entry to capture as much information as possible about the people and places in those photos. Sadly, many of the people and places in those old photos are no longer identifiable—an excellent demonstration of why Krogh's management techniques are so important.

Metadata, usually defined as "data about data," is fundamental to managing digital photos. Krogh's discussion of this topic was the best we have seen anywhere. He talks about "... broad classes (of metadata) . . . mostly measured in how much effort it takes to create the information." That was very important lesson for both my old family photo scans and my own photos. For example, I established a Baseline metadata template that I apply to all of the scans and a different Baseline metadata template that I apply to my photos. In either case, that takes very little effort. Then I add image specific metadata that takes more time.

The use of metadata makes it unnecessary to try to squeeze descriptive information into the file name. The author states emphatically that "The file name does not have to carry important content information about the file." That turns out to be more difficult to understand than you might think. I had to send detailed instructions on how to access the metadata to family members with whom I have shared those old photos. In several cases I even had to recommend a (free) software application that they could use for that purpose. Those family members were expecting to see a description of the photo's content in the file name (an expectation shared, I suspect, by the overwhelming majority of casual photographers).

In his discussion of "The Fine Art of File Naming," the author describes a file naming approach for both the camera original files and what he calls "derivatives (edited photos)." You may not need as many derivatives as the author (unless you are a professional photographer), but his approach (perhaps modified, as I did, to suit your needs) will work equally well for the serious amateur photographer.

Naming a file is not however, the starting point for managing digital photos. That starting point is when you download the photos from your camera(s) to your computer. In Chapter 7, Ingestion Workflow, the author describes a process that includes applying a unique name (in place of the usual combination of letters and numbers), applying "bulk" metadata, backing up the photos, and other tasks.

One criticism of this book, and it is a mild criticism, is that it took me some time, moving back and forth between chapters 3, 4 and 7 (and, to a lesser extent, Chapter 8, Working Files Management) to gain enough of an understanding of Krogh's concepts so that I could adapt them to my less complex needs.

For example, my folder structure for the old family photo scans is very simple—just one folder. However, for my photos, I create a new folder for every photo "event." I define a photo "event" as any occasion where I take photos. It could be a family get-together, a trip into the

mountains or just any time I use my camera. Within each of those events I create 4 subfolders: Camera Originals, Working, Archive, Delivery. While it is not necessary to describe in detail in this review the differences between those folders, it is worth noting that I evolved that structure after reading *The DAM Book* and evaluating the author's recommendations. It is also worth noting that the Camera Originals are just exactly that. They contain no edits and no metadata. That is my preference.

There is much more to this book. Chapter 5 talks about image storage hardware and Chapter 6 talks about backup software and backup strategies. There are chapters on cataloging software and cataloging strategies. The final chapter talks about "Data Migration," which covers how to move many previously unorganized photos into an organized file structure, how to move photos from one storage medium to another and a section on converting film to digital files.

This book is a "must-have" for anyone with more than a passing interest in digital photography. It is an excellent book.