

Figure 1 Library module layout showing colour and star ratings

LIGHTROOM: SELECTING AND PUBLISHING YOUR IMAGES



In his article in the Spring 2010 issue of DIGIT, No. 45, pp 16-20, Martin Addison FRPS introduced the main features of Lightroom. Here, Ria Mishaal Cooke LRPS builds on this by covering the practical use of Lightroom to import, rate and filter your images and how you can use the program to get your images into the public domain.

I have been using Adobe Photoshop Lightroom for about a year and it has changed the way I approach my work. It is quite simply incredibly powerful photo-management software which allows non-destructive editing. It has enhanced my productivity and so allowed my creativity to flourish. I imagine, like me, many of you have a back catalogue of images you would like to share with the world, but neither the time nor the energy to keep changing the images on your website one by one. I have found Lightroom makes this an easy task. In this article, I will cover the practical use of Lightroom to import, rate and filter your images and I'll focus on Lightroom's web module and some plug-

ins which make this module really powerful. I'll also illustrate how Lightroom can enable you quickly and efficiently to change and add to your online catalogue. I currently work as a wedding photographer as well as a research scientist, so I must work efficiently to achieve my goals. I have found Lightroom has dramatically reduced the time it takes me to process a wedding. I now process 80% of the images solely in Lightroom through the develop module, only using Photoshop on a handful of images to apply particular specialised filters or for particular artistic manipulation. Because I can access Photoshop through Lightroom to edit

these images I am able to handle all my work through Lightroom. I can then use the web module to create online proofing galleries for my clients and print ordering galleries for their guests. It couldn't be easier. At first, Lightroom is not necessarily as intuitive as it could be, but I really think that it is worth spending the time to learn as the benefits in time saving far outweigh the effort to learn. There are many books on the subject and at the end of the article I've given details of resources which I have found particularly helpful. The undeniable power of Lightroom is that it allows you to import, handle and manipulate large numbers of images

very quickly and easily. The backbone of Lightroom is the library which is a catalogue, where images are represented by previews which can be organised, duplicated and manipulated. This is very powerful because you can look at your image previews without the images being available (for example when the images are on an external drive not attached to the computer), but you must also remember that changes made outside Lightroom to the location or name of images will mean that the catalogue can no longer find them. While Lightroom gives you the option to find missing files, it is easier to make changes to the location or name of files and create or delete folders through Lightroom.

I import all my images directly through Lightroom, because I can rename them, add metadata (keywords and tags) and create standard previews on import. You also have the option to back up your images on import, which I do. Please remember that these backed up images are straight out of the camera, so you need also to backup your Lightroom catalogue and those image files associated with it regularly.

After importing images, I immediately create a 'collection set' for the images and add a 'collection' to the set, which I call 'all' where I drag and drop all the new photos. I do this because if I delete an image from a collection, it will only remove it from the collection and not delete it from the disc, thus adding an additional level of security. I then sort my images, using a combination of flags, colour labels and star ratings (Figure 1). It is important to note that colour labels and star ratings are universal, but flags are specific to collection or folder.

Labelling couldn't be easier with the shortcut keys: '1' to '5' representing stars, '6' to '9' representing colours, 'f' is flag; 'u' is unflag, and 'x' reject. You can create different colour label sets (go to Metadata menu; Colour label sets). I have a custom label set where red is labelled 'to delete', yellow 'final images', green 'to work on' etc. First I will go through a shoot and label all the images I don't want to keep 'to delete' by pressing 6. In the library module, I often change the display properties by pressing '1' to get just the image shown on the black background. Using the shortcut keys I can rate my images as I go through them in this uncluttered view, with Lightroom displaying a handy

message informing me of what I have done. When I have selected all the images I want to remove in my collection, I go back to the original folder and, using the filter options at the top of the library module, I choose to view only my red labelled images. I select all, press 'x' to label them as rejected images then I go to the 'Photo' menu and choose to delete the rejected photos. Lightroom will always ask you when you want to delete images if you want to delete from the catalogue or from the disc. I choose to delete them from the disc to remove the unwanted images.

