

Photoshop World 2021

Getting Organized in Lightroom Classic

By Rob Sylvan

A place for everything and everything in its place is a phrase often attributed to Benjamin Franklin, but can absolutely apply to how we use Lightroom Classic. One of the keys to getting organized in Lightroom Classic is understanding all the components of a typical workflow, what tools exist to help us stay organized, and then developing habits that allow us to use those tools consistently in a manner that scales successfully into the future. Join Rob as he demonstrates the features and functions within Lightroom Classic to help you organize your photo library and manage the associated settings and files to keep your workflow running smoothly.

As I've worked with people over the years, I've noticed a few common obstacles to getting their Lightroom Classic (LrC) lives more organized, so my approach to this article is to address ways to overcome these issues to help anyone struggling to feel more in control of their growing photo libraries. I've also embedded links to related articles I've written and one of Scott's classes to help you go even further.

One of the first obstacles to overcome is understanding what all the components of a LrC workflow are so that we can manage them over time. From there, the next hurdle is knowing what organizational tools are available within LrC, and then how to use them. Once people understand the components and the tools, then they can apply them effectively and continue to refine their workflows to become more consistent and efficient. Once you've reached that stage of progress you are in control of your photo library, and that's the place I want to help everyone reach.

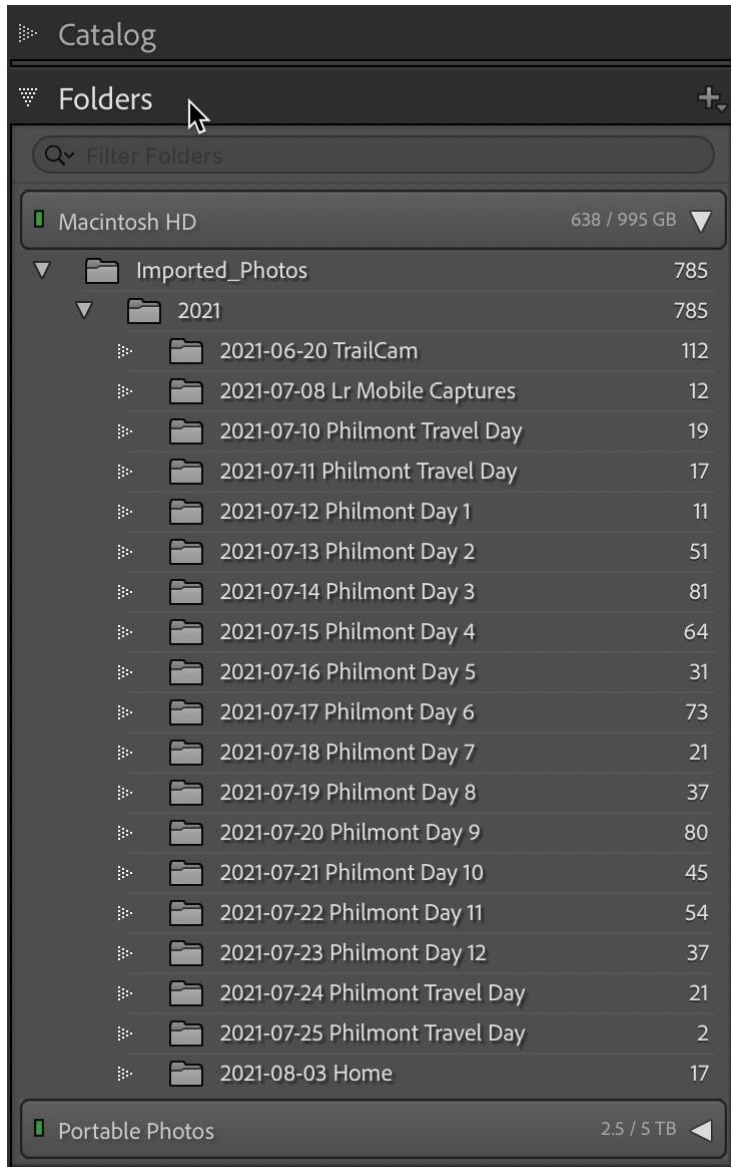
What about a specific organizational system? I've had the pleasure of seeing a lot of different ways photographers organize their photos and some methods work really well, and some are a horrible, disorganized mess. The three important elements of a successful organizational system appear to be that the system must make sense to the way that person's brain works, it must scale smoothly into the future as the library grows, and the user must be able to easily find the photos they are looking for when needed. Outside of that, there's a lot of room for creativity. So, while I will share some of my thoughts on what works for my brain, I recognize that it might not work for yours, so if you have a system that meets the above criteria (like [Scott's SLIM system](#)) then I feel you would get more out of focusing on improving efficiencies within your system than changing the system completely.

The Components

The key components of a LrC workflow that you need to keep in mind are your photos, the catalog (and its associated files), and the presets/templates you use to become more efficient. You also need to understand how these files interact and depend on each other to avoid self-inflicted injury. A firm grasp of each component will put you on the right track to staying organized. Let's explore each of these components in a bit more detail.

Your Photos

The whole reason you're doing this is for your photos, and they must be at the center of all your decisions. You must know where your photos are located on your system, have them included in a backup process, and have a plan for managing them over time as you outgrow your current hardware. The place to find them in LrC is the Folders panel in the Library module.



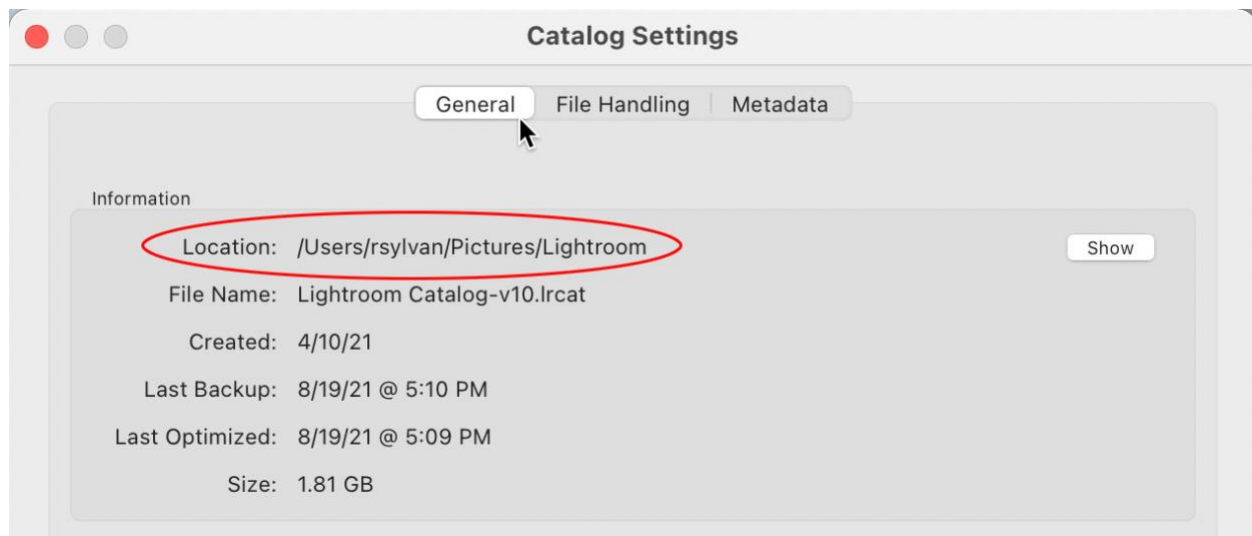
There are two main places where LrC touches your actual photos, with the first being part of the import process and the second being through managing them in the Library module. During the import process you have an opportunity to decide where the photos will be stored, and after import, in the Library module you will find the tools to rename, move, delete, keyword, organize into collections, and find your photos over time. You must have a plan for how you will use these tools to keep your library organized and understand how to use each of these tools. We'll revisit these tools a little later.

The Catalog

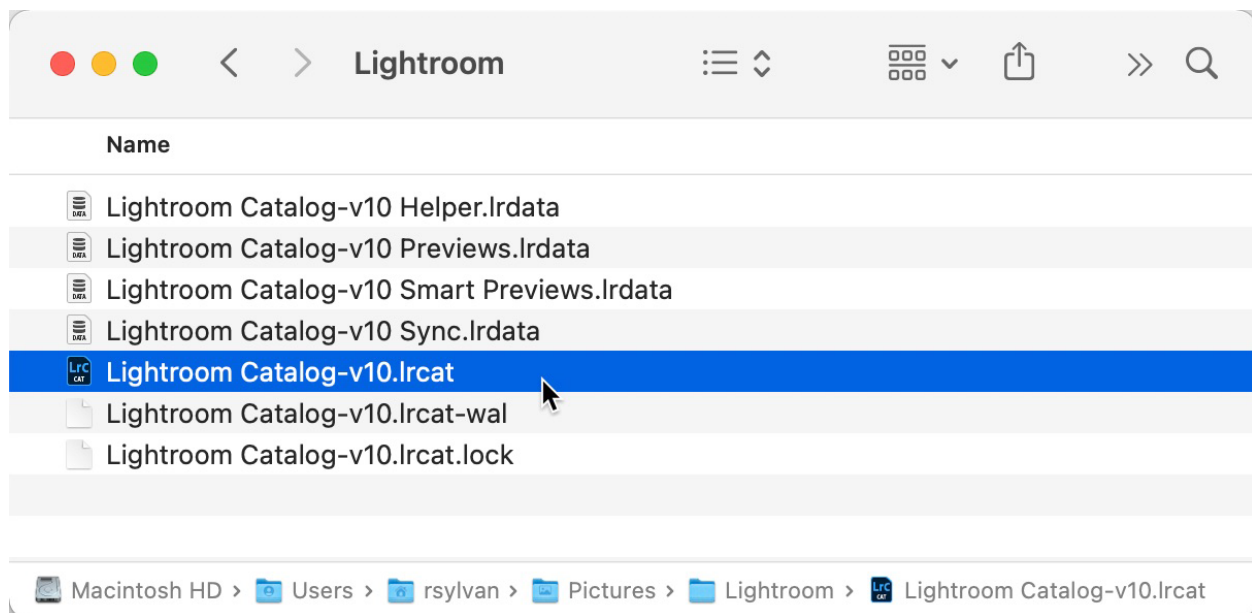
At its heart (or brain?) LrC has a database, called the catalog, that stores information about every photo (and video) that goes through the import process.

