Photoshop World 2021 – Preconference Session
Lightroom and Lightroom Classic for Beginners
By Rob Sylvan

Did you know that there are two versions of Lightroom? Did you know that they operate completely separately from each other, but can also be used together? Did you know that one version stores everything in the Adobe cloud and the other stores everything locally? Are you considering adding one or both versions of Lightroom to your workflow? If you'd like to learn the answers to all these questions (and more) so that you can decide with confidence which version of Lightroom is right for you and your needs, then this is the session for you. Join Rob as he explains the fundamental differences and similarities between Lightroom and Lightroom Classic, outlines real world use case scenarios for each application, and unlocks the keys to using them together if you choose.
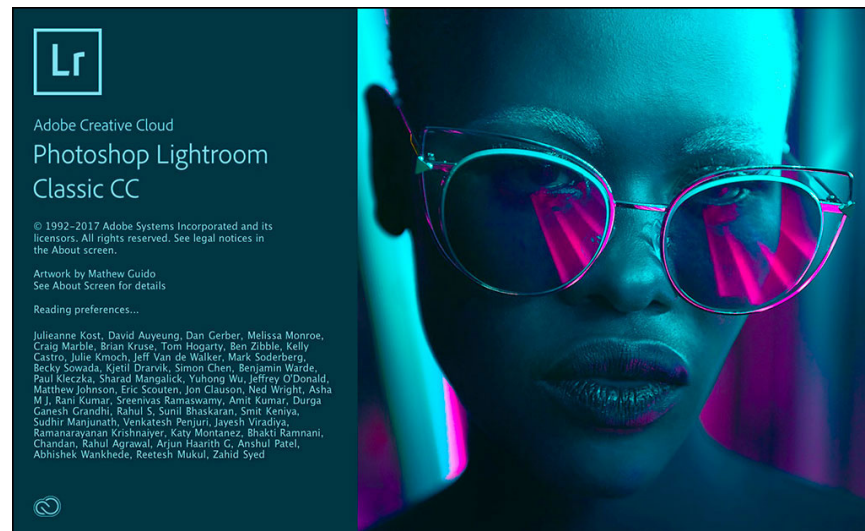
Short History – how did we get here?
I think it can be helpful to know the history of how these products evolved to have a context for understanding which version may be best for your needs. Feel free to skip this part if you already know it.

2015 is the year Adobe released *Lightroom 6* available through a perpetual license, and *Lightroom CC 2015*, which was the same product but available through a Creative Cloud subscription. Over the next couple of years *Lightroom CC 2015* did gain a couple of new features, but overall it remained the same program as *Lightroom 6*. During that period, there was also a product called *Lightroom Mobile* for iOS and Android which could sync with *Lightroom CC 2015*. So while there were a few different products in the Lightroom family, they each did have a unique name, so it wasn't too hard to have a discussion about which one you were using. Those were also the good old days when they also displayed the version number on the splash screen.

Then October of 2017 came along and what we knew as *Lightroom CC 2015* became *Lightroom Classic CC*, and we learned that *Lightroom 6* was the last version available through a perpetual license. Oh, and what we knew as *Lightroom Mobile* was now going to be called *Lightroom CC* and we gained Mac and Windows versions to go along with the existing iOS and Android versions, and an "ecosystem" was born. Referring to your Lightroom software as *Lightroom CC* got a bit more complicated because now all versions of Lightroom have had Lightroom CC in the name.

Then, in 2019 Adobe dropped the "CC" bit from the names of all Lightroom products because there was no longer a perpetual license version to differentiate from. This left us with *Lightroom Classic* and *Lightroom*. However, due to all this history and product name evolution, just saying Lightroom alone always begs the further clarifying question of, "which version of Lightroom are you using?"

I had hoped that in all the years after Lightroom became *Lightroom Classic* and the new version of *Lightroom* appeared that the confusion around the product names would have gone away. Alas, that has not been my experience. Every new *Lightroom Classic/Lightroom* user needs to understand the difference between the two versions of Lightroom. It really shouldn't be this hard, but here we are. Once you've got your brain wrapped around the different versions and how they are used, there really isn't a better solution for managing your photos locally (*Lightroom Classic*) and even extending it into the cloud (*Lightroom*).

The one helpful bright spot for being able to communicate about these two versions of Lightroom more easily came along in 2020 when Adobe updated the brand identity for the creative cloud suite of products, which gave *Lightroom Classic* and *Lightroom* new icons that helped to differentiate them visually and gave a simpler way to communicate about them. *Lightroom Classic* gained an icon with the letters LrC and Lightroom's icon was a simple Lr across all supported platforms. For the sake of clarity, I will now refer to *Lightroom Classic* as LrC and *Lightroom* as Lr for the rest of this workbook.

Ok, with that history under our belt and a simpler way to talk about LrC and Lr without wondering which version is being discussed, let's look at the different subscription plans available for using either or both versions.

Subscription plans – what's included?
The two most common subscription plans for acquiring LrC and/or Lr are:

- The Photography Plan
- The Lightroom Plan

The Photography Plan has been around since 2015 and the price has not changed from the original $9.99/month. This is the most popular plan among photographers that I know and have talked to over the years. The Lightroom plan was introduced when the products split in 2017 and is also $9.99/month. Understanding what is included in each plan is the key to choosing the right one for your photography needs. I've included a screen capture of the plan comparison chart, but you'll want to check Adobe's website for the most up-to-date information on pricing and what is included.

As you look at the chart on the next page you'll note a third option, which is the Photography Plan that includes 1TB of cloud storage. This is what I call the best of both worlds plan, but it is not for everyone. We'll dive into the details in a bit.

