

☺ Photography and the Internet ☺

The internet has revolutionized photography. Film is rapidly being outpaced by digital and digital cameras of all types and styles have been selling like gangbusters. What 5 years ago, was unavailable, or would have cost you many thousands, is now available for a few hundred and up. Computers, hardware and other electronic components have also taken nosedives in prices and are becoming increasingly better/faster/bigger, etc.

What this means for the average consumer is normally good news, but alas, the cost of living is quickly offsetting any real savings! However, there are some great bargains out there for the average consumer, if they know where to look, which brings us back to the internet and one of its prime functions; searching.

Think of the internet as the largest repository of information in existence and you're just beginning to grasp an understanding of its exponentially growing vastness.

This is fabulous for people who want to learn, but also for crooks, spammers, snoops and other unsavory characters who lurk about, waiting to make their next move.

So, when utilizing the internet, we need to use some common sense and caution as we navigate the realms of cyberspace. No one program can completely protect you if you don't use common sense to start with.

Let's start with spam, junk-email and advertising pop-ups. How can we reduce the sheer volume of V!agra ads, etc.?

The best solution/solutions are to first, set up a junk email account. A prime example, Yahoo, is very generous with their free email accounts right now, offering 250 MB of storage for free. Gmail offers 1 Gigabyte of storage for free! Yahoo is following suit soon!

So, set up a free account with whomever you choose and then, anytime you're online and a form or field, website or forum asks for your email, give them your junk email account and information. Do not use your real name in the name of the email.

Instead of billsmith@whatever.net, use ilikecandy77@whatever.net. This will go a long way toward protecting your main Bill Smith account from the incessant bombardment of junk that would surely be heading your way. There are also many free pop-up blockers out there, as well as the settings built into your web browsers. Mozilla Firefox is an excellent web browser with lots of nifty extensions, tools, etc. that make browsing the web safe and fun again.

A good anti-virus program is vital to protecting yourself while online, with the industry leader being Symantec's Norton Anti-Virus, although McAfee is good and Avast is free! So are AVG and AntiVir. One of the best Firewalls is Zone Alarm, this being just one of many. Look for set and forget and auto-update functions in these programs, it makes life much easier. The best and free anti-spyware programs are Lavasoft AdAware SE and Spy-Bot Search and Destroy.

Now that we're up and running and secure, it's time to start exploring photography and the internet. As mentioned earlier, the internet has truly revolutionized photography and this is seen daily in the news and media outlets around the world.

When some event happens nearly anywhere in the world, photos are available almost instantaneously. For those of us with digital cameras, this holds true as well.

If you have a digital camera and internet connection, you can walk into your

backyard, take a picture of a flower and I can be viewing it within a couple minutes of when you photographed it. It's that quick and that easy! Instant gratification! If you have a decent quality printer, you can also have a print of that photo within a few minutes as well. This leads us to photographic workflow. Film shooters bear with me here, you have to engage in a few more steps, with the most important being getting the film developed and then getting it into a digital format, via scanning, having a photo CD made during lab developing, etc. Digital shooters bypass this step and go directly to the computer. Once there, what are some good workflow techniques?

1. After transferring your photos to the computer and culling the bad ones, organizing them, etc., your first step should be to back them up! It's best to back them up redundantly too! That is, to a different hard drive than your main Operating Systems drive as well as to optical disks (CD/DVD). These original images are as important as developed film (negatives or slides). The voice of experience tells you, if you crash and lose good images... they're gone! That's it! Hard drive crash recovery centers charge exorbitant rates for data recovery. I can't afford it. You probably can't either.
2. Never save over your original files. Leave them in the format they were shot in and don't change it. If you open IMG_4052.jpg and work on it, then when you're done, save it as Awesome-Sunset-01.jpg or whatever. DO NOT save as IMG_4052, or you've just destroyed the original image. Always save edited shots as copies, or with a descriptive filename. Always!
3. Shoot in the highest quality settings your camera will allow. If you have an award winning shot, but you shot it in the 640-480 pixel email mode, it won't be hanging as a large print in the National Gallery of Art. If you have a 7 Mega-pixel camera, shoot in the highest quality mode. If memory size is an issue, buy larger and more memory. Memory is cheap and more memory allows you to photograph more!
4. Learn the basics of your image editing software, and then grow from there. Don't expect to become a Zen Master in image editing overnight. Get online and search for tutorials of what you want to do. Use your programs help documentation, which with most programs is quite extensive.
5. When shooting, try to get the best shots possible which will often require little, if any, editing. Just like with any camera, digital or film, minimize shake and vibration, keep an eye on your composition while also watching for interesting and unusual compositions. Use your cameras settings and program modes to your advantage (it helps to read the manual!) and with digital, if you can preview it and don't like it; try it again with different techniques, settings, etc. That's where the instant gratification of digital comes into play!
6. Shoot, shoot and shoot! Believe it or not, this is one of the best ways to learn. You'll soon discover what works best, what differentiates a mediocre from spectacular shot, what lighting is best, and a plethora of other details that will help make you a better photographer. Experiment and keep notes, or a journal, if necessary. Then, as your shots begin to take more of a wow! effect you'll begin to understand more and you and your shutter will begin to click!