I then go through remaining images and rate my favourites, those I want to work on and I use the Lightroom develop module and Photoshop to create my final images. Sometimes, I want to have several versions of the same image with different treatments or I want a different crop to display on the web. To do this, I right click on the image and create a virtual copy, then I make my new changes to this copy. At any time you can press 'reset' at the bottom left hand corner to go back to the original raw image. Remember that all changes made in Lightroom can be undone. The virtual copy will be stored in the collection in which it was created unless you add or move it to another collection. You can see which collections particular images are in by right clicking, 'Go to collection'. You can remove copies from a collection by pressing delete, but remember this just removes them from the collection doesn't 'delete' them. I create a new collection within my collection set for the 'best' images, and using the filter options at the top of the library module, I select those I have rated, select all, and drag and drop them into this new collection. In preparing my images for the web, I add titles and captions and edit copyright information in the library module metadata panel (scroll right down to the bottom).

Sharing your work with the world

I built my entire website using Lightroom and web engine plug-ins which I bought for a nominal fee. However, it is important to mention first that if you have an existing website which you are happy with but would like to use Lightroom to create galleries to upload, it is very easy to do, and you can use the existing templates for html and flash galleries that come with Lightroom or download one of the free

galleries that are available on the web (please see page 9 for galleries). You can even upload the gallery straight to your site through Lightroom if you have your FTP details, you don't even have to go to another program.

Previously I had built my websites in Adobe Dreamweaver but this made any changes laborious and creating new albums or changing the content of old albums took longer than I had time to spare. With my ever-present focus on efficiency in my work, I needed a solution to creating online galleries which were easily changed and indexed. I built my new site using Lightroom web engine plug-ins produced by The Turning Gate (TTG), and I am very pleased with the results. TTG is the one man operation of Matthew Campagna who provides Lightroom web engine plug-ins, tutorials and resources for Lightroom. There are several sources of plug-ins online but I have chosen to describe the plug-ins from TTG as I believe they are some of the best available and Matthew provides extremely good support for his products. For information and testimonials from satisfied customers see

<http://lr.theturninggate.net/>

My website

<http://www.riamishaalcooke.co.uk> was created using a combination of TTG special purpose templates. All the templates are highly customisable so you can get the look and feel you want. The TTG site has excellent tutorials showing you how to transfer settings from templates in one engine to another so you can use multiple engines for different purposes with a seamless appearance across the whole site. They are very easy to install – all you have to do is put the folder containing the web engine into the Lightroom program web engine folder, re-launch Lightroom and away you go!

In describing how I have used these tools to build my site, I will show useful screen shots to illustrate my points. It might be helpful to look through my website in conjunction with reading the article to get a full demonstration of what is possible.

From the splash page of my site you will see there are options to enter the main site or enter a site for mobile phones. In this modern age, the use of mobile phones has shifted from just making phone calls to acting as internet devices, allowing access to the web



Figure 2: TTG iPhone Portfolio consists of three pages: Gallery, About and Contact, shown here from left to right. Clicking on any thumbnail in Gallery enlarges it to fill the width of the phone screen.