	Photography plan (20GB) Make amazing photos from anywhere, and truly transform them with Photoshop (starter storage included). US$9.99/mo [Buy now]	Photography plan (1TB) Make amazing photos from anywhere, and truly transform them with Photoshop. US$19.99/mo [Buy now]	Lightroom plan (1TB) Make amazing photos from anywhere. US$9.99/mo [Buy now]
Adobe Photoshop Lightroom The all-new app that lets you easily edit, organize, store, and share your full-resolution photos anywhere. Lightroom requires Windows 10 or later or Mac OSX v 10.11 or later.	•	•	•
Lightroom Classic The desktop-focused app for editing and organizing your photos.	•	•	
Adobe Photoshop on desktop The imaging app with advanced editing and compositing features for transforming your photos.	•	•	
Photoshop on iPad Edit, composite, and create beautiful images, graphics and art on your iPad.	•	•	
Adobe Spark to create social graphics, videos, and web pages.	•	•	•
Adobe Portfolio to build your own website.	•	•	•
Cloud photo storage 20GB: Approx. 4,000 JPEGs 1TB: Approx. 20,000 raw DSLR images or 200,000 JPEGs	20GB	1TB	1TB

Looking at this chart you can see that **if you just want Photoshop and LrC then the Photography plan** is the one for you. However, if you don't want Photoshop and **you just want to use Lr on all your devices then choose the Lightroom plan**. The cost is the same, but those key options really determine what your photography workflow will encompass.

What if you want Photoshop, LrC, and the ability to use Lr on your mobile device(s)? This is where you really need to think about how you will use Lr to determine how much cloud storage you'll need. For example, if you only plan to use Lr on your mobile devices to showcase photos from your LrC catalog then you can stick with the base Photography plan because it also includes Lr as part of that plan. However, that base Photography plan only includes 20GB of cloud storage, which is not much space, so you'll have to be more mindful of managing that amount of storage. A key point that we'll dive into further later is that **if you only ever sync photos to the Lr cloud from LrC you won't ever use any of that 20GB of cloud storage to do it**. The only way you will impact your cloud storage is if you import or capture photos directly into one of the Lr apps, which is possible to avoid.

All that said, if you want to be able to use all those apps and be able to store a substantial number of photos (and videos for that matter) in the cloud, then you might consider the Photography plan with 1TB of cloud storage (the middle plan on the chart) for $19.99/month. This gives you the best of both worlds with a lot of flexibility for importing photos into Lr while in the field, editing full resolution photos from any device, while using LrC as your home base for all your photography. This would also be the plan choice for anyone just wanting to use Lr

and have access to Photoshop too (even if they never used LrC) because it is the cheapest way to get Lr and Photoshop together with 1TB of cloud storage.

Note, it is possible to pay for more cloud storage at a cost of $9.99 USD per month per TB up to 10TB on top of the base plan cost.

That's a broad look at the plans to help you choose a path forward, but you may still have questions about the differences and similarities between LrC and Lr to help you decide which is best for your needs, so let's cover that next.

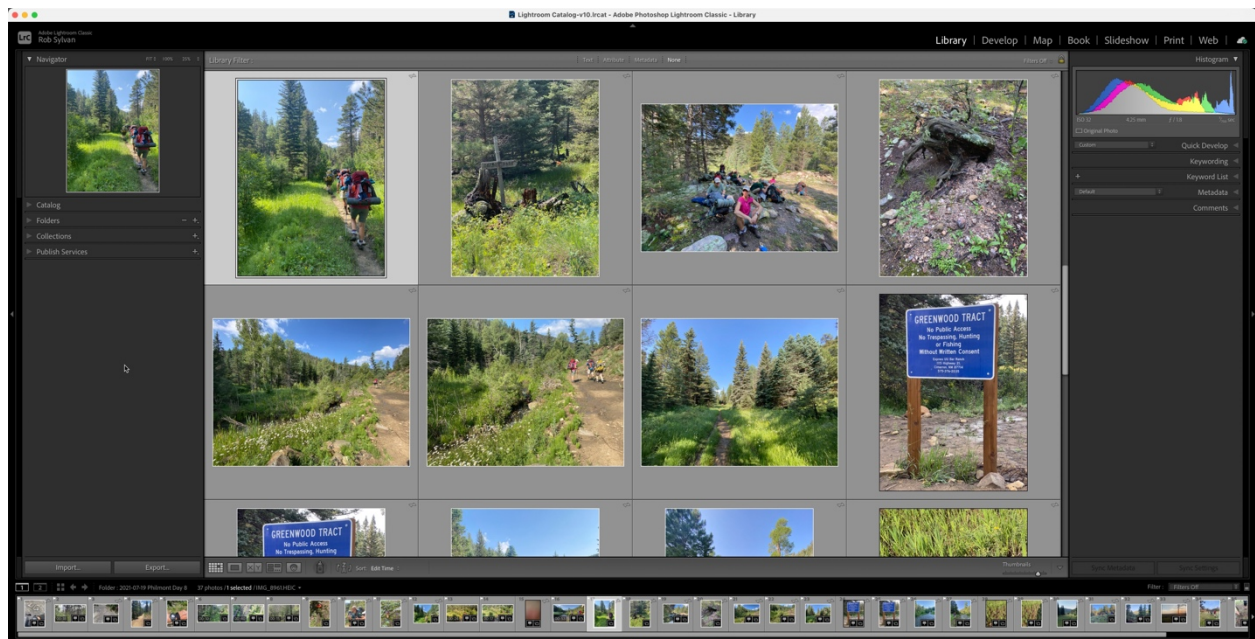**Key Similarities and Differences**
The main area of similar functionality between LrC and Lr has always been in the editing department. While Lr has not yet achieved 100% feature parity with LrC, it is maybe 99% of the way there and continually getting closer. This is arguably the area that is most important to us photographers, so we can see why Adobe has made it such a priority. For example, while Lr does include local adjustment tools like the Radial and Linear Filters, it does not include the Range Mask function within them.