The main job of the import process is to create a new database record for each photo that includes all the metadata created by the camera, the exact location (path) to where that

photo is stored on your system, and any additional metadata you add along the way (like copyright and contact information). You can find where your catalog is located by going to Lightroom Classic > Catalog Settings > General (PC: Edit > Catalog Settings > General).



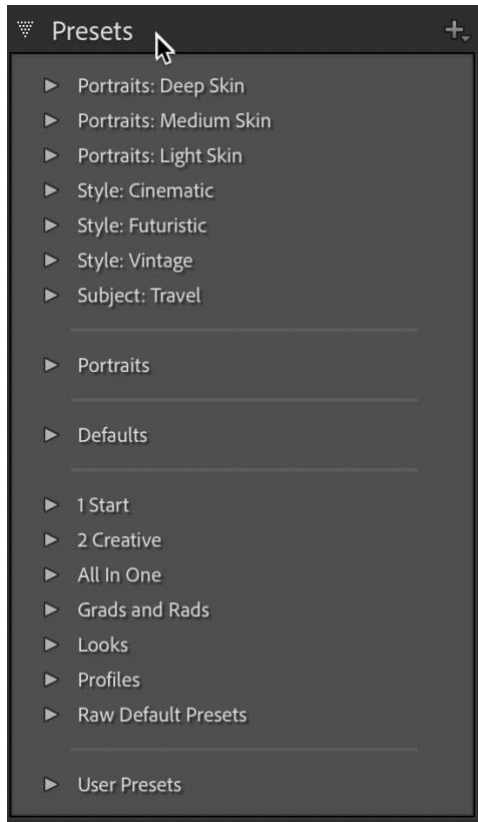
Each time you launch LrC you are opening that database and looking at its contents. All the work you do in LrC (every keyword, color label, collection membership, virtual copy, edit, etc.) is written to that database as you do the work in real time. By default, LrC does not write any of that information to your photos at all. For these reasons you can see that it is very important to know where your catalog is located, keep it backed up, and know how to restore from disaster if something happens to your catalog file. Clicking the Show button (above) opens your file browser to the folder containing your catalog (below).



Stored alongside the catalog (which has a .lrcat file extension) are several files that protect it from being opened by another program while you have it open, assist it in case of a crash, and store previews of each photo that is being managed by that catalog (called a cache). Together, this collection of files allows you to work with your photos even if they are stored on an offline drive because LrC spends most of its time writing to the catalog and showing you previews of

your photos. Your actual photos are never in LrC, but always stored in some folder on some drive on your system that LrC simply references via the path stored in the catalog.

Presets and Templates



The words presets and templates get used interchangeably within LrC, but whatever you call them they are crucial to a consistent and efficient workflow.

LrC's original reason for existing was to provide a more efficient workflow for digital photographers, and there are many points within a workflow, from import to export (and everything in between) that you can leverage presets and templates to make your life easier.

The most common example are the presets we use in the Develop module, but you can create import presets, filename templates, metadata templates, text templates, and export presets too. Keeping these files updated, organized, and under control (especially [Develop presets](#)) are important considerations to managing your photo library over a lifetime.

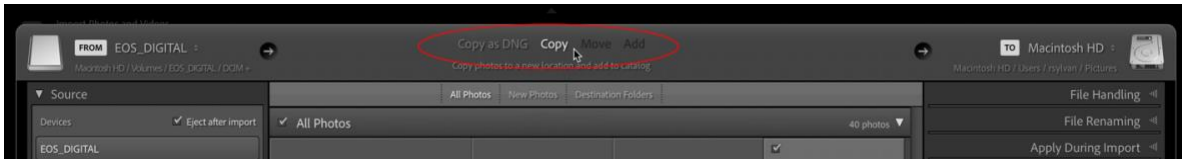
Now that you're familiar with the components let's dive into the most important organizational tools LrC has to offer.

Organizational Tools

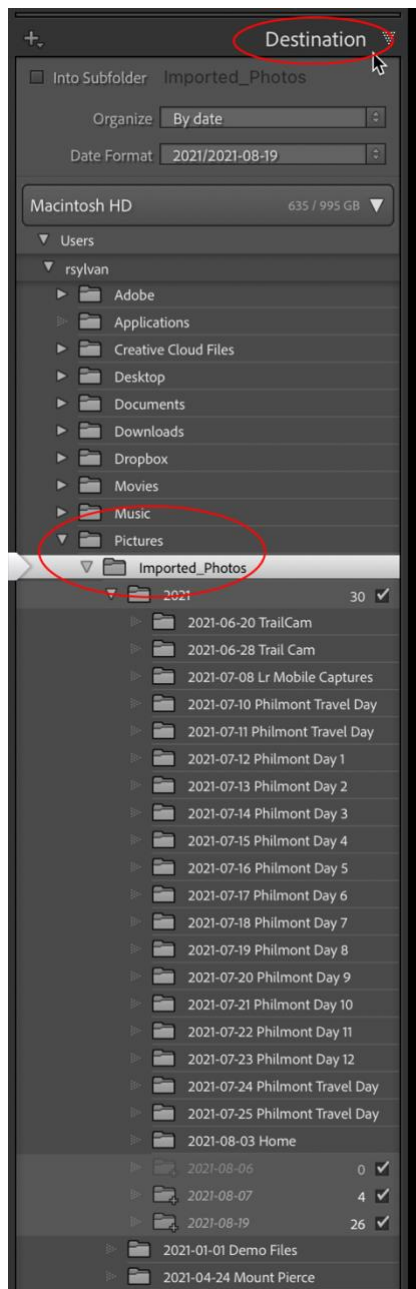
The Develop module is the sexy beast everyone likes to spend time in, but the Library module is the most important place for keeping your photo library under control and for finding the photos you want when you need them. I include the import process as part of the Library because that is your first opportunity to keep yourself organized and moving in the right direction, so let's start there.

The Import Window

Earlier I stated that the main job of the import process was creating records in the catalog file about each imported photo, but the secondary job of importing can involve copying or moving photos to a storage location of your choosing. You need to be in the driver's seat for this job and ensure that LrC is not placing photos in an undesired location. There are two choices on the import window that determine where your photos will end up. The first choice is along the top of the screen where you choose between Copy as DNG, Copy, Move, or Add.



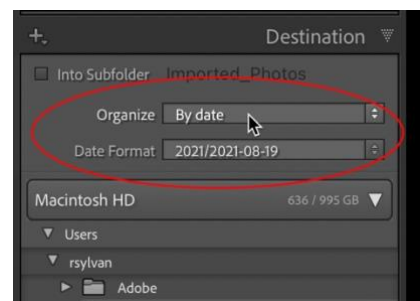
The two most common choices are Copy and Add. If your photos are coming from a memory card you will choose Copy (Copy as DNG is effectively the same as Copy except it also includes the operation to convert the raw photos to DNG, but for organization purposes it is beyond the scope of this article). If your photos are already exactly where you want them to be stored (because you put them there outside of LrC), then you will choose Add.



A word about Move. I don't recommend using Move for safety reasons because Move includes a copy operation followed by a delete operation from the original location. It is much safer to use Copy for import, and then once the copy operation is done successfully you can go and manually delete the source files from the original drive if that is what is needed. Move will be unavailable when the source is a memory card, so it would only come into play when source photos are on a hard drive.

When choosing Copy the only other choice you need to make at this time is in the Destination panel. When Add is selected the photos are already in their final location, so the Destination panel is not included.

When configuring the options in the Destination panel you have two choices to make. The first is where do you want the photos to be stored and the second is how do you want them to be organized at that location. Keeping in mind that the settings in the Import window apply to ALL photos being imported at this time you want to choose a location that works for all photos being imported. The default setting in the Organize drop-down menu at the top of the panel is By date, which includes options for your choice of date format in the drop-down menu below it.

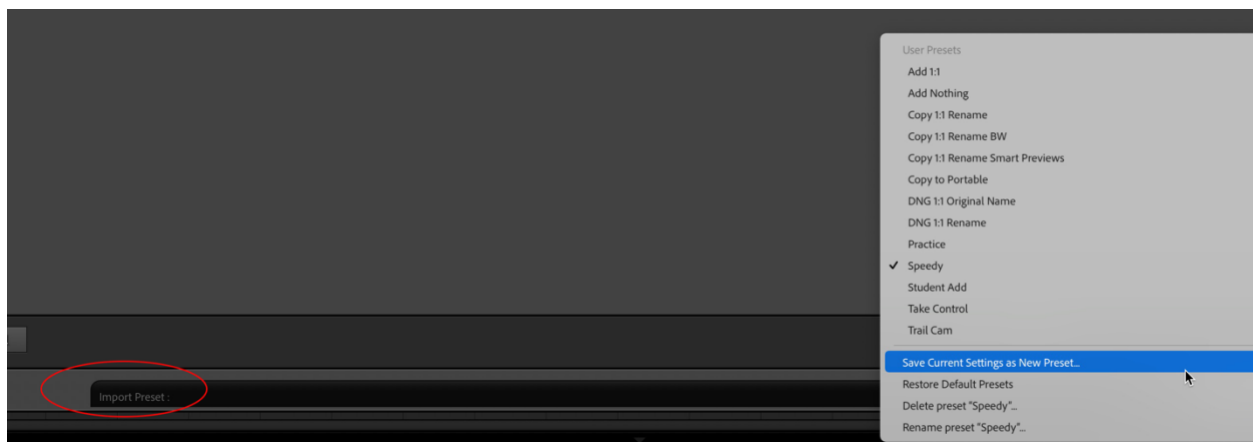


The nice things about the By date organize option is that it is fully automated using the creation date of each photo to create corresponding folders within the folder selected in the Destination panel and it scales nicely into the future. That

said, dates alone may not give you enough information to find your photos easily in the future. I work around this limitation by simply renaming the date-based folders after import (using the Folders panel) to include additional meaningful information along with the date. This way I don't have to think about organizing my photos during the Import window, can let the automation of folder creation save me time, and get the benefit of dates added to each folder so that they sort in a meaningful way within the Folders panel.