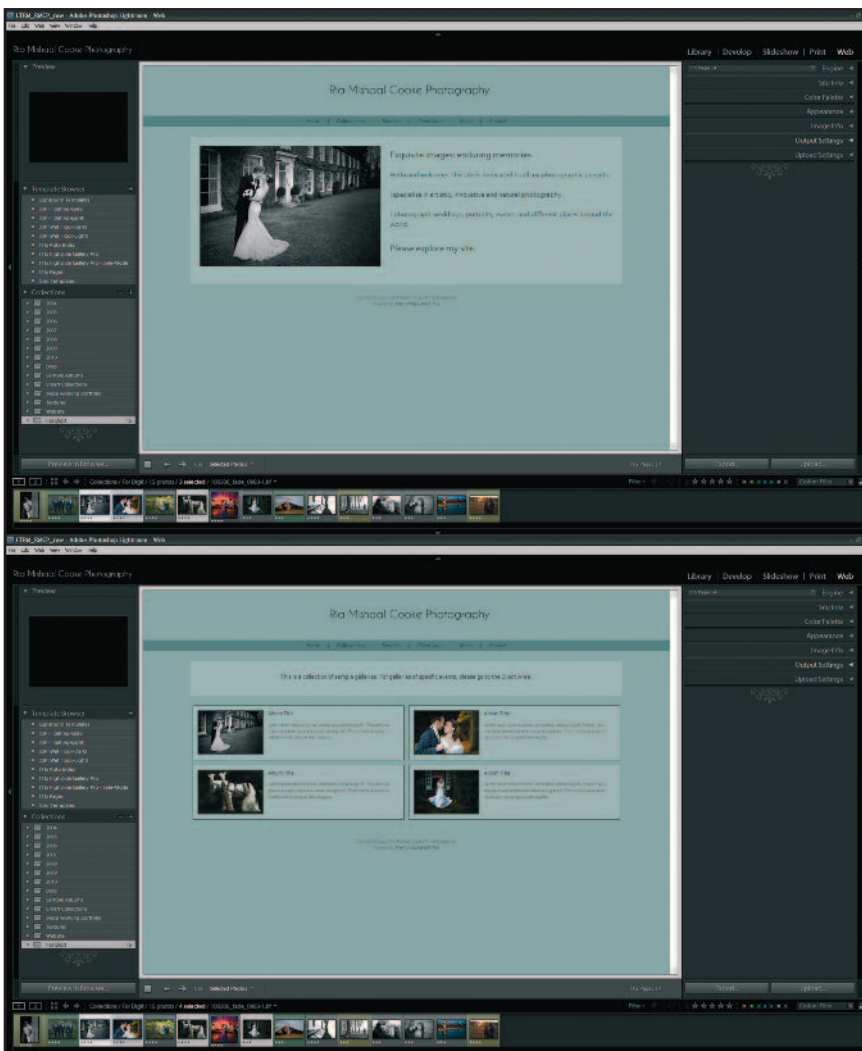


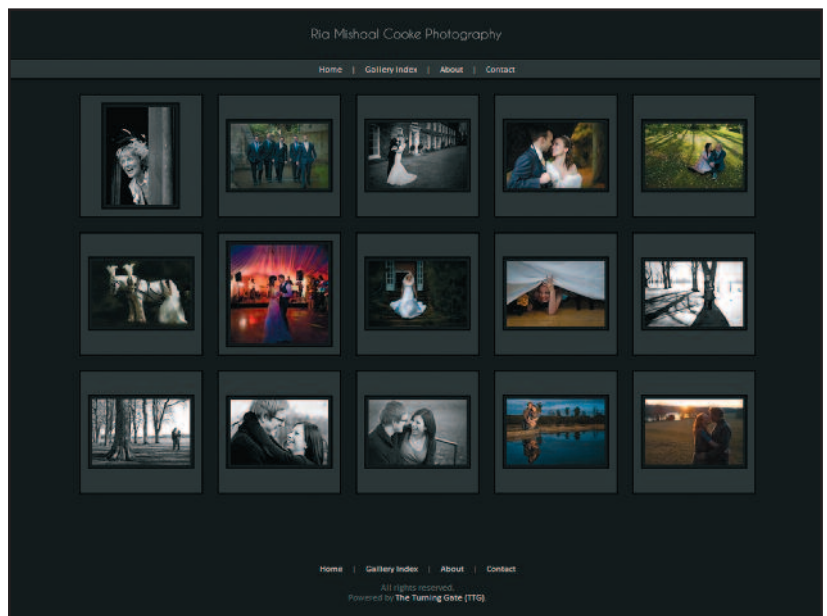
Figure 3: TTG Pages. I used TTG pages to create my site. The screen shot at the top shows the Home page and that at the bottom shows the self-populating Gallery Index

wherever you are. Sites need to be differently designed for the smaller screens and interfaces of iPhones and other similar mobile devices. To make sure your work is available to this growing audience, it is a good idea to create a slimmed down HTML site (at present flash is not viewable on an iPhone). One way to do this is to use the TTG iPhone Portfolio (\$5) as I have done (Figure 2). The main site was created with TTG Pages (\$25), shown in Figure 3. It allowed me to create a Home page, an About page, and a Contact page with email submission form, which sends the contents directly to my email address. I chose to have flash galleries on my Home and About pages, but you could equally choose to have static images. Most impressively, TTG pages contain a self-populating Gallery Index of image galleries. This was very exciting to me as it made it very easy to replace or add galleries to my site in an organised way. To add a new gallery all I had to do was create a gallery using Lightroom and upload the folder to the galleries folder used by the gallery index of my TTG Pages site. As if by magic, the gallery appears in the gallery index either with a specified thumbnail or one chosen at random from all the images in the gallery. When creating a gallery I could enter a title and description for the Auto Index, which is displayed in the gallery index. On my site, you will see that I have two self-populating indexes accessed from the main menu which runs across the top of the page – the Gallery Index and the Client Area, and that the index