It is not just that a certain editing feature or tool is not present in Lr, but one must also consider that LrC has a lot of efficiencies built into how tools can be used that Lr does not have. For example, LrC can perform many more tasks at the moment of import into the program than Lr can, LrC has more options for export, and much tighter integration with Photoshop to name a few things that impact your workflow as a whole.
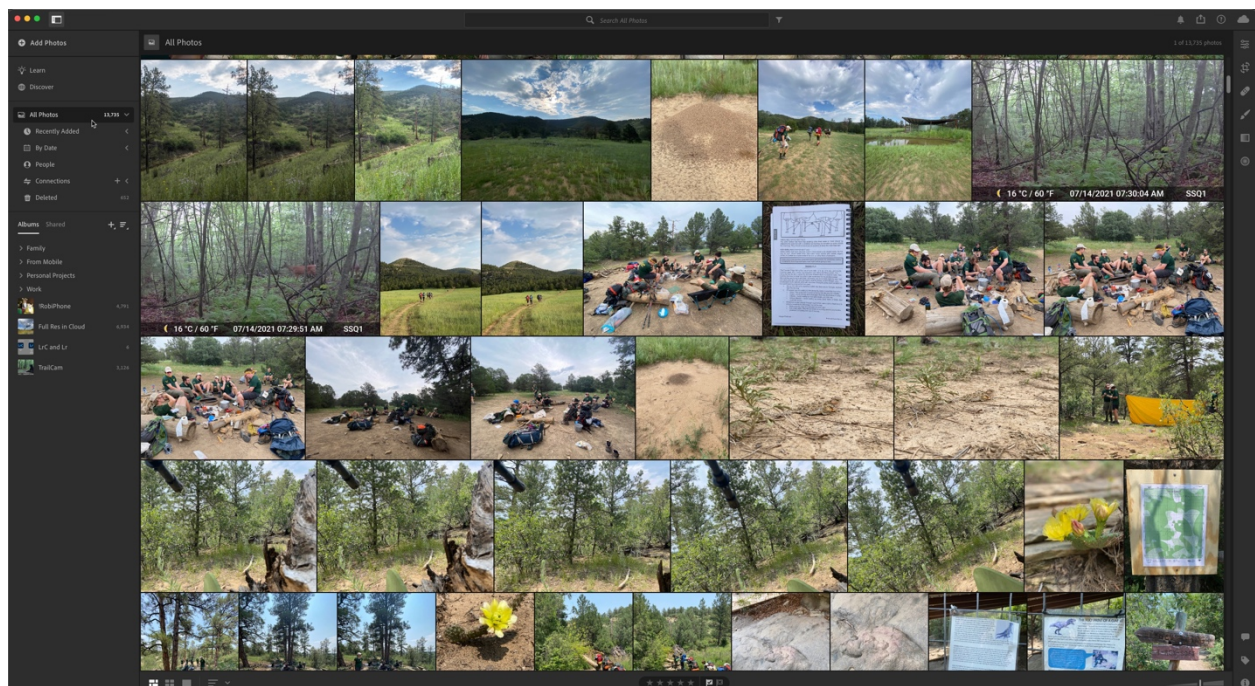
Another similarity, with a difference, is that both LrC and Lr use collections to group and organize your photos. In fact, it is the only method that Lr has to group your photos together since all photos are stored in the Lr cloud and not on your local drive. The key difference here is in the names used in LrC and Lr for this same exact functionality. In LrC we call them collections, and within LrC you can organize your collections using what are called collection sets.

However, in Lr these are called albums, and within all the Lr apps you can organize your albums using what are called folders. Do not confuse the use of the word folders here with the local folders on your drive because there is no connection to them. In Lr, just know that you can group photos together into albums and you can group albums together within folders. While in LrC you can group photos together in collections and you can group collections together within collection sets.
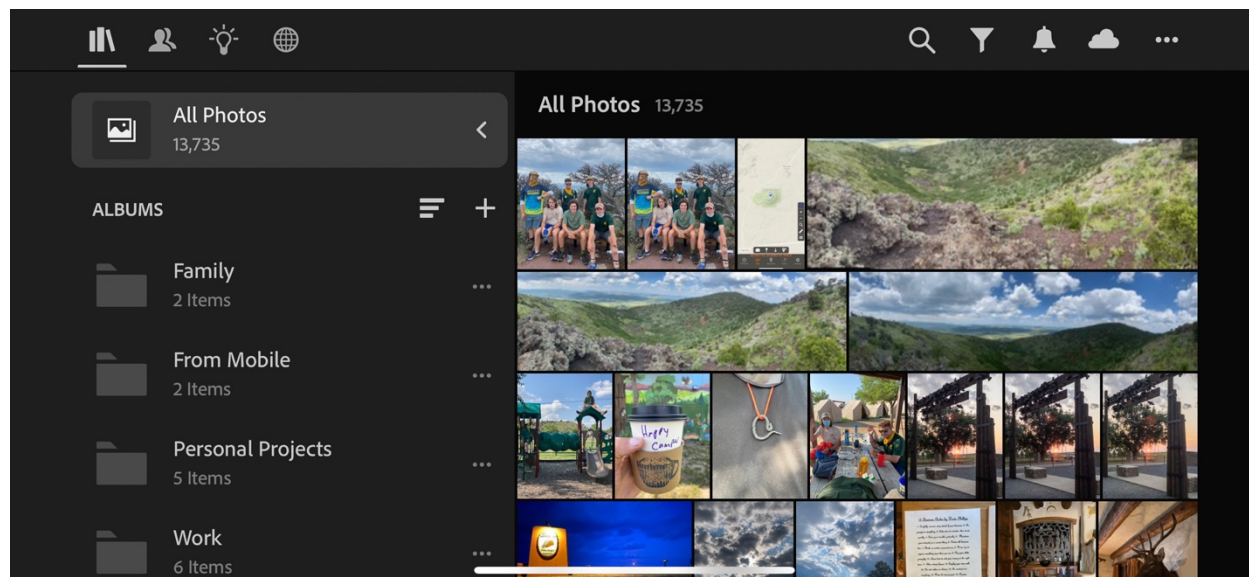
Visually, the interfaces are very different, and that's a good thing in that as soon as you see one of them you should know exactly which is LrC and which is Lr. Here's the Library module of LrC:

Contrast that against Lr as it appears on Mac and Windows you'll see there are no modules at all. You just have a single interface that provides access to photos on the left and tools on the right:

On mobile devices (Android, iOS, and even Chromebooks) have a similar feeling interface, though its differences are due to the differences in screen size and touch interface. It still feels like the Lr application, and wouldn't be confused with LrC. Here's an example of how it appears on iOS when held horizontally (the screen can rotate to fit how you are holding your device):

When first using any program there is a period of getting oriented to where things are, and I appreciate that it can be overwhelming. If you prefer a simpler, cleaner, and more intuitive interface then that may be a reason to consider using Lr over LrC. LrC does have more options overall (like the Print, Book, Map, Slideshow, and Web modules in addition to Develop and Library), but that does come with the penalty of having more to learn.

The most important difference to understand is that when using Lr all photos you import directly into any of the Lr apps are uploaded at full resolution and stored in the Lr cloud (Adobe servers). By storing full resolution copies of all photos in the cloud it allows you to access those photos from any device you own (assuming you have Internet connection), which is incredibly freeing and flexible.

