Photoshop's Bridge

What has Bridge ever done for me?

Br

Br

Br

by Barry Beckham

www.beckhamdigital.com.au

What can Photoshop's Bridge do for me?

Here is a question that comes up fairly often. What can Photoshop's Bridge do for me? Now this sounds rather like that part in the Monty Python film *The Life of Brian* when they are discussing what the Romans had ever done for the them. Slowly each member of the "Popular Front" adds to a growing list of positive things like:- Aqueducts, wine, roads, safe streets etc etc.

I think the problem here is that learning about Bridge in Photoshop is not our first priority when we are trying to learn the main program. Our attention is on Improving our images, so we tend to sidestep Bridge and carry on using what we have used for years.

The problem with that is it rarely displays all the image formats we use as thumbnails and it doesn't offer some of the options that we photographers we may need. We hear a lot about Lightroom's catalogue system, but where do you think it started life. Yep as a part of Bridge.

Remember too that Bridge comes as part of your Creative Cloud account, which includes Photoshop Creative Cloud, Bridge CC and Lightroom CC

What can Bridge do for us?

It can import our images from our storage card adding a wide variety of options and lets face it. While these options are all demanded by the consumer, it's these very options and the number of them that entourages some to side step this part of the software. So, perhaps just for this once, stay with me and find out what Bridge can do for you.

Importing Images

We can import images from a media card, USB stick or any other device and Bridge gives us a lot of options. So, during the import you can:-
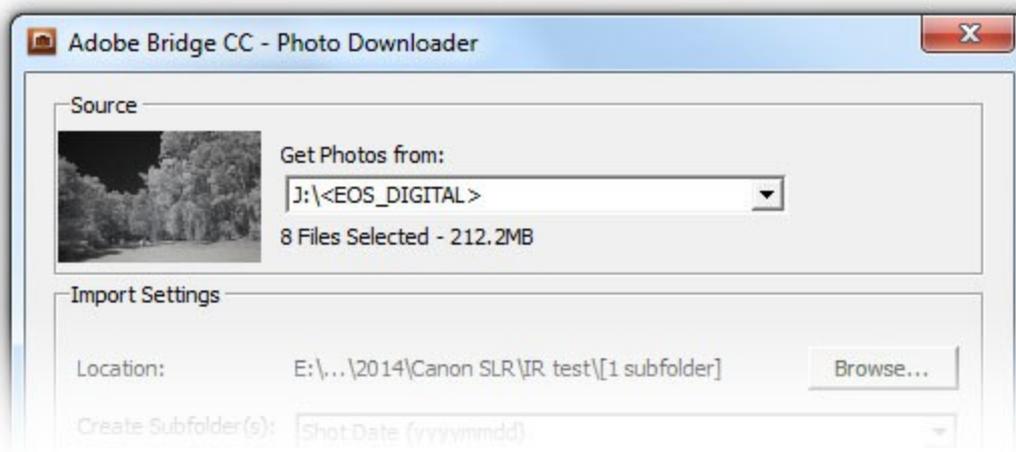
1. Browse for a ready made location of your choice, or create one as you import images.

2. Create Sub Folders in a variety of date orders or create a custom name for your folder

3. Rename the Images, but retain the original name in the Xmp data

4. Convert Raw to DNG files

5. Delete the original files from the card at the same time. (I don't recommend this – Format the card in camera)

6. Add a second location, so as you import your images, you can back-up them up to an external drive all in one operation.

7. You can add basic data to your files such as who the creator was + copyright info + you can decide what is included from a large amount of other data. Create a template from what info you want stored with the images and apply your own template as you import them. Alternatively, use the basic one provided.

All the above can be done while downloading images from your storage card. Bridge does not work like Lightroom. You do not have to import into Bridge before opening files in Photoshop. You just browse your computers files.

Thumbnails

1. You can right click a thumbnail or group of thumbnails and do the usual things we would expect. Cut – Copy – Paste – Duplicate – Delete – Copy To – Move to. We can also open up the files into Photoshop/Camera Raw and any other Adobe program from Bridge. Either one or multiple images.

2. Thumbnails can be dragged and dropped within Bridge using it rather like a light-box if we want. Great for sorting images into a running order for a slide show perhaps. (use in conjunction with batch rename perhaps)

3. You can right click and reveal the location of the images in Windows Explorer. You can add the image to your favourites and also rename that one file

4. We can also use the batch rename option. The batch rename is powerful. Rename the images using a wide range of user defined options. Rename them in the same folder, Rename and move them to another folder, or rename and copy them to another folder.