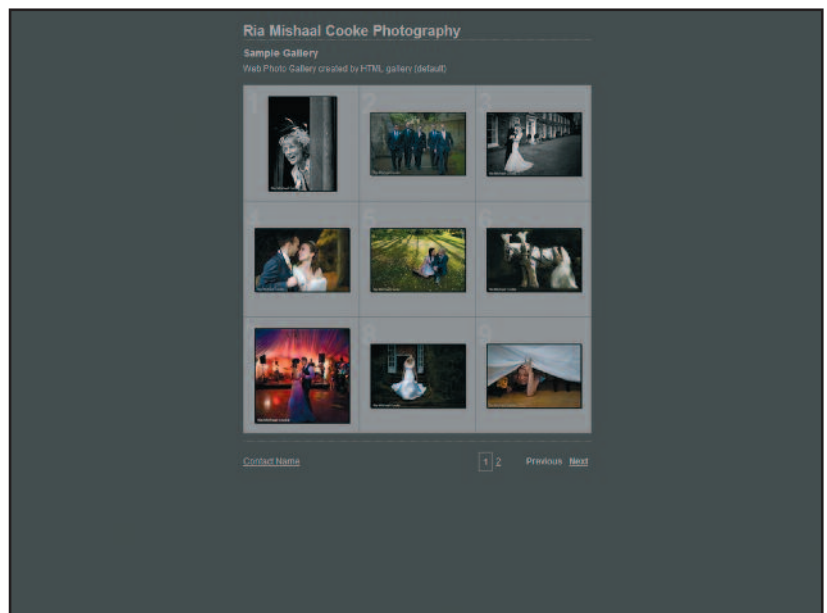
contents in the Client Area link through to other indexes, creating a nested hierarchy of galleries, easily navigable and organised. The additional indexes were created with TTG Auto Index (\$10). So now with the basic framework of the site, I needed galleries to add to the indexes. I primarily used TTG Highslide Gallery Pro 2.0 (\$40 plus a licence for commercial use if necessary). I particularly liked this as I could set it up to look exactly like my TTG Pages main site. It allows me to create gorgeous thumbnail based galleries which launch slideshows, or enlarge individual images on the background of the thumbnails in a proofing mode. There are options to allow clients to select images with a single click and by filling in a simple form send a list directly to you. You can sell images directly from your site using services such as Fotomoto, PayPal, FoxyCart or a proprietary PHP shopping cart system. This engine allows you to choose to use many fun features like Geo-tagging images with GPS coordinates (integration with Google Maps) and Cooliris support. It also has added security like right click and password protection options and does not use flash, so Flash Player is not required to view the galleries. The latest version also supports the new watermarking option of Lightroom 3. You can customise almost everything, but to get you started you can download template themes from the TTG site. With all web engines in Lightroom, if you make customised changes, you must save these as a new template to be able to access them after switching between web engines or other existing templates.

There are many other galleries you could use to display your images too, some of which are also illustrated. You can, of course, use the galleries that come with Lightroom (see the HTML and Flash default galleries to the right), but for other more exciting options, TTG also provides a range of other HTML and Flash galleries, like the horizontal scroll gallery TTG Horizon (\$15) which has multiple page options, or the fun TTG Polaroid Gallery (free). Another exciting way to display lots of images on one page is provided by Jigasawrus (£10) which was created by Timothy Armes of The Photographers Tool Box. The thumbnail images fit together automatically like a jigsaw, shifting their placement when the width of the browser window is changed, and clicking on an image enlarges it. Jigasawrus also does not use Flash and supports use with TTG pages and TTG Auto Index.

Lightroom has allowed me to handle, manipulate and display large numbers of photographs in a way I couldn't have imagined. The excitement that Lightroom brings to interacting with my images is unique, and I would thoroughly recommend using this program to any photographer – you won't regret it!