Contrast that against LrC that can only ever store and refer to photos on local drives (local drives can include internal drives, external drives, and local network drives). Yes, within LrC you have the option to sync your catalog to the Lr cloud, but LrC can only upload a smart preview (more on those later) to the cloud. A very important point about smart previews in this context is that they do not count against your cloud storage quota, so you can sync as many photos from LrC to the cloud as you wish without ever impacting your 20GB of cloud storage.

Another key difference is that LrC allows for integration with a range of third-party plug-ins as well as tighter integration with Photoshop itself. Lr does have a basic level of integration with Photoshop but lacks options for opening as a smart object or opening multiple photos in a

single document with layers, and completely lacks integration with third-party image editors at this time.

It is challenging to compare and contrast LrC and Lr by just looking at a list of features though because ultimately you have to keep in mind that each was designed for a different set of needs, and they are both also in a continual state of evolution and change. A difference today may be a similarity tomorrow (or some time down the road). **The real key deciding factor for which Lightroom is right for you really boils down to where do you want to store your entire photo library**. If you want to keep your entire library stored on locally managed hard drives then LrC is the program for you. If you want to store your entire photo library in the Adobe cloud then Lr is the program designed for that exact purpose. Once you've made that decision, then it is just a matter of learning the ins and outs of the choice you made.

What Type of Photographer Am I?
Knowing the history, the similarities, and the differences, we can begin to understand the types of photographers who may gravitate more towards LrC, Lr, or using both together to manage their photo libraries over time.

Generally speaking, a photographer with a high volume of new photos entering their library and/or a very large existing photo library (multiple terabytes) will find LrC an easier and more cost-effective tool for editing and managing their photos. LrC has many more tools for handing a high-volume workflow and avoids the additional expense associated with adding more cloud storage. Additionally, LrC plays nicely with Photoshop and other image editing tools. I would add to this scenario any photographer who has reservations about storing their photos in the cloud in general or has limited Internet bandwidth.

In the same general vein, a photographer who places a priority on being able to access full resolution photos from all their devices and has no reservations about storing photos in the cloud, may enjoy the freedom and flexibility of just sticking with Lr on all their devices. Adobe has learned a lot of lessons from years of feedback on LrC and has made Lr much simpler to use, and it completely avoids the headache of managing a catalog file or even managing photos on local drives, which can be a godsend to some. Ease of use and simplicity, coupled with powerful editing and seamless transition between devices is a pretty good deal.

Then there are those who want the best of both worlds and want to use LrC as the home base for all photography while extending their photo libraries onto their mobile devices and even multiple computers
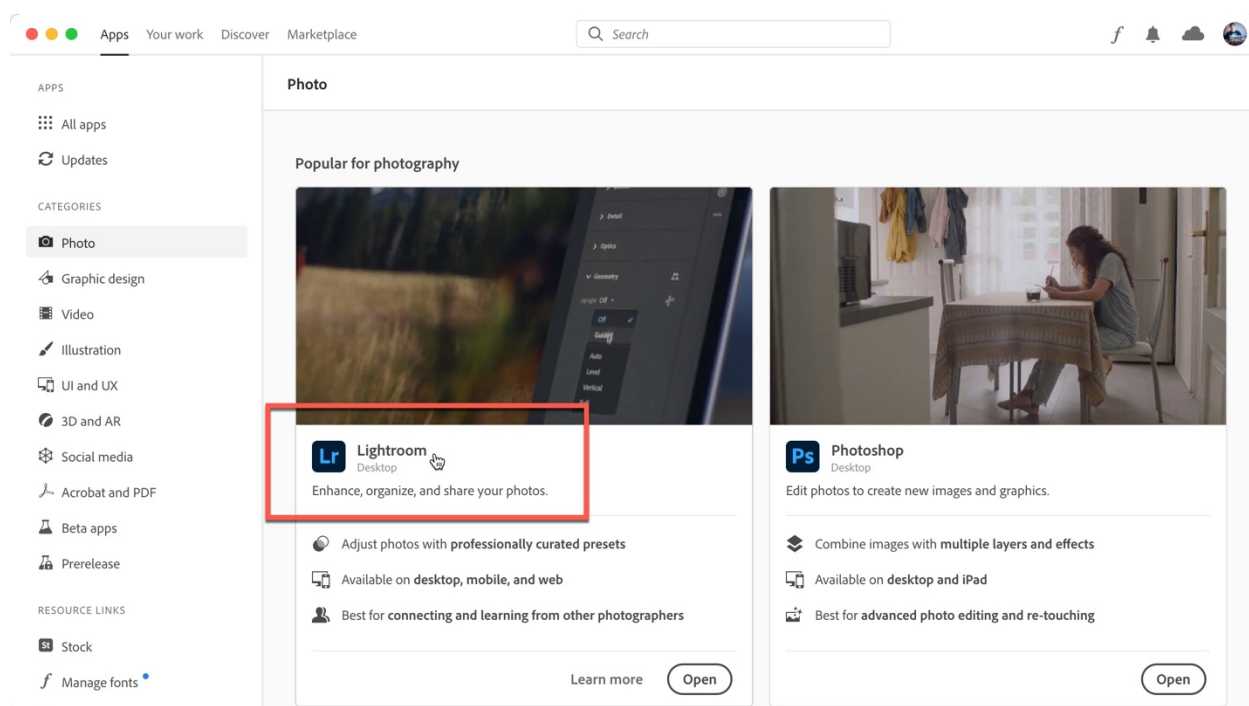
Getting Started on the Right Foot with only Lightroom Classic (LrC)
I'm not able to teach you everything you need to know about how to use LrC, but thankfully there is an entire Lightroom Track devoted to just that on KelbyOne, not to mention the other classes here at Photoshop World. All I want to do is impart some advice to help you get started on the right foot if you have never used it before and want to give it a go.

First, you must understand that your photos are never inside of LrC. The only thing inside of LrC is information about your photos, which is stored in a database called the catalog. Your photos are only ever stored in folders on a drive (internal, external, or network) of your choosing. By default, the catalog is created within a folder named Lightroom within the Pictures folder of your computer. To dive deeper, I've compiled a list of 15 tips I would tell a new LrC user, and I recommend that you go through them all (even if you are not that new to LrC). That was originally a top 10 list, but I've recently expanded it to 15. I guarantee you that your LrC experience will be vastly improved by learning those tips.