5. You can read file info such as your camera data. What Camera was used, what lens, what the focal length of the zoom was used for the shot

6. You can label thumbnails with a star rating or with a simple keystroke add one of five coloured labels to one image or as many as you select. Great for sorting out those you want to work on from those you don't

7. You can display what data you want with the thumbnail such as file name, image size in pixels, Image type, date created, size in MB etc. In fact there are too many options to list here.

Cataloguing and Filtering

Add keywords and filter your images in a wide variety of ways. e.g. Sort instantly all images in a folder shot with your lens set to 400mm or your 28-135mm zoom when it is set at 35mm. Maybe filter all the images shot on a particular date. All these options and more are there for you if you want them.

However, apart from those options above, what has Bridge ever done for us?

Collections - Create a collections folder and drag thumbnails into that collection when you're sorting images for a slide show, camera club competition or other project. Bridge does not copy the image it just locates the thumbnail in your collections folder.   So you can add and remove images without ANY fear of losing them. When you're ready, you can select one, some or all of the images in your collection and copy them to another location. Very useful and easy.

File Tree - We have a file tree to allow us to navigate anywhere in our computer and all the usual options are included. Quick access to recently opened folders and a quick and easy method of jumping between recently opened folders. (Back and forth)

Meta-data - We can select an image and instantly reveal all the Meta Data. Shutter Speed, Aperture, ISO, when it was taken, what lens, what focal length. Plus other information too numerous to mention

Raw Files - We also have a develop settings option when viewing raw thumbnails. Select one or many images, right click and reset all the raw adjustments you have made back to raw default (as shot)

Select one, some or all images in a folder and apply your previous Raw conversion to them. Get one image in a set right and apply the same settings to all the others.

You can copy or clear Raw settings and apply pre-sets you have already created in Camera Raw. e.g. If you always apply Lens corrections in Camera raw for example, you can do that to every image in a folder instantly from bridge. When the image opens in Camera Raw that part of your manipulation is already done for you.

Bridge Screen View

You can choose from a number of different layouts, switching from one to the other with a single click from the main screen. The screen is also fully customisable so you can set it up just as you like it and save your own preference. That personal preference is also easily selected with a single click.

Hit the space bar with an image high-lighted and get a full screen preview. Use the cursor control keys to move to the next or previous image. This works with all file formats including Raw

We can highlight a number of image thumbnails from bridge and open them up directly into Photoshop's layers. A very useful and time saving option.

We can highlight a number of images and create a contact sheet. You can select the whole folder or as many images as you want and create the contact sheet. You decide the page size, the resolution and how many thumbnails are placed along and down the page. Great for evaluation and printing

We can select one, many or all images in a folder from within Bridge and open the image processor. Very quickly we can convert one format to another, or create a copy of the images in three file formats. Jpeg, PSD and Tiff.

At the same time we can apply actions, such as a sepia conversion of all of those thumbnails. Plus we can do all this by creating another folder or putting the selected images back in the same folder. *NB. The original image thumbnails will not be overwritten, but placed in a separate folder by bridge, keeping your originals intact.*

OK, but apart from all those options what has Bridge ever done for us?

Review Mode - Well, there is review mode too. Select a number of images you shot of one subject and select review mode (Ctrl+B) Use the left and right arrow keys to cycle through your selection of images. Use the down arrow to remove images from review mode *(NB. They are not removed from your computer)* Use this option to finally select the best of the images for editing perhaps.

While doing this add star ratings and/or labels to your review images and even select images to add to a collection. You could select the whole folder and rapidly work through them dropping selected thumbnails into your collection. *(remember, you can add and remove images in review and collections with no risk)* Use collections like a temporary folder for sorting images for a project. Oh, and I nearly forgot, you can rotate one or a whole batch of images too if you need to.

OK, but apart from all those options what has Bridge ever done for us?

There are a few other options included with Bridge, but I think you're probably losing the will to live by now. I hope you have reached this point, because there is a lot packed into Photoshop's Bridge. Far more than many realise.

How does all this impact on that vital question. Does any of this affect the images and projects I produce? In an indirect way, yes it does, because we all carry out a cost benefit analysis when ever we think of some great idea or project. We may not even do that in a conscious way, but we do it just the same. Often a great idea falls at the first hurdle because one aspect of it appears to be too time consuming or tedious. So, we tell ourselves we will do that later, but rarely do of course.

Well, often it may not be anywhere near as boring or time consuming as you think and all we need to do is to see what Bridge can do for us. We are unlikely to need all that it offers of course, just select the bits you want and worry about the rest if and when you think they might be useful.

We have now added a series of videos that deal with most aspects of Adobe's Bridge. There are 22 videos in all, but 7 of those are very short miscellaneous ones. So lets say we have 15 videos running for a total of 1hr 46 mins

This group of videos on the subject of Bridge are freely available on my web site with my Photoshop for Photographers training course

Go to that page here