All that said, if your system utilizes the *Into one folder* option in the Organize drop-down menu, and that works for your brain, then don't let me stop you from using that option. I recognize the benefits of putting your photos in custom named folders from the outset, and I know many who use that option. If it isn't broken, don't fix it.

Additionally, I recommend standardizing on the top-level location for all newly imported photos. In my case, I copy all new photos to a folder structure within the Pictures folder of my internal drive with the same top-level parent folder selected for all imports (and let LrC create the subfolders within it). This way I don't have to spend any time thinking about where to put photos at this time, and best of all, can create an import preset that includes the settings in the Destination panel (as well as all the panels above it). Over time, I use the Folders panel to move folders to a larger external drive to maintain space on the internal drive.



To create an import preset, configure all desired import settings (in all panels), then click the Import Preset drop-down menu at the very bottom of the screen and choose Save Current Settings as New Preset. You can create as many of these import presets as your workflow requires. These are huge time savers and allow for consistency in your organizational efforts (*check out my Photoshop World session on Optimizing Lightroom Classic for more on this idea*). For each subsequent import job, simply choose your desired import preset and everything is done. After a quick visual confirmation all you need to do is click the Import button and LrC does the rest.

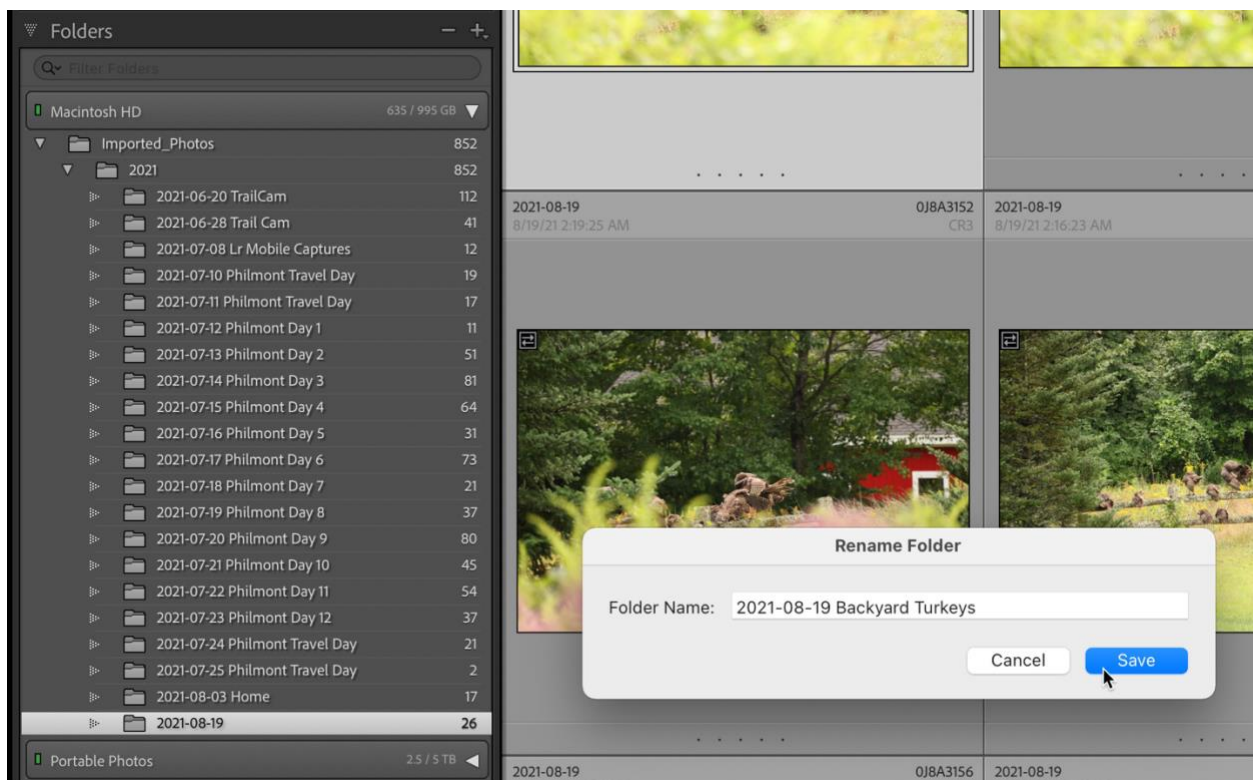
The Library Module

Once the import process begins your view returns to the Library, and as the photos fill your screen you can turn your attention to the Folders panel to confirm the photos are going exactly where you designated. The Folders panel is one of the most powerful tools for organizing your photos over time. It is here that you can move folders into new folders and drives, rename folders, remove folders, create subfolders and more. For example, I mentioned that I rename all newly created folders during import to include a meaningful name in addition to the date. Here's how to do this:

Step One: Right-click the folder you want to rename.

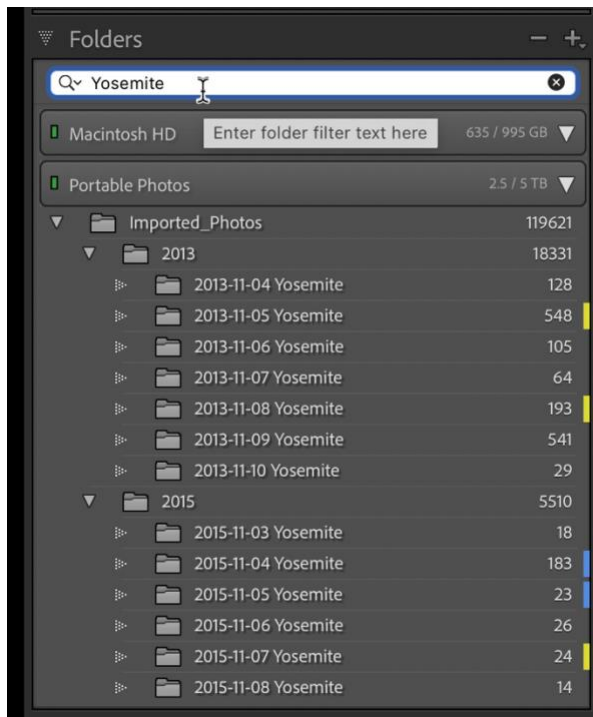
Step Two: Choose Rename from the contextual menu.

Step Three: Enter a meaningful name in the Rename Folder dialog box that appears and click Save.



This renames the folder in the Folders panel as well as on your drive all in one move while keeping the record in the catalog up to date. By performing all your file management tasks in LrC you keep your files organized and keep the catalog updated. To learn even more about the Folders panel and how to unlock all of its power, be sure to bookmark [my article on the Role of the Folders panel](#).

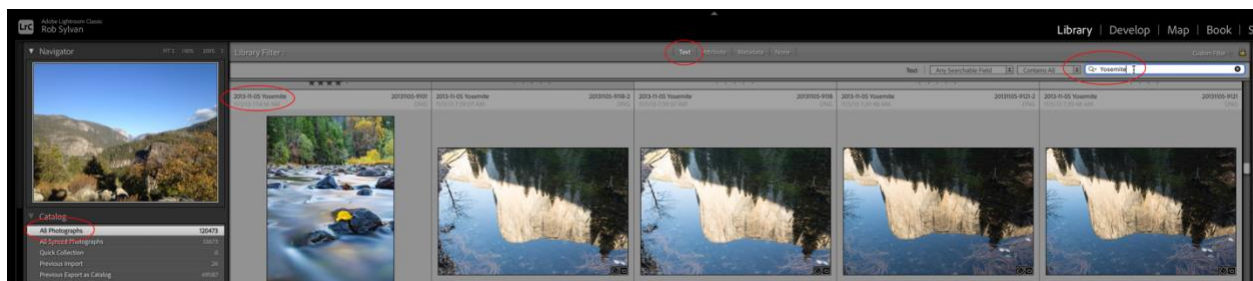
A powerful benefit to naming your folders with simple, descriptive, and consistent names is that you can utilize the filter at the top of the Folders panel to quickly find all the folders that



G for Grid view if not there already.

Step Two: Click the Text button on the Library Filter to open the text input field.

Step Three: Type the text you want to search on into the field. In my case I typed Yosemite here too.