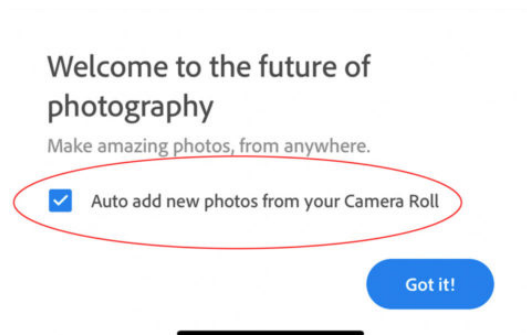**Getting Started on the Right Foot with only Lightroom (Lr)**
If you are only using Lr (and not at all using LrC), then all you need to do is install Lr on all your devices, log in with the same Adobe ID on all of them, and away you go (if you're not using Lr, then skip this section). It really is as simple as that. On your mobile devices you can find and install the Lr app from the app store on each respective device (iOS, Android, and ChromeOS are supported). On Mac and Windows computers, install the Creative Cloud Application Manager first, log in with your Adobe ID, then install the Lr app.
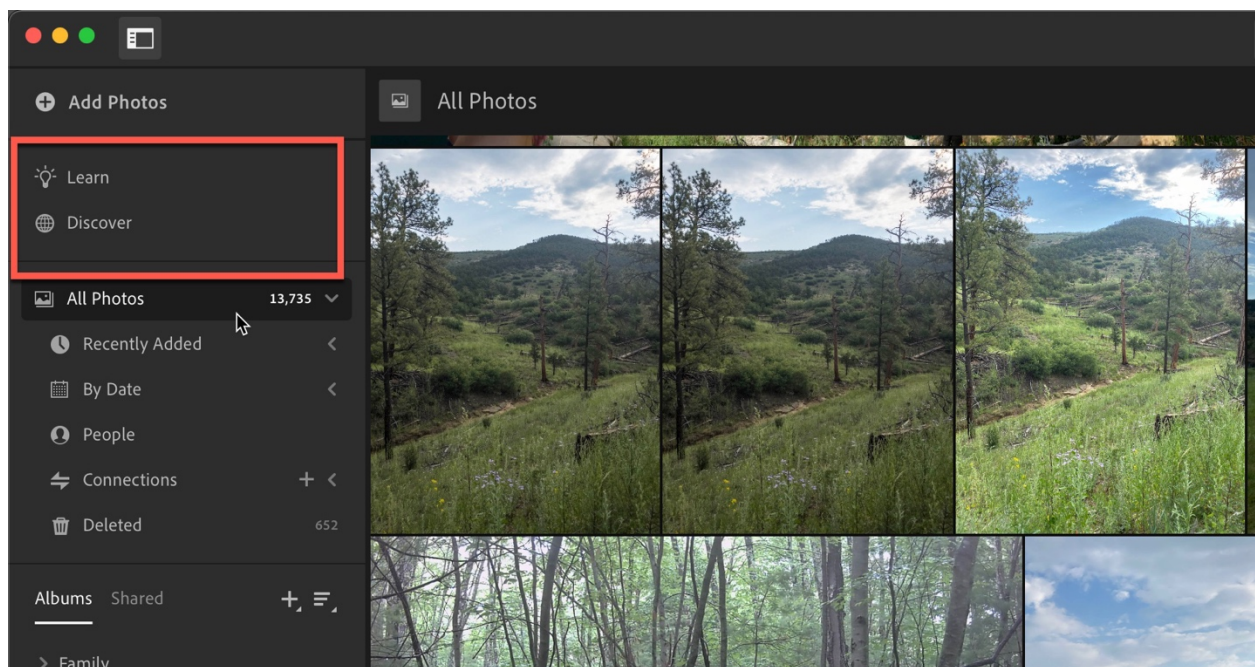

It bears repeating, but the key to understanding the Lr app ecosystem is that every photo you import into any of the Lr apps is uploaded at full resolution to the Lr cloud and counts against your storage quota. For this reason, you may want to go through your photos before importing them to weed out any photos you don't want, don't need, or don't want uploaded to the cloud.

I would also like to give you the heads up that on your mobile devices, Lr will be configured by default to automatically import your entire device's camera roll. You may not want this! You can always do this manually when you are ready, but it can be overwhelming when you are first

installing the app. Keep your eye out for this Auto Add option screen and disable it unless you are ready to bring it all in.

From there, be sure to explore the in-app tutorials found under the Learn and Discover tabs within the Lr app (on each platform). I think you'll find the experience intuitive. I've also added more resources at the end of this workbook.

Getting Started with Syncing Lightroom Classic to the Lightroom Cloud
Ok, this section is just for the people who want to have it all. These are my recommended steps for getting started with Lr on your mobile device if you're already a LrC user.
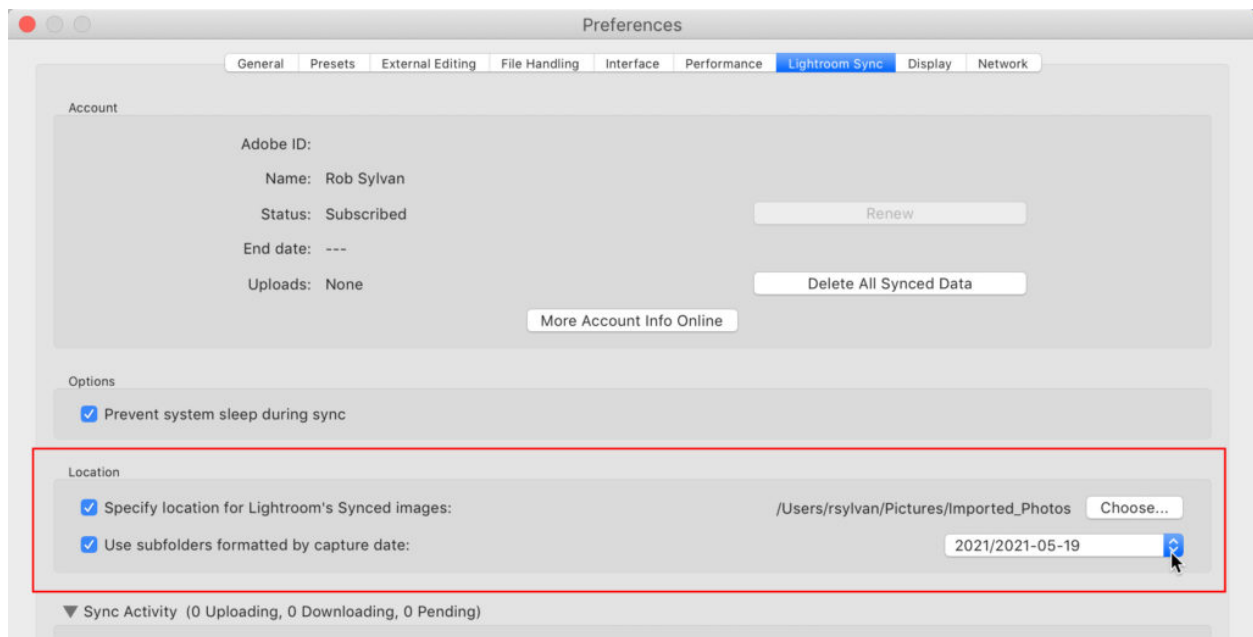
To recap, with the Creative Cloud Photography plan you get access to Photoshop and LrC, which are the main draws to that plan for most people. Additionally, you can install the Lr app on all your devices, but only get 20GB of cloud storage for exploring that cloud-based workflow. I've written about how you can [manage that 20GB of cloud storage,](#) so don't let that small amount hold you back from trying this.

