

Your Virtual "Book"

How to Create a Knockout Online Portfolio

IMAGES AND TEXT BY COLIN SMITH

Times really have changed! Only a few years ago it was par for the course to travel across town or the country, lugging a heavy portfolio case full of treasured works, or mailing them to a faceless stranger. There was the fear of damage or worse still, hearing the words, "Can you just leave it here with us for a few days," not knowing what will happen to your work as soon as you turn your back.

I have a hunch that the printed portfolio will be with us well into the future. However, there is a growing trend to put portfolios on the web. This has obvious advantages: your site is up 24/7, it's inexpensive, and it can be viewed by anyone around the world. Since launching PhotoshopCAFE.com almost four years ago, over two million people from around the world have viewed my portfolio. This would have been impossible without the web.

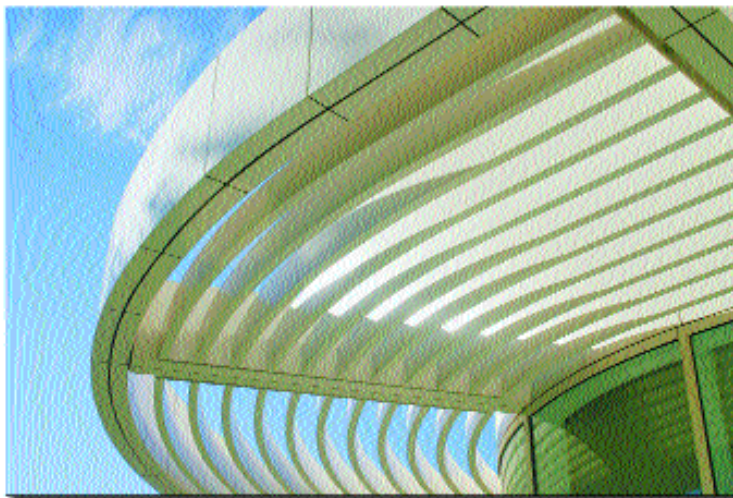
Photoshop makes it very easy to build an online portfolio. I will show you how in just a few steps and we can do it all from the File Browser in PhotoshopCS! Please note that when I indicate 'right click' in the text, that is the same as 'ctrl click' on Macintosh computers using a one button mouse. Although this tutorial shows the Windows OS, the tutorial is identical for Mac users.

FILE PREP

Launch the File Browser and navigate to the folder of images you desire to include in your online portfolio. (Tip: To hide all the palettes press the tab key.)

Click on an image and view the metadata tab (fig. 1). A lot of information can be automatically stored here such as image information, camera settings at time of capture and even your location if your camera is equipped with GPS. Under 'IPTC' you will notice some fields that have a pencil in the left column. This means that these fields are editable. Enter in a description. This will become our caption on the Web Page. Also enter in the credits for the image. (Note: For more fields, right click a thumbnail and choose 'File Info'.)

Click the checkmark at the bottom of the window to apply custom fields to the image. This information will be attached to the image and travel wherever it goes.



BUILDING A GALLERY

Choose Automate>Web Photo Gallery from the File Browser's menu.

Select a style for the gallery. You can see a preview to the right. (Note: Some options will not be available with certain styles.) I've chosen 'Centered Photo 1 – Info Only'. Enter your e-mail address so visitors can contact you.

Now to the Source Images section. This is where we will choose the images and decide where you will save the gallery. Use either 'Folder', in which you select an entire folder of images to be processed, or 'Selected images from File Browser' to use when the file browser is open and specific files are selected (fig. 2). You will have to select the images in the File Browser before opening the Web Photo Gallery dialog box.

Click on 'Destination' and either create a new folder, or select a folder in which to save the gallery.

OPTIONS GALORE

Under 'Options' you will see a drop down menu. There are many options available, but only the three most important ones are discussed below. The others can be left as defaults.

Choose 'Banner': This is where you will enter the title of the gallery and personal information (fig. 3).

Next, choose 'Large Images': This is the actual size that your images will be

displayed (fig. 4). You can choose the default or increase the size if you wish. Notice there is a slider that says 'File Size'. This will set the jpg compression. The further left the slider, the faster the images will load but they will be lower quality and suffer from jpg artifacts (little blocks and smudged details). Move the slider to the right and the quality will be much better, but it will take longer for the images to download. The setting you use depends on your intended audience. If your audience is using broadband connections then use a higher setting. If they are using dial-up modems or overseas connections, use lower settings. If you are unsure of user connection speeds, a setting of five will produce a healthy compromise.

Choose 'Thumbnails': This will allow you to set the thumbnail size and it is totally up you, based on the style of your specific gallery.

PROTECT YOUR ASSETS

One of the biggest fears photographers face with regard to posting images online is the possibility of unauthorized use of their images. This step will allow you to watermark your images, making it difficult for people to use them without paying you a proper fee or credit (fig. 5).

