A very important aspect of digital photography is the post-photography phase, including photo editing and file organisation. Gone are the days of writing details on the back of prints or organising prints in book type albums. Today we might go on holiday, take a hundred or more photos in a day, and when we return from the holiday be faced with the task of naming, sorting and editing literally thousands of files.
*In this unit we look at ways of downloading the files and organising them on the computer.*

Transferring or copying the image files from the camera

1. Prepare your folders

Before you get into downloading you should do a bit of preparation and have one key folder ready to receive the files. I will assume that you know how to create folders and move or copy files from one location to another. As we work through this process we will be creating a number of folders where our images will initially be stored.

You would probably know by now that all cameras create a file name for each image they create. Depending on the brand, model and design of the camera, (from here on when I refer to 'camera' I mean any type of digital camera, including phone cameras), they all have their own way of file naming. It does not matter how they do it, but whichever way they do, is not always helpful for when you want to look for that image you took of a grandchild about six months ago. My Nikon produces a file name "DSC-1324" with the number increasing with each image; other cameras might have prefixes such as DSCF, IMG, or P. We will look at file renaming and other aspects of file management.

One of the first and most important things to remember is that image files should not be stored only on our computers - I am sure that you have had, or heard of, a computer crashing and ending up with lost data. If it has not happened to you yet, you are lucky, but don't be complacent. For this reason ALL my images are stored in two places - firstly I have a 1TB external drive which is the primary storage for my images, and also I burn the files onto DVDs and store them in a different room of my house (In case of fire). Better still, treat the DVDs like other important documents and keep them in a fire-resistant safe.
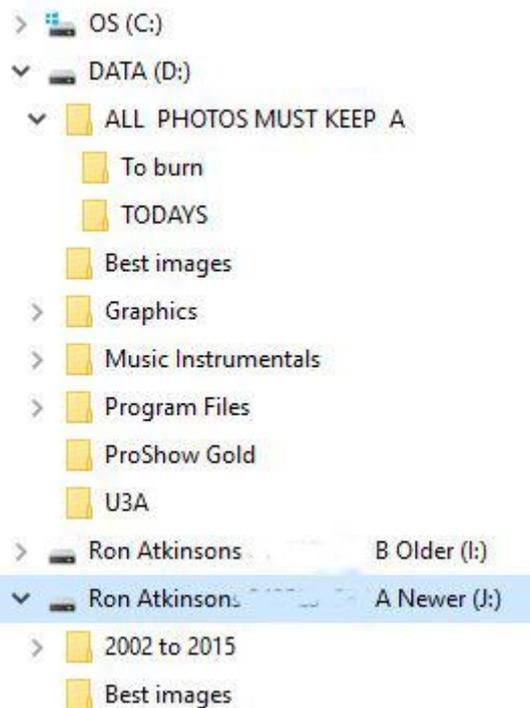
So here we go. Right from the top, you will notice from the snip of my computer (right) of my folder list that I use a lot of folders. Without folders it is too difficult to find images, or music files, or any other document files for that matter. Using folders is good housekeeping and makes it easy to find things. How often do you see people flicking through hundreds of images on their smart phone to show you an image taken six months ago? Many times, I bet. Looking at my folder list you will notice that I have a "C:" drive labelled OS for operating system; this is the drive where Windows and virtually no other programs live. If there is a computer crash it is usually with Windows and this makes it easier to reinstall.

My next drive is "D:" labelled Data. This is my working drive where most of my work is carried out.

You will notice a folder that I have called 'TODAYS' and to me it is a very important folder. Every day when I get home I connect my camera or phone to my computer and MOVE all images to my TODAYS folder. TODAYS to means that anything in there is in it's raw untouched state and has to have some work done on it, e.g. culling bad shots (yes, I get them too), renaming the files, and carrying out any immediate adjustments that might be necessary such a s rotating images so that they are upright. I recommend making a folder similar to this (and feel free to use another name for it, but make it logical); create a shortcut to it on the desktop and it will save you from having to delve every time into the computer's file system.