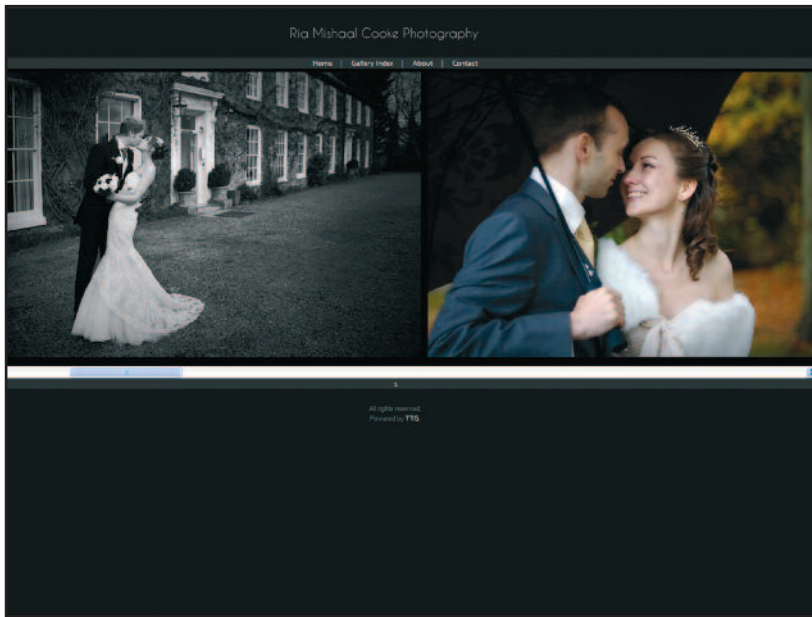
TTG Highslide Gallery



Lightroom HTML (default) Gallery



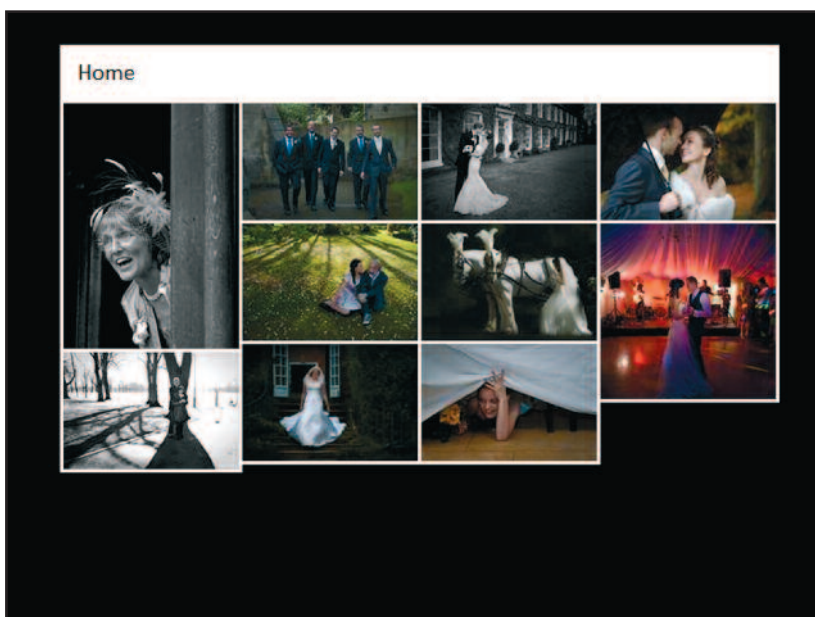
Lightroom Flash (default) Gallery



TTG Horizon Gallery



TTG Polaroid Gallery



Jigasawus by Timothy Armes

Resources

Weblinks

<http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshoplightroom/faq/>

If this article has inspired you into thinking about getting Lightroom, look at the Adobe 'frequently asked questions' to tell you more about the program.

<http://lr.theturninggate.net/>

Matthew Campagna and his web engines, resources and tutorials for Lightroom.

<http://photographers-toolbox.com/products/jigasawrus.php>

Timothy Armes's fun web engine

Forums

<http://www.lightroomforums.net/>

A helpful community of photographers and specialists, so if you have any questions, just ask!

Books

In my opinion, these are some of the best books available, the first being the simplest and the third being the most involved.

Photoshop Lightroom 2 Made Easy by Sean McCormack, ISBN: 978-1-86108-536-8

The Photoshop Lightroom Workbook: Workflow not Workslow in Lightroom 2 by Seth Resnick and Jamie Spritzer, ISBN: 978-0-240-81067-6

The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 3 Book for Digital Photographers (Voices That Matter) by Scott Kelby, ISBN 13: 978-0-321-70091-9

e-book

Adobe Lightroom - The Missing FAQ found at

<http://www.lightroomqueen.com/>

This is a compilation written by Victoria Bampton aka 'The Lightroom Queen', where she provides 'real-world answers to real questions asked by real Lightroom users'. This book also contains a fantastic list of all the short cut keys you will ever need!