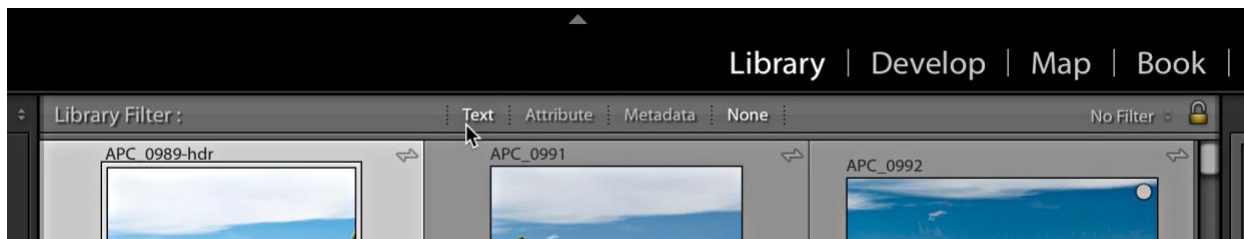
Your entire library is now searched for that word in all searchable fields, which includes folder names. In this screen capture you can see the folder name displayed on the thumbnail. I find this much faster and simpler than keywording each individual photo. I've got nothing against keywording in general if it is needed for a given workflow, but in my experience, it is a non-preferred activity for most people (to put it mildly). If keywording is your thing, then take a dive into my [controlling keywords article](#) to learn more about them, and by all means keep using them. Let's take a closer look at the power of these filters.

The word "filter" often gets used to describe the edits and adjustments made to our photos, but in LrC the real meaning has to do with how you can filter the data stored in the catalog to

help you in your workflow. We'll start with the most obvious, but there's more hidden here and there within the Library module.

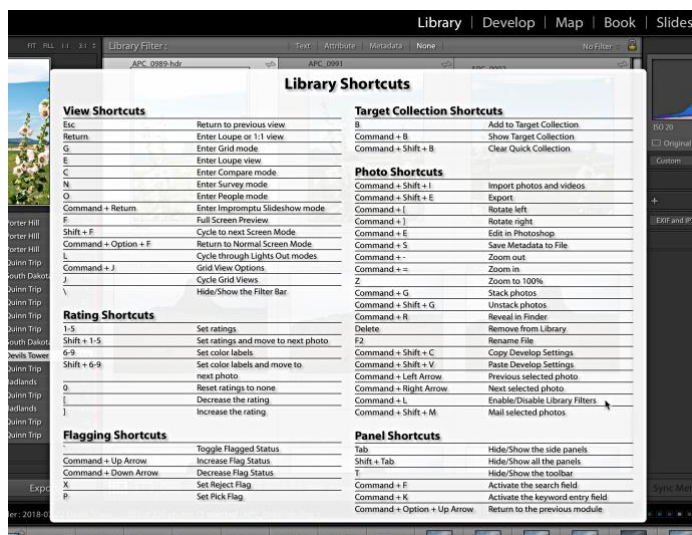
The Library Filter Bar

Located above Grid view in the Library module, the Library Filter bar is the most powerful and useful filtering tool in Lightroom. The key to using the filter is understanding that it only filters the currently selected source, whether that is folders, collections, or your entire catalog. You select the source first, then apply the desired filter to see the results.



The Library filter consists of four parts, a filter by text function (Text), a filter by photos' attributes (Attribute), a filter by photo's metadata (Metadata), and a drop-down menu for accessing saved Library Filter presets. The Text, Attribute, and Metadata sections can be used independently or in conjunction with each other.

The best way to learn how to use these is to explore and try out the various options, but before doing that there are a couple of keyboard shortcuts you should file away to keep you out of trouble. The first is CMD+L (PC: Ctrl+L) which will turn on or turn off the Library Filter, so if you are playing around and want to escape the filter simply employ that shortcut and you're back to the unfiltered view. The second is the backslash (\) key which hides and reveals the Library Filter bar itself. This is useful when using the Library Filter and you want to hide it to see more of your photos, but I've seen it cause frustration when people hit that key by accident and can't find the filter bar. Here's a bonus tip, in any module press CMD+ / (PC: Ctrl+ /) or go to Help > [ModuleName] Shortcuts menu to display common keyboard shortcuts for the module you are in, and then click anywhere on the overlay to dismiss it.



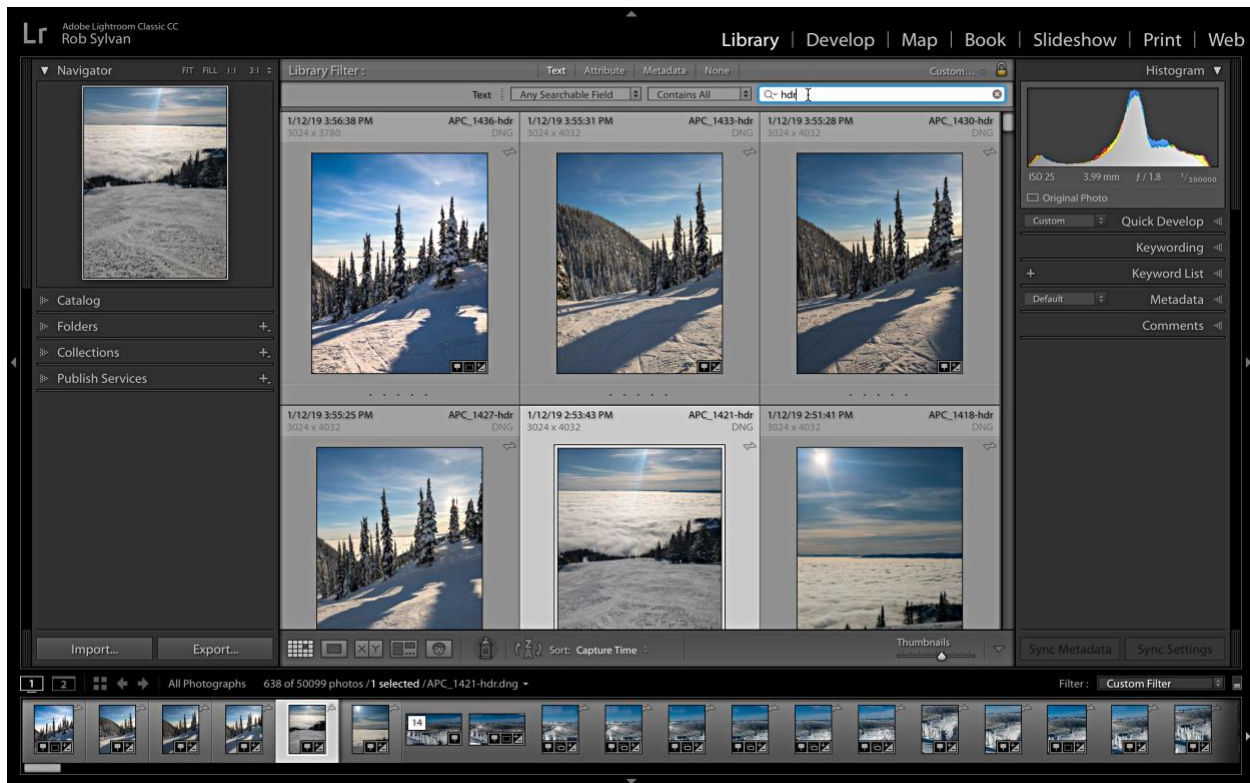
Text-based Filters

I just showed you how you can use the Text filter to find photos based on folder names, but another example of one that I use frequently is a text-based filter to find HDR photos based on filename. Here's how:

Step One: Select the desired source containing the photos you want to filter. In my example I selected All Photographs in the Catalog panel to filter the entire library.

Step Two: Press CMD+F (PC: Ctrl+F) to open the Text filter with the search field active for text input. This will also switch to Grid view if not there already.

Step Three: Type in the text you want to filter the results on. In my case I typed HDR because LrC automatically adds those letters to the filenames of all merged HDR photos it creates, as does the HDR mode in the Lightroom mobile camera module. As soon as you start typing the filter starts working in real time.

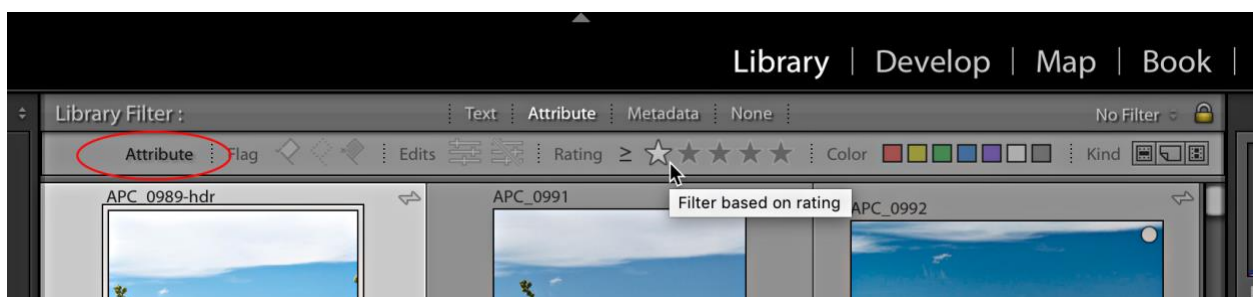


Step Four: Refine the filter. By default, that filter is set to Any Searchable Field, which may cast the net wider than you intend. Click the (tiny) drop-down arrow next to the magnifying glass icon in that text field and choose Filename (for my example) to force the filter to only use photo filenames. You can achieve the same result by clicking the drop-down where it says Any Searchable Field and changing it there. The same goes for changing the Contains All option to something that better fits your needs.

Pretty cool? I most often use that when working in a folder full of brackets that I am merging to HDR. After setting all the various brackets to be merged I enable the filter so that I only see the final results in the folder for processing further. When finished, press CMD+L (PC: Ctrl+L) to disable the filter.