☺ Some software for the photographer ☺

There are many great image editing programs for the photographer and for those on a budget, there are a few great free programs. Let's start with those:

1. **Picasa 2** is a free image program that allows basic editing with a few advanced features that include cropping and an assortment of special effects. The program will read almost any image format and allows you to instantly email right out of it. This program is a must have and best of all it's free. Picasa used to cost \$40, but google.com bought them out and now offers it for free. A quick search on the web will find it.
 2. **IrfanView**- Developed and continually improved by Irfan Skiljan, IrfanView is a fabulous freeware program that handles virtually all image formats and has many more features than its simple interface appears to have at first look. IrfanView is another must have that's also free and will give you lots of options for image editing/organizing/cataloging.
 3. **PhotoFiltre**- a program by a French developer, PhotoFiltre is another great freeware program which allows many adjustments, effects, etc., to be applied to images, as well as having a drawing and paint program built in to it.
 4. **The GIMP**- Feel like a geek? Think you're a real computer guru with the knowledge to grok? Then you need to try grokking the GIMP (Gnu Image Manipulation Program) The GIMP is a cross platform, multiple operating system wonder that can rival Adobe Photoshop in the hands of experienced users. There are versions for Linux and Windows available, totally free and open source, of course! This means if you're a geek developer type, you can really go to town! Like learning curves? Real challenges? Maybe just too much time on your hands? Then the GIMP is for you! Learn all about it and then walk away feeling like you know nothing at gimp.org Remember though, it's free!
 5. **ImageN**- A nifty little freeware program with some surprising effects and features!
 6. **Pixmantec RAW Shooter Essentials**- Must have for RAW editing- and it's free!
- Search google.com for more freeware image editors.

Between the above freeware programs, you can do just about anything you want with your photos and other images. Now, for some that aren't free, but are great nonetheless:

1. **Photoshop**- Adobe's latest offering, Photoshop CS is the flagship, the absolute Mothership of imaging programs. It tries to be everything to

everyone and succeeds quite handsomely. The ultimate cat's meow, Photoshop is pricy, but what is cost in order to do everything?



2. Corel/Jasc Paint Shop Pro 9, the latest version which has more bells and whistles than you can shake a stick at, and which won't break your bank!
3. ACDSee 7- A full featured editing/cataloging/organizing suite of tools that rates very high.

These are just a few. Go somewhere like download.com to see many, many more. Many programs give you a free trial basis to play with them a little. Take advantage of this to see if you like them before outlaying your cash.



Photography Websites



Finally, you're situated, everything is working great, you have a workflow, and you're ready to learn more and maybe even share photos, knowledge, ideas, etc. with like minded individuals. It's now time to hit the web. First stop? Ckspc.org and send some shots to Jerry for your member page! Then, its off to jerrysfoto.com then dpreview.com to learn all about photography and read forums and camera reviews, phototalk.net, outdooreyes.com, flickr.com, photo.net, luminous-landscape.com, vividlight.com, photo.net for everything photographically related, you get the idea... start searching the web for photography and you'll come up with quite a list of favorites. Go to our own site and look at the Links page. There's a good start for your browsing. Don't forget to start sending me photos for placement on your own personal page on our website. Don't be bashful or sensitive, we're all only in it for the fun! Plus, having your photos on a web page is a good way to share with everyone, and in our case, as members of the Central Kansas Photography Club, it's not costing you anything but a little of your time.



Optimizing Photos for Print and Web



First of all, lets discuss standards, and in particular, some common standards. Two come to mind right offhand. They are 300 and 72, these numbers being pixels per inch, or dots per inch if you will. These are pretty much universal standards for print (300ppi) and web (72ppi). Some will argue, and with merit, that the larger the print and further the viewers distance, the less ppi needed. This is true, but how many of us are printing billboard signs, or ads for the side of buses? 300 ppi makes beautiful prints if you have a good photo to begin with. For the web, on the other hand, anything over 72ppi is overkill and can't be noticed by the human eye. The computer monitor resolution and display is standardized for 72ppi. You should also set your monitor display properly! You can take what looks like a perfect 4x6 or 5x7 on the web and try to print it and invariably, it will make a very shabby, poor quality print. So remember, if you're concerned about someone "stealing" your web resolution photos, not only are they copyrighted by you after you click the shutter, if they are just web resolution, all the image snatcher can really do is admire them!

In order to optimize your beautiful photos for the web, some steps have to be taken to ensure quality, as well as portable file size. If you take a 3mb file size photo that is 1576x1200 pixels at 300ppi and try to send it to someone with a dial up connection, or host it on a web page, it'll take a long, long time to download, or finally display on a page. So, for the web, we're looking for small and fast. Some good standards for full frame web sized photos are 800x533 pixels which displays as the equivalent of approximately a 5x7 photo, but if sized at 72ppi, still loads fairly quick with even a dial up connection. File size will vary with amount of color and the subject matter in the photo, but will generally be well under 100kb and most times from 35 to 80kb. This is a nice size for posting on the web and emailing friends and family where the photo still is large enough to display a lot of gorgeous detail. On our website, most of the photos are displayed at 500x333 pixels. This still allows enough detail to see that the photos are great shots, plus the pages load and the images display pretty quickly even for dial up connections, with the average image file size being nearer to 20-25kb. There's nothing more frustrating than waiting for some slow loading page that's taking 3-4 minutes to finally display everything so you can see it all. In a nutshell, that's about it folks. The space below is reserved for notes and hopefully you found some of this information useful!



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