While going through these images, if there are any that I feel needs or I want to do some more intense work on I will copy them into a temporary folder called WORKING FOLDER and play with them at some later stage.

When I have completed working on my images in the TODAY folder they are then transferred to folders in the "TO BURN" folder, folders there are named like Family, friends, enemies, dogs, cats etc. etc. I keep a check on the size of the TO BURN folder and when it's size gets to about 4gb I then burn the folder onto a DVD for more permanent storage.

After culling bad shots, I rename all images, I use Adobe Bridge which is part of Photoshop, however I have found and did a little testing for you a free renaming program from http://www.sherrodcomputers.com/products_filerenamer_download.cfm it seems pretty good for a free program. I rename them first, there are many ways to rename, if you want a date in your file name use the format of yyyymmdd e.g. 20150630 for June 30, 2015. This will then sort out the images by date so you could have 20150930ron1234 or 201506johnny0256.

In a window you could then search for a date or name, the 4 numbers at the end could be incremental for people, as the above example, Rons image would be the 1234th image of ron or the 256th image of johnny.

My next job while in this TODAY'S folder is to do adjustments, such as lighten or darken, contrast, cropping etc. Next job is to store them.
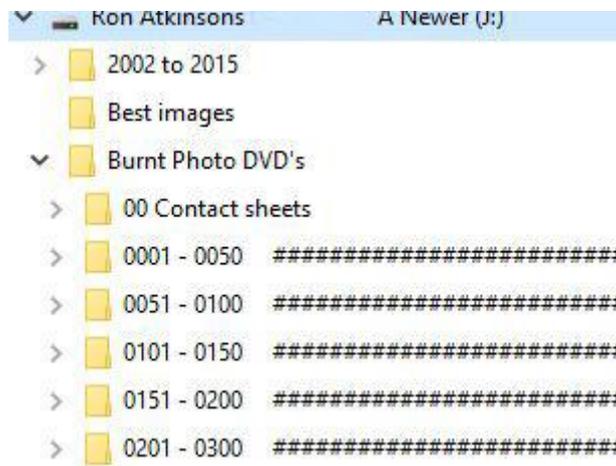
We will now start to create more folders, as you see I have two 1tb drives attached to my computer an "I:" and "J:" drive, my "I" drive is for general storage duties while on my "J" drive I have dedicated it to photos and music files.

On my "J" drive I have a folder called Burnt Photo DVDs and here each DVD gets assigned a number and I am now up to 220 DVDs of photos, on the next page you will notice the DVD number followed by abbreviations of it's contents. You will also notice I created some proof or contact sheets using Photoshop Bridge, there are also other programs that allow you to do this.