Before you even do anything else, open LrC and go to Preferences > Lightroom Sync. This is where you can configure a location for storing any (and all) photos that are downloaded from the Lr cloud.
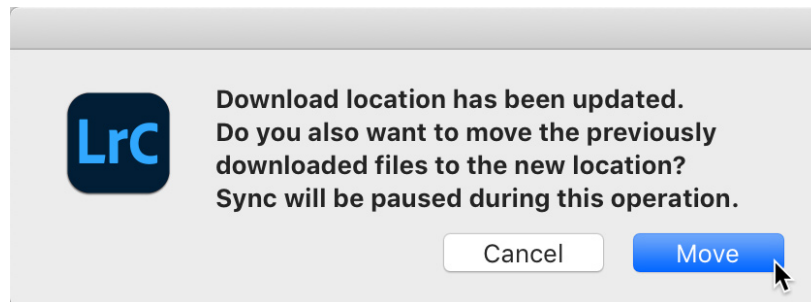
Let me make/reinforce two important points:
- Any photo imported into any Lr app is uploaded full resolution to the cloud and counts against your cloud storage (this includes photos taken within the Lr app itself).
- Any photo synced from LrC to the Lr cloud is only uploaded to the cloud as a smart preview, and these do not count against your cloud storage limit.

So, by configuring a location in the LrC preferences you will know exactly where all photos taken with the Lr camera or any photos you import into any Lr app will be stored on the computer running your LrC catalog. Start by checking the Specify location for Lightroom's synced images checkbox.
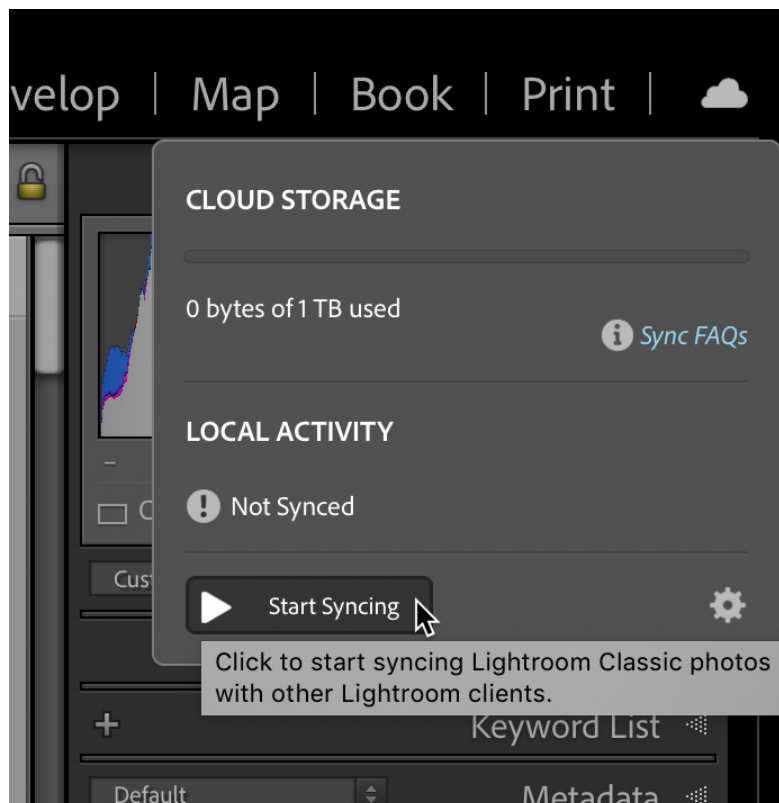
Then, click the Choose button to the right of the checkbox, and navigate to the location where you want these photos to be stored. I keep mine in my Pictures folder, in automatically created date-based folders, and then use LrC to move them to an external drive over time. This way I know the Pictures folder is always accessible and it keeps things simple. You do what makes the most sense to you.