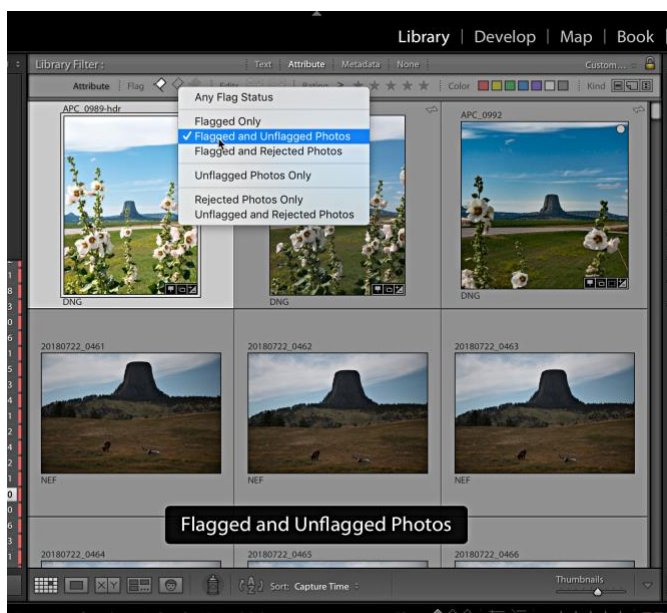
Attributes

In the course of your workflow you may apply color labels (learn how to [make the most of them](#)), flags, or star ratings, and eventually you will edit some (or all) of the photos. Additionally, you may have a mix of photos and videos, and perhaps even some virtual copies. All of these aspects can be used as filters under the Attribute button on the Library Filter.



One of the most useful ways I've found for this is when making my initial selects after returning from a shoot. I'm a big fan of using Flags to mark the keepers from the ones headed to the trash. Here's what I do:

Step One: Select the desired source to filter and press G for Grid view.



picks and unflagged.

Step Two: Click the Attribute button to expand its options, then right-click the Flag section to access the contextual menu. Select Flagged and Unflagged. Assuming you have not yet applied any flags, there should be no change in what photos are being shown.

Step Three: Begin the process of applying Flags. Make sure Auto Advance is checked under the Photo menu. As I mentioned previously, use P for picks, X for rejects, and U for unflag. Because of the filter that is set any photos marked as Reject will be hidden from view. When you reach the last photo in the shoot you will only see

Step Four: Right-click the Flag section and choose Unflagged Photos only. Now picks and rejects are hidden and only the ones you skipped are visible. Repeat the process again using only pick or reject until all are hidden from view.

Step Five: Set the filter to Rejected Photos Only and make sure there were no accidental rejections. Change if needed.

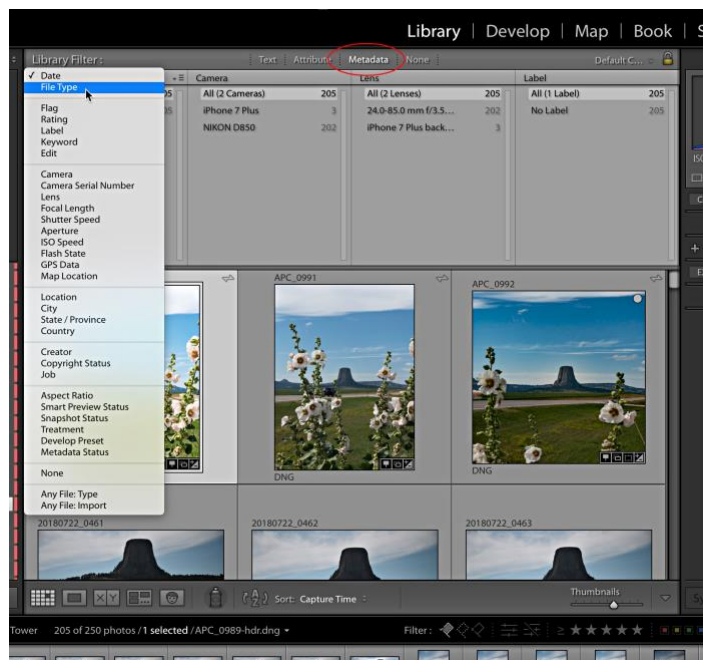
Disable the filter to see all the photos and delete the rejects or use the filter to keep the rejects hidden and move on to processing. Explore all the other ways you can turbo-charge your workflow with this filter.

One note of caution, at the end of the Attribute filter is the Kind section. If you hover your cursor over each icon, you'll see what they represent. If you ever get a weird filter result that doesn't make sense double-check that one of these Kind icons is not accidentally included in the filter. I have seen that virtual copy icon get enabled by accident (somehow) and it can be easy to miss.

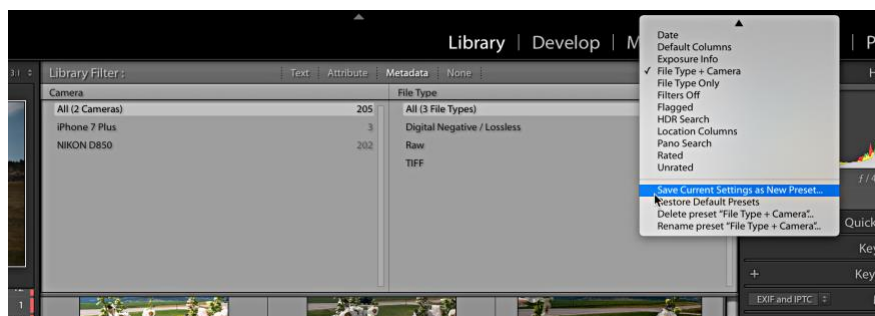
Metadata

The most powerful aspect of the Library Filter is the Metadata section simply because there is so much more data available to filter on. Once enabled you'll likely see the default set of metadata columns. If you place your cursor over the label on any column, you'll see it become active and drop-down arrows appear. Click that label to access a different set of data for that column.

On the right-side of the column is another drop-down menu where you can access controls for removing a column, adding a new column, and changing the way the data in the column is displayed or sorted. You can have as many as 8 columns or as few as just a single column.



Customizing these columns to your needs is where the real power lies, and once you've created



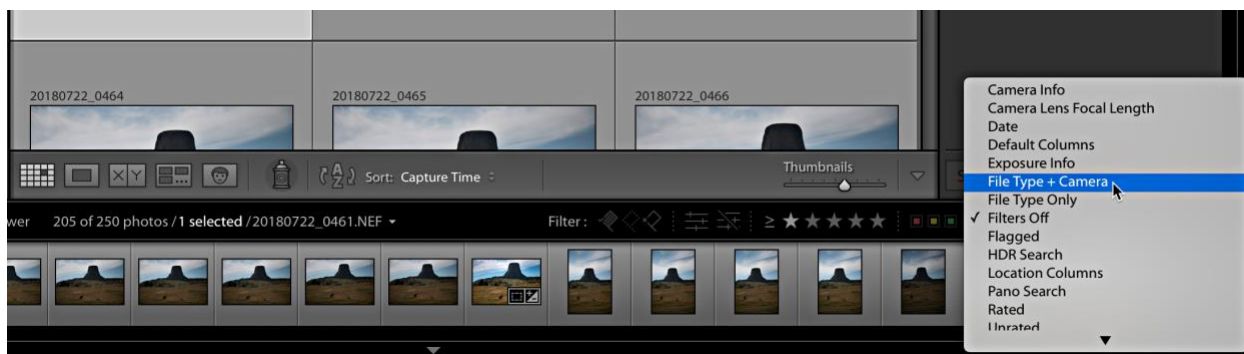
a set of columns to your specifications click the Preset drop-down menu at the far-right of the Library Filter and choose Save Current Settings as New Preset. Give that preset a meaningful name and you'll be able to recall

it anytime in the future from that same Preset drop-down menu or under the Library > Filter by Preset menu (note the other filter options buried in that Library menu too). You can also create saved presets based on Text, Attribute, or any combination of filters too.

Bonus tip! Place your cursor over the bottom edge of the Library Filter when Metadata is enabled, and you'll see it change to a double-sided arrow. Click and drag up or down to change the height of the columns. Remember that the \ key hides and shows the Filter bar without disabling the filter to better see the photo results.

Filmstrip Filter

All of these filters can also be accessed right from the Filmstrip while you are in any of the other modules. Way over on the top-right side of the Filmstrip is the Filter section. Click the word Filter to expand the options (a second click will collapse them). The drop-down menu there gives you access to all the same filter presets as up in the Library Filter. The little light switch at the end turns the filters on or off. Don't forget you can even change sources from the Filmstrip by clicking the path displaying the current source.



Locked and Unlocked

There are times when I want to apply the same filter to more than one source when I am gathering up photos for a project. The little lock icon at the end of the Filter bar will lock the current filter as you change sources when the lock is closed. When the lock is open you have to manually enable the filter if you change sources.



Did you know it is possible to lock a unique filter to different sources? It may be kind of an edge-use case, but it is there if you ever have the need. Let's say you wanted to filter one folder on all photos that are 4 star and above, and another folder for all photos with a pick flag so

that you could switch back and forth between sources without having to change the filter each time.

Here's how:

Step One: Select the first source and set the 4 star and above Attribute filter, then click the Lock icon.

Step Two: Go to File > Library Filters, and check Remember Each Source's Filters Separately.

Step Three: Switch to the second source and set the pick flag only Attribute filter.

Step Four: Switch back and forth between sources and you should see a unique filter applied to each one.

Clicking the lock icon again to unlock the filter will disable the unique filters when you are done with the project. File that away for the future.