Contents of "Burnt" folder
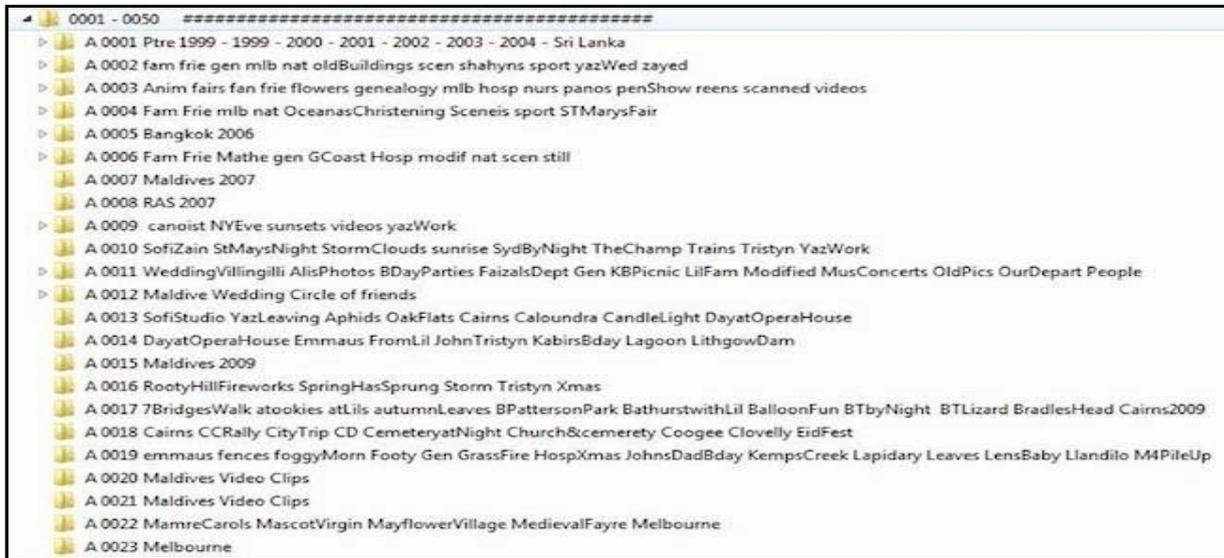
These folders are copies of the DVD's I have burnt containing my stored images. Their file names consist of an incremental number followed by brief description of the contents, I am slowly going through them now and adding a date such as jun2009 etc.

So now, with this file naming and storing system it becomes a lot easier to locate your images at a later date. By keeping them on a drive will keep them handy while the DVDs are your permanent backup should anything happen to your drive, I lost a 1TB drive a couple of years ago and when I replaced it, it wasn't such a large job to copy my DVDs back onto the new drive.

It has been mentioned to me that DVDs are not a good permanent way of storing files because they may deteriorate; well, I am not too sure, I have some music on DVDs that gets played over and over again and no problems over quite a few years, however, that being said, technology will eventually out-date them; who thought vinyl records would become obsolete, like reel to reel tape recorders, cassette tapes, floppy discs, etc. One must always be ready to up-date to new technology because over the years I can see a time when you will not be able to buy a DVD player because of more modern technology.

All of the above 'house-keeping' can be applied to all types of files - not just photos. It works just as well with music and other documents.

Transferring or copying the image files from the camera

Until you are familiar with the method it is recommended that you copy the files. If you transfer them and something goes wrong there is a chance that you will lose the files. Keep this in mind whenever you are manipulating files in any way. Sometimes to can go back a step and undo an action, but not always.

We will assume here that you have a USB cable that can be used for connecting the camera to your computer and that your computer uses the Windows operating system. With the cable connected and the camera turned on and in the PLAY setting, the computer should immediately recognise the camera as a removable device. depending on how your computer is set up it might display a Wizard that will ask what do you want to do. There should be an option to copy the files in which case you select them and the follow the prompts to find the TODAYS folder which will be the destination.

If the computer does not provide a Wizard to assist you it will be necessary to do a bit more manual work. Double click on the Computer icon on the Desktop to display a list of drives and connected devices. The camera when it is turned on should appear as a Removable Device. Double click on this icon and your will see several folders, one of which will be labelled DCIM. Double click on this folder and your image files will be listed or displayed as thumbnails, depending on how the file computer's file manager has been set up. Select the files that you need and using your preferred method, copy them to the TODAYS folder.

NOTE- If you are already using a commercial program or app to copy files from your camera and it allows you to save them to a folder of your choice, then continue to use it but save them to a folder such as TODAY. Some programs will download files automatically but they may create folders of their own making; I recommend that these programs be avoided.

Activity 6.1

The exercise for the week will be to set up your filing system; you can follow my guide of folders, or create one of your own, and remember, DO NOT store your images only in your computer, have a two-fold back-up system for them, such as on an external drive and also burned to DVD, or the latest type technology can provide.

Next lesson we will look at editing your images, and some tips.