Under custom text you can type in any message you like for a watermark. In this case I have used the copyright symbol.



fig. 1: The File Browser with metadata fields selected to the left of the thumbnails

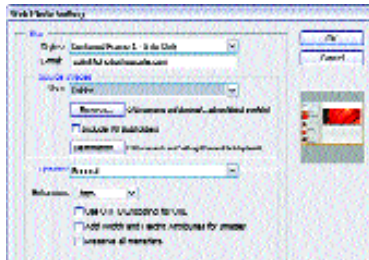


fig. 2

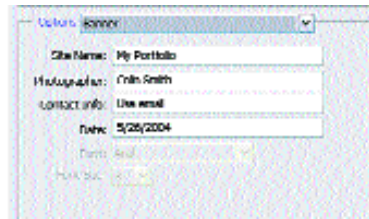


fig. 3

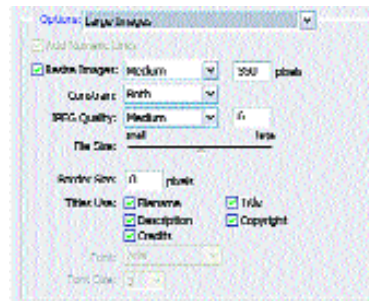


fig. 4

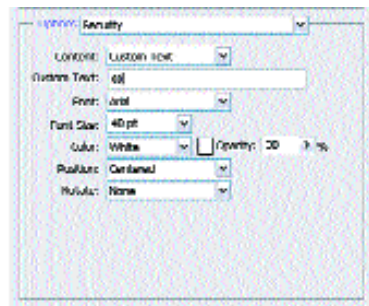


fig. 5

(Tip: A great idea is to take your logo and have it converted to a font and then select it as the watermark). Next, choose the size and placement of the watermark.

Finally, select a color and opacity; this will determine the strength of the watermark. I prefer to use white and lower the opacity to 38%. This allows the watermark to protect the image without distracting from the image too much.

When you are happy with all the settings click OK. Photoshop will do all the work for you. Sit back and relax while you are saved hours of work. You don't even have to resize any of your images first. All the thumbnails, HTML and

UPLOAD EM!

The final step is to upload the images to the web. You will need to locate a web hosting company if you don't already have an account. A hosting account can be obtained for a very reasonable price. You will then upload the folder containing the web gallery files to the internet via ftp. There are easy to use ftp programs available such as cuteFTP for Windows or Fetch for Mac. Any good hosting company will provide full instructions and assistance.

The galleries you make can also be viewed offline just by opening the file 'index.html' in any web browser. In

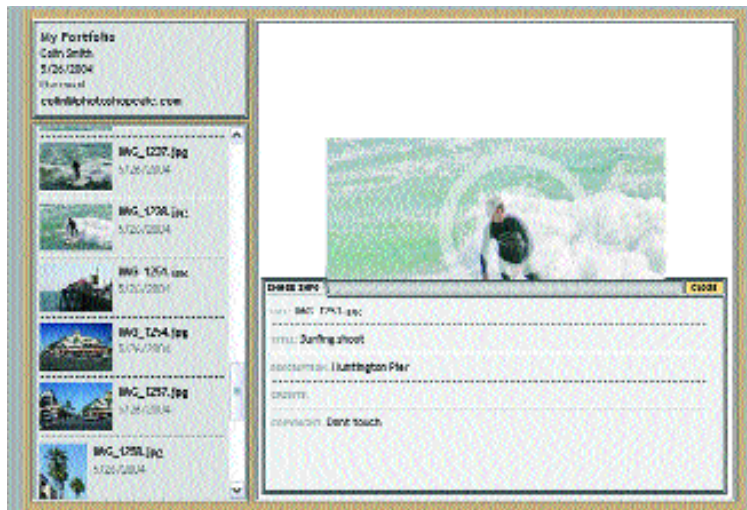


fig. 6: Completed online gallery with image info tab expanded

Javascript will be built automatically and placed in the folder that you specified as your destination in fig. 1. When Photoshop has finished, it will launch your new gallery in your web browser.

You can scroll through the thumbnails and click on any of them to display the full size image. This is a quick way for viewers to locate the desired images. Also notice that the watermark can be clearly seen.

To display file information, click on the Image Info tab, shown at the bottom of fig. 6.

those cases, you may want to create your galleries at a much higher jpg level for optimum quality, since file size won't be as much of an issue. The web gallery folder can also be burned to CD, DVD or other media, or attached as an e-mail and used as a cataloging or proofing tool.

Good luck with your portfolio; your images are waiting to be displayed in the world's largest gallery for everyone to see. For more detailed information on Photoshop for Digital Photographers please consider my video training CDs

Colin Smith is well-known and respected in Photoshop circles and has authored eight books including, How To Do Everything with Photoshop CS and Photoshop CS for Digital Photographers. He is also a regular columnist for Photoshop User magazine and the official NAPP member's site (www.photoshopper.com). Colin founded one of the largest Photoshop Communities on the internet, www.photoshopCAFE.com, and thousands of photographers and designers have utilized Smith's acclaimed 'Photoshop Secrets' video training series, available at www.photoshopCD.com. He regularly lectures around the country and recently produced two sold-out hands-on seminars at the PhotImaging & Design Expo in San Diego.