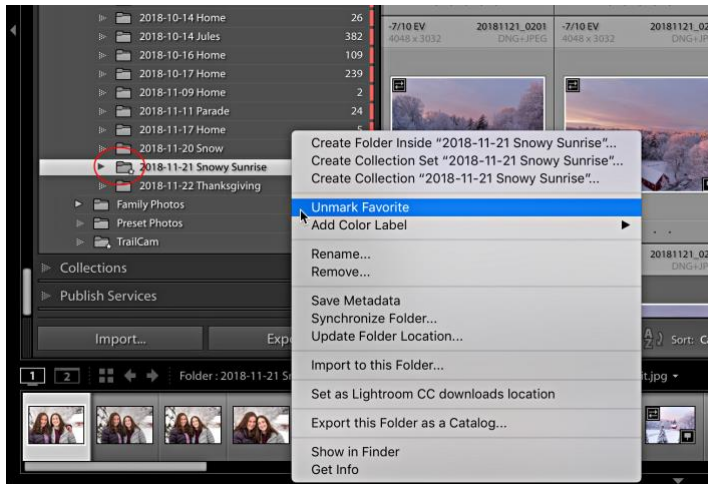
Things You Can Mark as Favorites in Lightroom Classic

Like whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles, and warm woolen mittens, it turns out there are a number of things you can mark as a "favorite" inside of LrC. The core logic around why you would mark something as a favorite is that it is something you use often and want to have faster access to it again in the future.

Favorite Folders

If you've got a folder or two that you'd like ready access to from anywhere in Lightroom, consider marking them as a favorite. This process was made much easier in a recent update. Simply right-click a folder and choose Mark Favorite (you can unmark as favorite the same way).

That folder will gain a special star icon to identify it as a favorite. If you click the drop-down menu in the folder filter field (say that five times fast), you'll see there is an option to filter by



favorites as well. When selected you'll only see folders that have been marked as favorites in the Folders panel. A great way to clear the clutter when needed.

Folders marked as favorites will also appear as a favorite source via the breadcrumbs link in the Filmstrip, which we'll look at next.

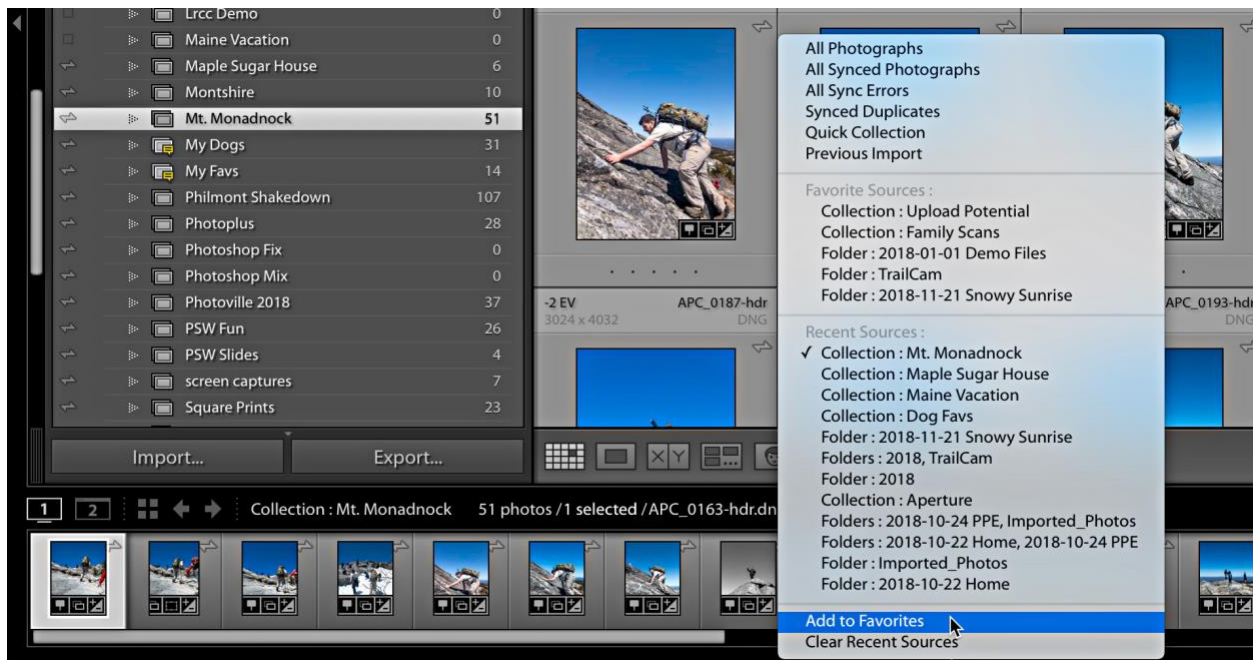
Favorite Sources

While there isn't the same functionality for collections as the previously mentioned functionality for folders (don't ask me why), there is a way to do it. Here's how:

Step One: Select the collection you want to add to favorite sources.

Step Two: Click the breadcrumbs path in the Filmstrip to open its menu.

Step Three: Click Add to Favorites at the bottom of the list.

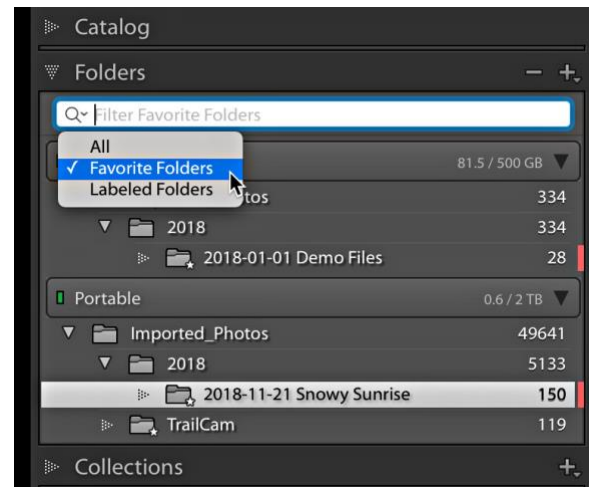


The collection, or source, will be added to the Favorite Source section of the menu. Collections marked as favorites don't get the same fancy icon as folders do, so the only place to see which

have been marked as a favorite is in this menu. You can also remove a selected source from this list from the same breadcrumbs menu.

Filter Within Panels – Going Deeper

Earlier I showed you the little search field at the top of the Folders panel, but a similar filter also exists in the Collections, and Keyword List panels too. They are easy to ignore and overlook, but each is a wonderful tool for filtering the contents of each panel respectively. I have hundreds of folders, nearly as many collections, and thousands of keywords. Instead of clicking and scrolling through each of those panels to find what I am looking for I can just type a few letters and the contents of each panel is filtered in real time! This is a huge time saver.



That little drop-down menu in each of the panels holds the real goodies so be sure to try each one. Did you know you can filter the Collections panel by color labels as well, or to only display synced collections? You can! And the Keyword List panel can be filtered to just show People keywords if you use face recognition. Filtering data is one of the most useful things you can do in a database (catalog), so get out there and try all these little gems to see how they can help make your workflow more efficient.

Mastering Collections

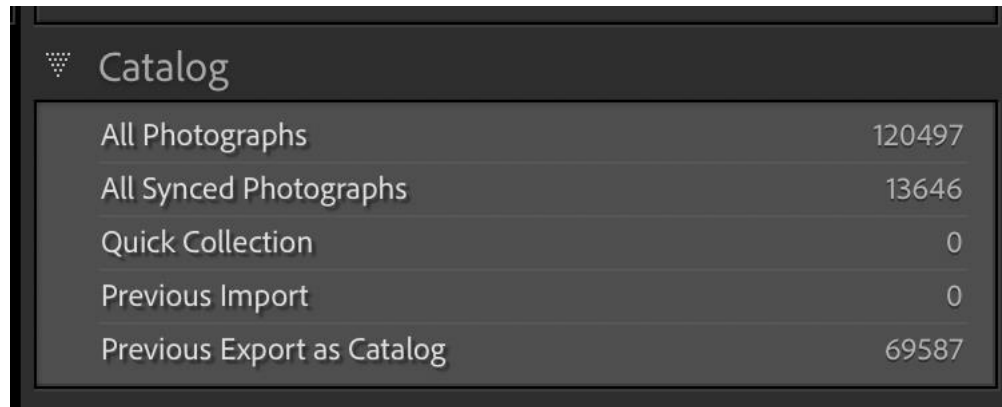
A key piece of data stored in the LrC catalog is the location of each imported photo on your system, stored as a path, from the volume name (PC: drive letter) to the individual file name and all the folders in between (this is part of what we see in the Folders panel). This allows LrC to reference where each photo is stored, and when needed for working in Develop or exporting copies, the program can access the photo in question and do the job at hand. Because LrC only references each photo, it can leverage that data to easily group photos together in a variety of ways using these things called collections. Think of collections as virtual folders that only exist within the catalog.

Some people find it easier to think of collections like musical playlists in a music app, where you can create a playlist and add as many songs to it as you wish, and you know that the music app is only referring to each song file without regard to where that song file is stored on your computer. Likewise, you can have an infinite number of playlists and you can even add the same song to every playlist, and at no time does the music app duplicate the actual song file on your computer or move it to a different location. Collections behave exactly the same way. This makes collections an incredibly powerful tool for organizing and accessing your photos beyond

the physical storage aspect of folders. Collections can be found in the Catalog panel and in the Collections panel.

The Catalog Panel

Before we get to the aptly named Collections panel, I want to point out that LrC comes pre-loaded with a few useful collections in the Catalog panel.



Catalog	
All Photographs	120497
All Synced Photographs	13646
Quick Collection	0
Previous Import	0
Previous Export as Catalog	69587

Even if you have a completely empty catalog, you'll find the All Photographs, All Synced Photographs, Quick Collection, and Previous Import collections ready to go. As photos are imported into the catalog you will see the number next to All Photographs increase accordingly, and clicking on that collection will give you access to all imported photos at once. If you are using LrC and are syncing with Lr on your mobile devices, the All Synced Photographs collection gives you a running tally on the number of photos synced, and provides similar easy access to them.