You might get a prompt about moving previously downloaded files to this new location you've chosen. That's entirely up to you.
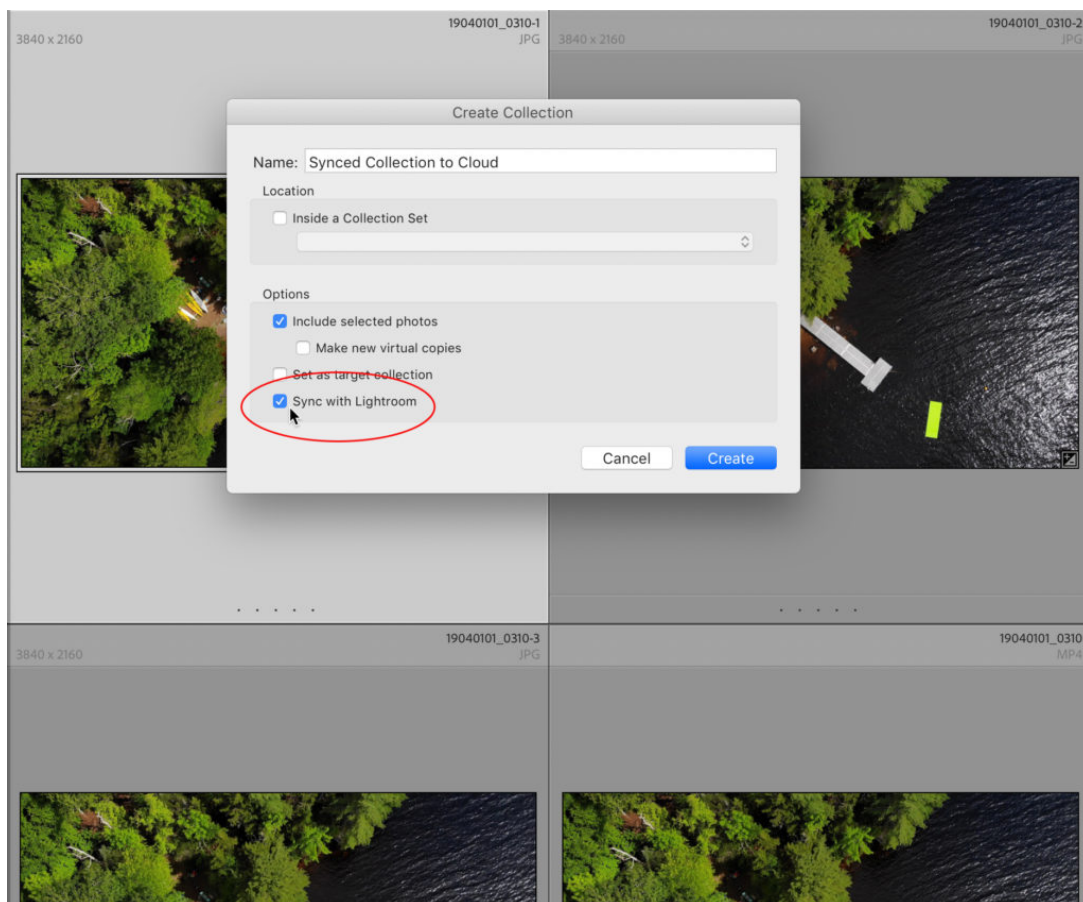

Ok, now you are ready to turn on syncing in LrC. Locate the cloud icon in the upper-right corner of the LrC interface and click it. This opens the window into the world of syncing to the cloud. Here you can see how much of your cloud storage is being used, find a very handy FAQ link on syncing (go read it), and the button to start the syncing process.
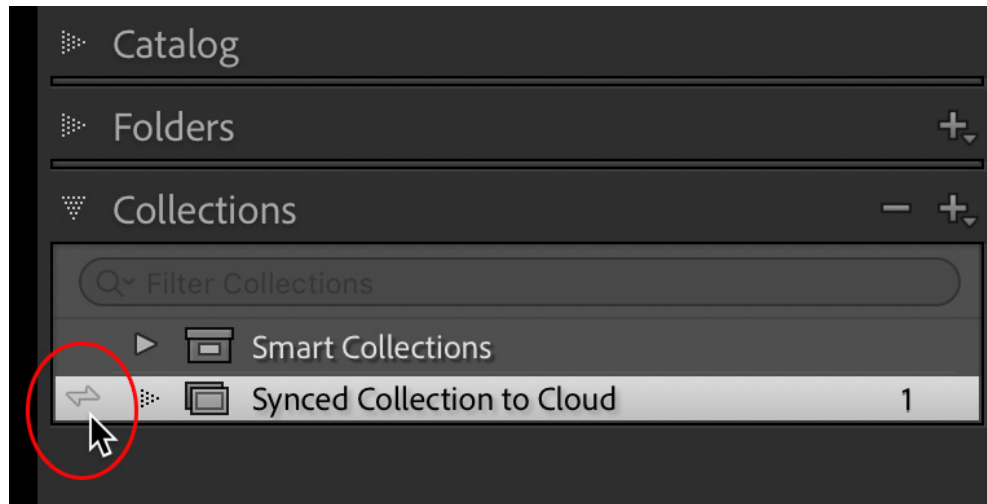
Before you click it, note that if you have already imported photos into any Lr app those photos will start downloading the moment you click Start, which is why I had you configure that location first. When ready, click Start. If you do not have any photos in the Lr cloud, then nothing will happen visibly yet. Well, you will see the Start button change to a Pause button, and you'll see a green check mark appear on the cloud icon to indicate that syncing is complete (for the moment).

The real change is that now you can mark regular collections to sync to the cloud at your leisure. When starting in LrC, only photos you place in synced regular collections will sync to the cloud. If a photo is not in a synced collection, it will not sync. This gives you total control over what gets synced and what does not. So, I'll create a regular collection, and show you what I mean.
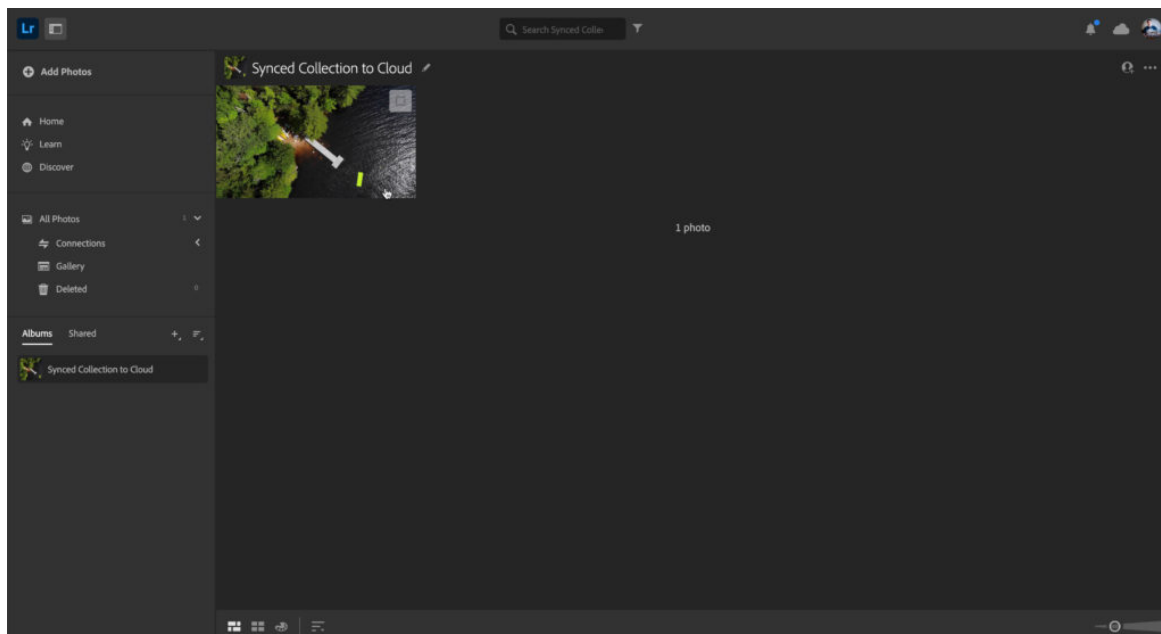

