The South Bay Mug

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A personal view from Bob

Lights, Action, Slide Show

Digital cameras are great. Film is free. Take hundreds or thousands of high-resolution pictures in a short time. That's the easy part. Then what to do with them? Print or email a few good ones or show them as a slide show. Many new HD TVs have a computer video connector so you can use it as a big-screen, high-resolution monitor connected to your laptop.

iPhoto is a great program for cataloging pictures, simple editing, creating albums, emailing, posting to the web and showing as a slide show. It's almost perfect, but has a few drawbacks. Photos are stored in a special iPhoto Library that should not be touched. Editing a photo creates a copy along with the original so the library size grows. The default title of each photo is the file name as imported from the camera, e.g. IMG_1689.JPG. You can re-title but the original file is untouched, and exported photos retains the original file name. iPhoto libraries created with one version of iPhoto cannot be opened by earlier versions and some later versions can't run on older Macs.

GraphicConverter ($35) has an excellent slideshow feature that will display a folder, or nested set of folders, of photos. Unlike iPhoto you can edit and rename photos without problems. Slides are displayed in alphabetical order or by creation date (the date taken), but you can't otherwise rearrange the order as you can in iPhoto. Here's a hybrid approach I use:

- Transfer photos from my camera to my Mac.
- Make a copy of the photos and archive the originals.
- Open the copies in GraphicConverter's file browser.
- View an array of thumbnail images and move unwanted photos to the trash or another folder.
- In the browser Re-title each file with a descriptive name.
- Double-click a thumbnail to edit the photo. Crop, straighten, adjust levels and de-skew as needed.
- Downsize the photos using GraphicConverter's powerful "Batch Convert and Modify". E.g. a maximum size of 1024x768 matches my iBook display and the vertical dimension of my TV. The file size is greatly reduced.
- I like to intersperse my presentations with a few title slides to break it up and give additional information such as maps and agendas. I use Keynote because of its powerful graphic capabilities, although Powerpoint or other page layout programs will work.
- Export the title slides as a set of JPG files and add them to your slides.
- Optional: Use subfolders to organize by rolls/events.
- Optional: Use iPhoto Buddy (free) to create a new iPhoto library for the slide show.
- Drag the photo folder(s) into iPhoto.
- Arrange the slide order as you'd like.
- iPhoto has many options for presenting the show, including transitions and music.
- Send out viewing invitations.

Although Keynote and Powerpoint are excellent slide presentations programs and are very flexible, it takes a bit of time to prepare each slide. They don't provide much image editing and create large files that run slowly on older Macs.

I put great value on "Workflow", the ability to process many photos quickly. The hybrid approach using GraphicConverter, Keynote and iPhoto works well and gives me the best of all worlds. I hope my approach gives you some useful ideas.

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