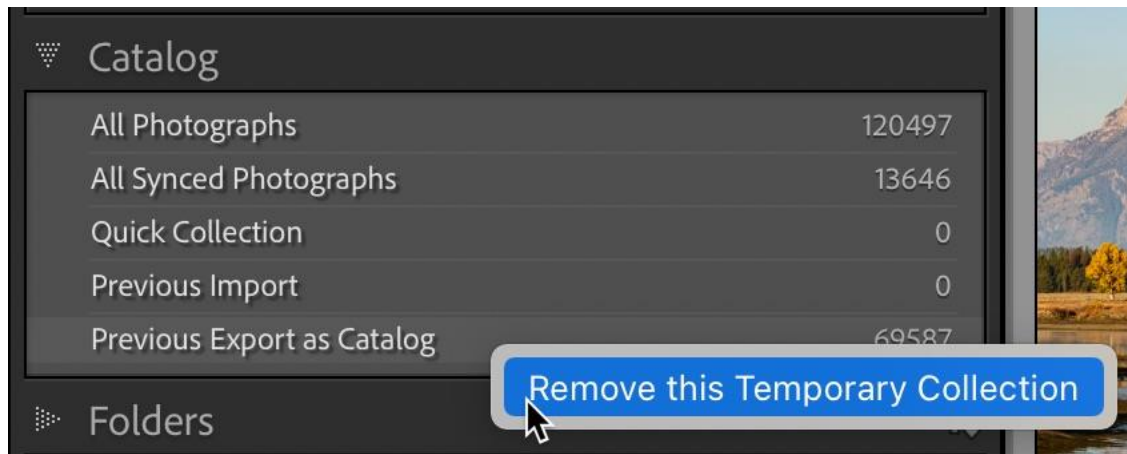
The Quick Collection is for when you need to temporarily gather a group of photos together and hold them while you work, which can be useful for pulling together some photos to be printed, exported, or some other purpose. You can add a photo to the Quick Collection by dragging and dropping it onto the Quick Collection, and you can remove a photo by selecting it and pressing the Delete (PC: Return) key. By default, the Quick Collection is also set as the Target Collection, denoted by the small + sign next to it in the Catalog panel. As the Target Collection, you can also add photos to it by selecting them and pressing the B key, or by clicking the small gray circle button that appears in the upper-right corner of the thumbnail.

Conversely, you can remove photos from the Target Collection by pressing the B key or clicking that button while viewing the collection.

The Previous Import (will say Current during an active import) will always show the last batch of photos to go through the import process (or the current active import). By default, when you start an import the current view will switch to this collection and you'll see the new photos appear in the catalog. If you don't wish to switch to viewing this collection during an import you can go to Preferences > General and uncheck Select the Current/Previous Import collection

during import, and you will remain viewing whichever folder or collection you were in before the import started.

Other collections may also appear in the Catalog panel as you work over time. These can be created when you do things such as export a catalog or use the Find Missing Photos command (found under the Library menu). If you discover one of these collections, such as this Previous Export as Catalog collection, and you want to remove it, just right-click it to access the contextual menu for removal.



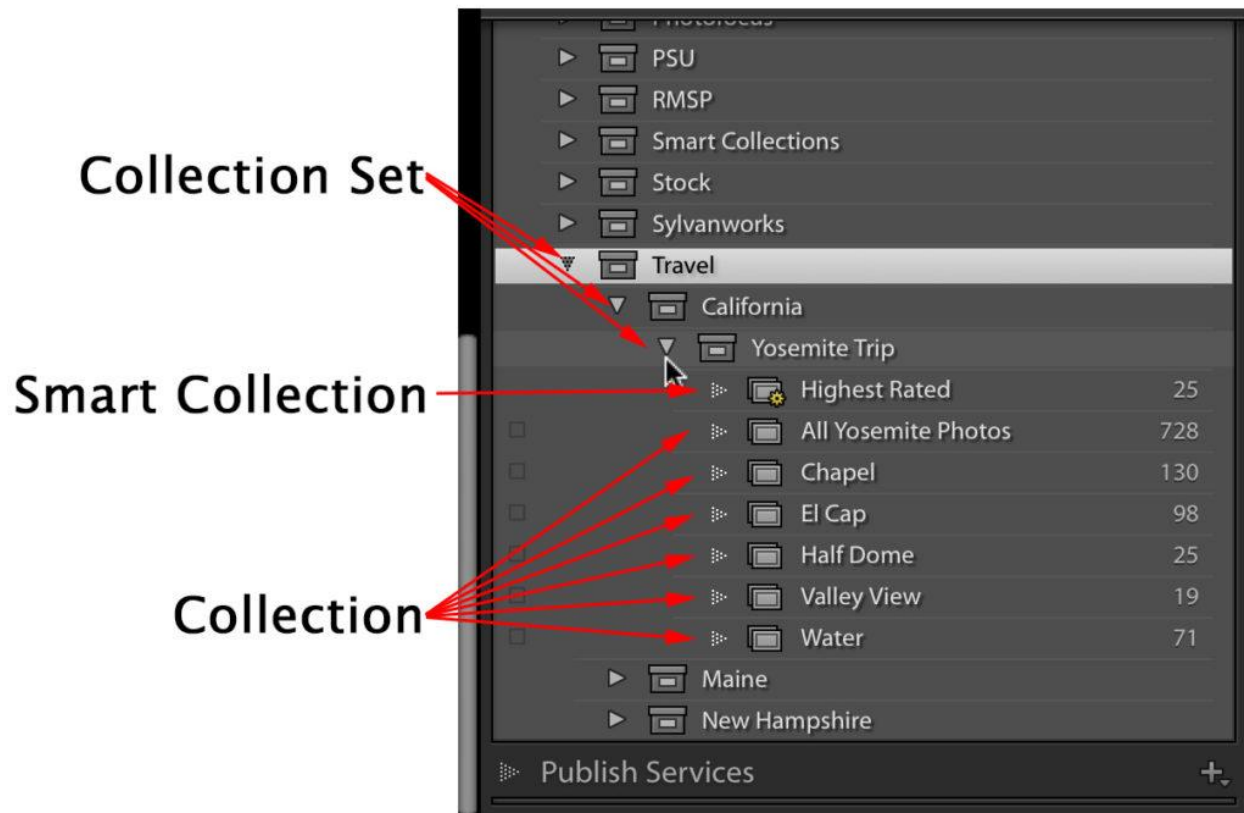
While those pre-built collections in the Catalog panel are all very useful in their own way there is another level of user-driven collections that you can leverage to fit your organizational needs. This is where the Collections panel comes into play.

The Collections Panel

There are three types of collection tools found here:

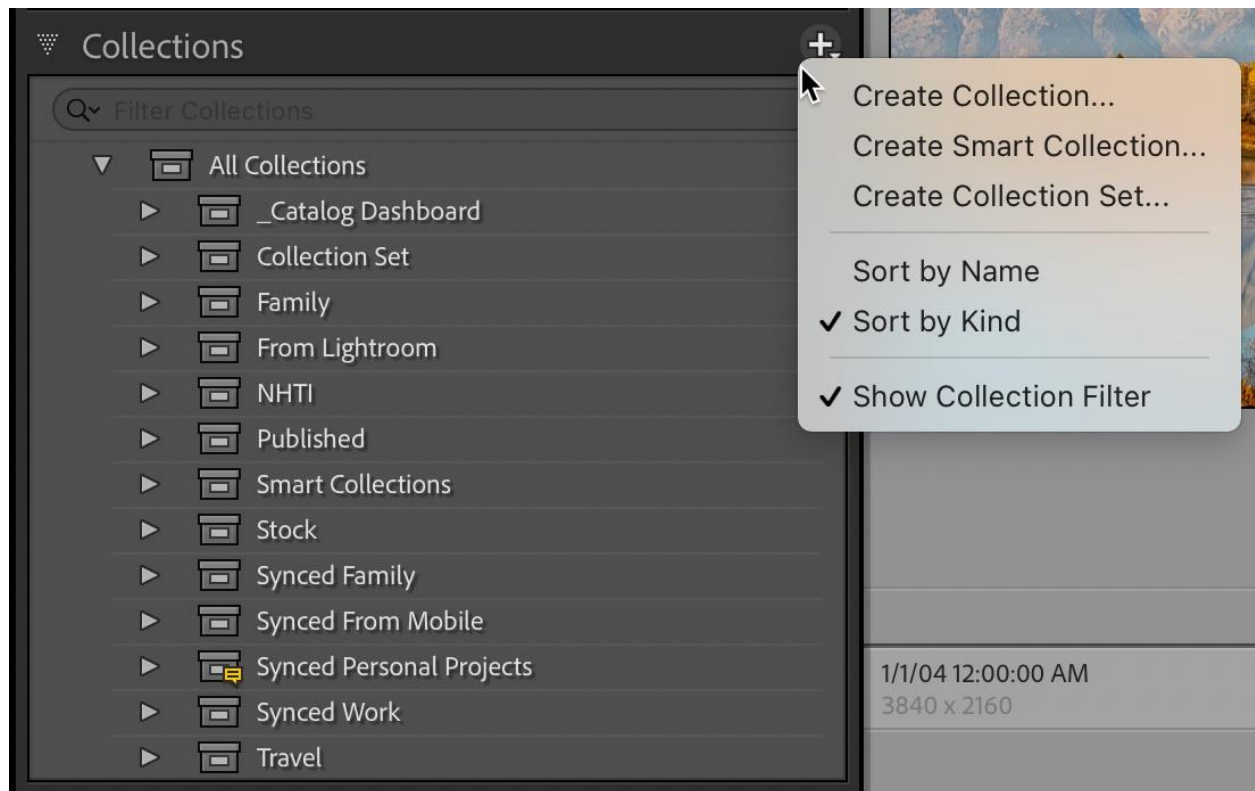
- Collection Sets – used for providing organizational structure
- Collections – used for manually gathering up photos in various groupings
- Smart Collections – a type of saved search that automatically finds photos matching specific criteria

Collection sets can only contain collections, smart collections, or other collection sets, which is why they are good for creating structure within the Collections panel. For example, you might have a collection set called Travel, and then within that collection set you could create a collection set for each location you've traveled to, and then within each location's collection set you'd create collections and/or smart collections to gather up the relevant photos for each location.