The new option is the Sync with Lightroom checkbox that appears in the Create Collection dialog box. Alternatively, you can hover your cursor over the box that appears to the left of the collection name in the Collections panel and click to mark that collection for syncing.
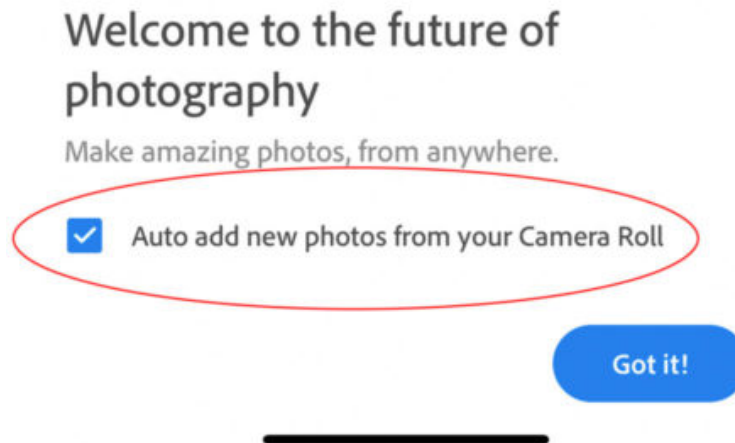
I included the one selected photo at the time I created the collection, and in so doing, a smart preview was automatically created by LrC, and that smart preview was uploaded to the cloud. Once syncing is complete, the green checkmark re-appears back on the cloud icon.

I can check to see the synced photo in the cloud by going to Lightroom.adobe.com in my web browser and logging in with my same Adobe ID. Accessing lightroom.adobe.com in your browser is referred to as Lightroom Web (which has nothing to do with the Web module in LrC, so just don't get me started on how confusing this all is).

What you see in Lightroom Web is the same as what you will see (content wise) in Lr on your phone or tablet. So, let's head there next.

Whether you have an Android or iOS device, go to the respective app store for that device and download/install the Lr app. As you go through the process of logging in with your Adobe ID (and password), please read all the info presented on the screens, and do yourself the favor of **unchecking** the Auto add from Camera Roll box, please (you can thank me later).

Once logged in, you'll see any collections you've marked to sync from LrC, along with any photos in those collections (note, collections are called albums here in Lr).

What Syncs and What Doesn't Sync
The syncing functionality that we have today basically the same as it was back in 2015. The good news is that Adobe hasn't taken anything away, but the bad news is that they haven't added any new items that sync. So, here's a short list of data that does sync between LrC and Lr, and what doesn't sync (meaning what data can go back and forth between the two programs, and what cannot).

What syncs between LrC and Lr:
- Edits (Develop settings)
- ratings
- Flags
- Titles
- Captions

What cannot sync between LrC and Lr:
- Keywords
- People
- Snapshots (LrC feature)
- History steps (LrC feature)
- Video files (videos will download to LrC from Lr, but cannot go from LrC to Lr)

That's it. You've successfully connected your LrC catalog to the cloud and opened the pipeline between LrC and Lr. Please be sure to read all the other articles I've linked to throughout the workbook, and I'm happy to answer questions you may have if you post them in the KelbyOne Community. I'm in there every day along with an amazing group of friendly and knowledgeable members who love sharing what they know with others. Don't be shy!

Continue Learning …
I hope this gives you a firm foundation for choosing which Lightroom path will work best for you and your photographic needs. I've pulled together links to articles I've written to help you go even further. All of these are on LightroomKillerTips.com, which is a free KelbyOne resource that Scott Kelby and I publish new content on every week, so be sure to keep checking it out for even more.

How to Use Lightroom Classic with the Cloud and 0GB of Storage - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/how-to-use-lightroom-classic-with-the-cloud-and-0gb-of-storage/

Managing Adobe Cloud Storage Space for Classic Users - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/managing-adobe-cloud-storage-space-classic-users/

Using Lightroom for Desktop as a Window to Cloud Storage - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/using-lightroom-cc-desktop-window-cloud-storage/

Can You Install LrC and Lr on the Same Computer? - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/can-you-install-lrc-and-lr-on-the-same-computer/

Tips for Syncing Lightroom Classic with Lightroom for Mobile - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/tips-for-syncing-lightroom-classic-with-lightroom-for-mobile/

All Synced Photographs - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/all-synced-photographs/

Keeping Your Collection/Album Organization in Sync - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/keeping-your-collection-album-organization-in-sync/

Keeping Your Presets in Sync - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/keeping-your-presets-in-sync/

Sync Stuck? - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/sync-stuck/

Taking a Closer Look at the Cloud-based Lightroom for Desktop App - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/taking-a-closer-look-at-the-cloud-based-lightroom-for-desktop-app/

5 Reasons to Use Lightroom Cloud for Desktop - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/5-reasons-to-use-lightroom-cloud-for-desktop/

Editing with Lightroom Desktop - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/editing-with-lightroom-desktop-and-a-book-giveaway/

Adobe Portfolio Integration with Lightroom (and Lightroom Classic) - Lightroom Killer Tips
https://lightroomkillertips.com/adobe-portfolio-integration-with-lightroom-and-lightroom-classic/

Thanks for attending my session! Please keep in touch.

About Rob
Rob Sylvan is a photographer, educator, and aspiring beekeeper. He is the author of
many Lightroom, Photoshop, and photography related books, eBooks, and videos. His latest
book is Lightroom Classic for Dummies. Rob also authors and curates tutorials found within the
Photoshop and Lightroom applications, is an adjunct faculty at NHTI, a Canon Product Educator,
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