Because LrC is always referencing the photos, you can continue to add photos to existing collections without worrying about where those photos are stored on your system. This also gives you the ability to add photos to as many collections as you need to without worry of duplicating photos on your drive. So, I can have photos in my All Yosemite Photos collection (and keep adding more each time I visit) as well as those same photos in each respective collection based on a location within the park. In the future, if I need to find a photo from Yosemite, I can just go to this collection set and find them without needing to remember what folder those photos happen to be stored within on my system. I can then use the Library Filter bar to refine the view of any given collection to show photos by date, rating, flag, camera, lens, and so on. This is truly leveraging the power of that catalog (database) for my needs.

There are a few different ways to create these collection tools, with the most obvious being the + sign at the top of the Collections panel.



From this menu you can choose which tool you need, and then you'll be presented with the dialog box for completing the process. Each tool has different options, so let's look at each one in turn. I'll create a collection set for a trip to Montana, and then create a collection to hold all of the photos from the trip, and then a smart collection to automatically gather up my highest rated photos from that collection. This process can be applied to any combination of collection sets, collections, and smart collections.

STEP ONE: Click the + sign at the top of the Collections panel and choose Collection Set.

STEP TWO: Give the collection set a name, and choose if you want it to be placed within an existing collection set. In my case, I want it to go into my Travel collection set, so that is checked.

Create Collection Set

Name: Montana

Location

☒ Inside a Collection Set

Travel

Cancel Create

Click Create to add it to the Collections panel.

Now that I have my parent collection set I can begin to add collections and smart collections to organize my photos. First I'll add a collection for all photos from the trip to Glacier National Park.

STEP ONE: An alternative to the + sign at the top of the panel is to right-click the parent collection set and choose Create Collection from the contextual menu that appears.

Create Collection

Name: All Glacier Photos

Location

☒ Inside a Collection Set

Montana

Options

☐ Set as target collection

☐ Sync with Lightroom mobile

Cancel Create

STEP TWO: When the Create Collection dialog appears the Location will already be configured for inside the Montana collection set. I can now give this collection a name and click Create to add it to the panel.

Adding Photos

Now I'm ready to add photos to that collection, and this can be done simply by dragging and dropping the photos from Grid view to the collection. As an alternative, if you want to create a collection from an entire folder of photos you can drag and drop the folder from the Folders panel to the Collections panel.

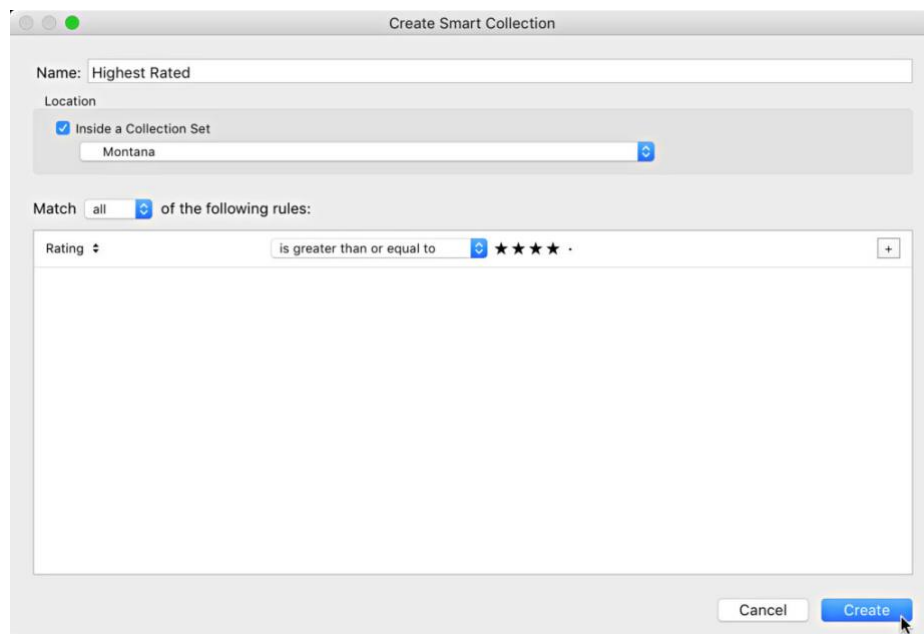
Either option gives the same result, but when you drag the folder down the resulting collection will have the same name as the folder. To rename a collection, just right-click and choose Rename from the contextual menu that appears.

Now that I have a collection set, and my first collection, I can create a smart collection with a few simple rules to automatically find all of the photos I give a high star rating.

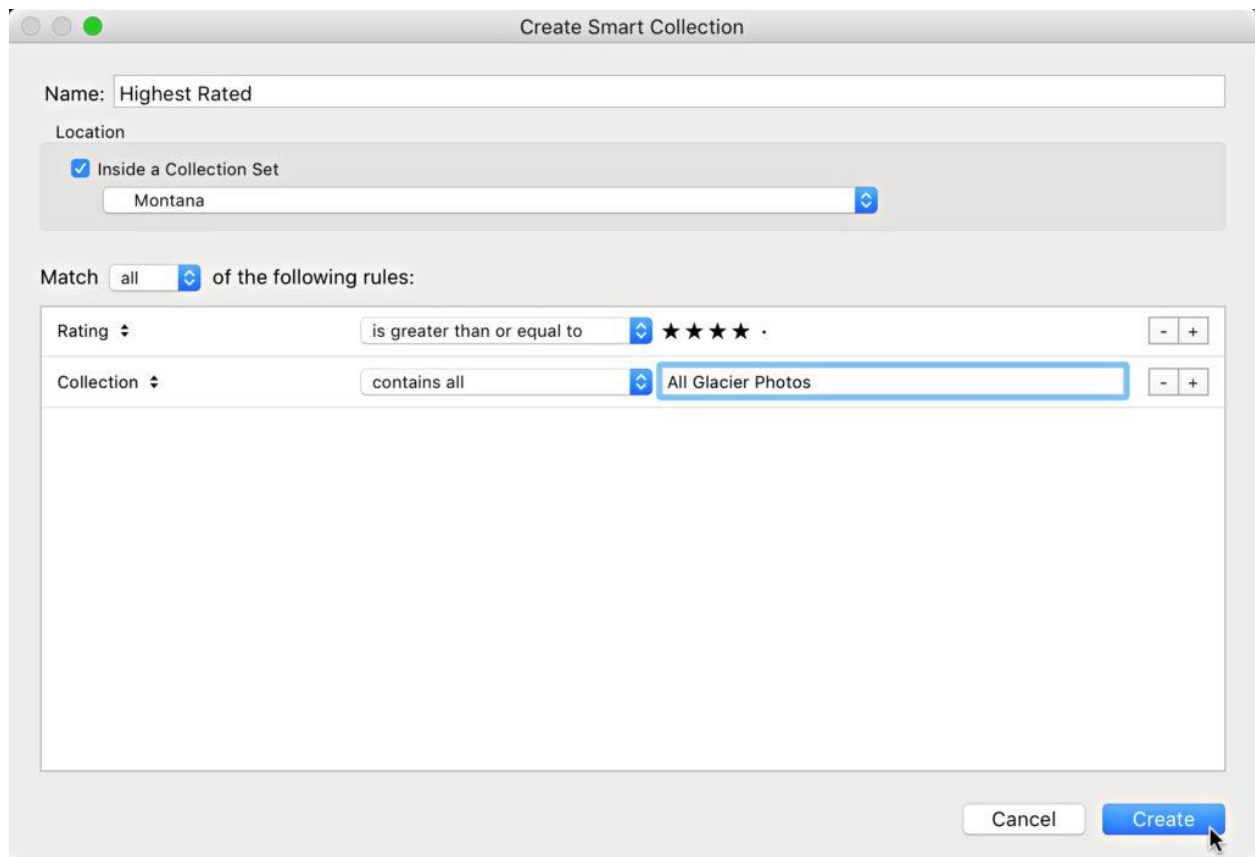
STEP ONE: Right-click the Montana collection set and choose Create Smart Collection from the contextual menu.

STEP TWO: In the resulting Create Smart Collection dialog box, give the smart collection a name and note that it is already configured to be created within the parent collection set.

STEP THREE: Define your first rule. For this smart collection I want a rule based on the star rating. By default, the Rating criteria came up as my first rule, so I just need to define the criteria and the number of stars. I chose greater than or equal to 4 stars.



STEP FOUR: Add additional rules as needed. I also want a rule that defines the source of the photos being searched or else the default behavior is to apply the rules to all photos in the catalog. Click the + sign at the end of the first rule to add a second. Then click the rule drop-down menu to choose from the available options. Under Source, I chose Collection, and then entered the name of the collection I had just created. Click Create to put it into action.



With my greater than or equal to 4 stars and All Glacier Photos collection set as the source, as I apply a 4 or 5 star rating to any photos in that collection they will automatically be gathered into my new smart collection. With the knowledge to create smart collections you can design your own [Catalog Dashboard](#) to help you keep tabs on your growing photo library. With these basic concepts mastered and put into practice you'll be well on your way to being organized and can then take it up a notch with becoming more efficient over time.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions. You can find me at any of the following locations:

Twitter: [@Lightroomers](#)
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