

Aperture® 3

PORTABLE GENIUS



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by Josh Anon and Ellen Anon



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About the Authors

Josh Anon

has been a nature photographer for most of his life, with his interest in photography starting when he received his first Kodak 110 camera at the ripe old age of 4. Camera in hand, he received a B.S. in computer science from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

After graduating, Josh started working at Pixar Animation Studios in Emeryville, California. There he has worked on *The Incredibles*, *Ratatouille*, *Toy Story 3*, and more. Currently he is a camera and staging artist.

He has traveled the globe searching for the next great picture, be it 100 feet deep on the Great Barrier Reef, on a cold and windy beach in the South Atlantic, or inside the Arctic Circle. His award-winning images, represented by the prestigious Jaynes Gallery and available on www.joshanon.com, have appeared in a variety of galleries, calendars, and other publications, including the San Diego Natural History museum, Nature's Best, Photo Media, The Kiteboarder, and more. Josh teaches photography, both privately and for the Panasonic Digital Photo Academy, and he and his mother, Ellen, have also coauthored *Aperture Exposed* (Sybex, 2006) *Photoshop CS5 for Nature Photographers* (Sybex 2010), and more. He is also a cofounder of DSLRU (www.dslru.com).

Josh continues to develop software in his free time, currently focusing on FlipBook, which is movie-making software for iPad, iPhone, and iPod Touch.

When not shooting, making cartoons, or coding, Josh can be found kiteboarding.

Ellen Anon

got her start with photography at age 5, but for years it remained a hobby as she took a very long fork in the road, eventually earning a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. Finally, a broken foot in 1997 forced her to take a break from work as a psychologist and she used the time to study photography. She debated briefly between building a traditional darkroom in her home and creating a digital darkroom. Because she's not fond of being closed up in small dark spaces with strong smells of funky chemicals, she opted for the latter. Ever since, photography has been a two-part process for her. Making the image in the field is step one, and optimizing it in the digital darkroom is step two. Being creative with it is the icing on the cake!

Ellen is now a freelance photographer, speaker, and writer. Her goal with her photographs is to go beyond the ordinary in ways that she hopes stimulate others to pause and appreciate some of the beauty and wonder of our earth. Ellen's images are included in collections in several countries. She is represented by several stock agencies, and her photos have been showcased in galleries, used in numerous publications (including Sierra Club's *Mother Earth* and Inner Reflections 2010 calendar). In addition, she has been Highly Honored in Nature's Best Photography Windland Smith Rice

International Awards and Highly Commended in the 2008 BBC/Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition. She is honored to be a member of the Aperture Advisory Board and is an Apple Certified Trainer for Aperture.

In addition to *Aperture 3 Portable Genius*, Ellen is the coauthor, along with Josh, of the series *Photoshop CS5 for Nature Photographers: A Workshop in a Book* (Sybex, 2010), and *Aperture Exposed* (2006). She has contributed chapters to several other books and she creates video training materials on digital software for several companies including www.maccrate.com. Ellen leads both photographic- and digital darkroom-oriented workshops and is a featured speaker at various events. She is an active member of the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA) and is an instructor for its high school scholarship program. She is honored to be a member of Nik software's Team Nik.

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To my family, for having a second refrigerator just for film. –Josh Anon

To Jack, Josh, and Seth for always being there for me. – Ellen Anon

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Ellen wants to extend a special thanks to her son Josh for being the lead author on this book and smoothing the way. It is a special pleasure to coauthor books with you! She also wants to thank all the people who have requested that she and Josh do another Aperture book. She also wants to thank Dr. Gary Brotherson and Dr. J.P. Dailey for their flexibility and perseverance in safeguarding her eyesight while enabling her to travel to remote places in search of the next photographic adventure.

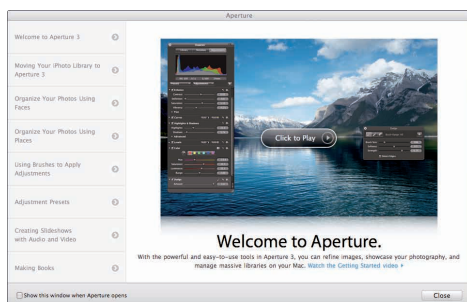
Contents at a Glance

Acknowledgments	xi	chapter 7: What Options Do I Have to Create a Physical Copy of My Photos?	198
Introduction	1	chapter 8: How Can I Share My Images Digitally?	232
chapter 1: How Do I Get Started with Aperture?	2	chapter 9: How Can I Use Aperture with My HDSLR'S Video Files?	274
chapter 2: How Do I Import Images?	28	chapter 10: How Can Aperture Make My Workflow Smoother?	284
chapter 3: What Methods Can I Use to See My Images?	58	Index	312
chapter 4: How Can I Use Metadata to Organize and Find My Images?	90		
chapter 5: How Do I Use Faces and Places to Categorize My Images?	120		
chapter 6: What Tools Can I Use to Make My Images Better?	144		

Contents

chapter 1

How Do I Get Started with Aperture? 2



Understanding Why Aperture Is a Key Part of Your Workflow 4

Seeing the difference between Aperture and iPhoto 4

Choosing Aperture over Bridge and Lightroom 5

Bridge 5

Lightroom 6

Working with Aperture's File Structure 7

Understanding the Aperture library and where your files live 7

Understanding referenced and managed files 8

Understanding how images are organized within Aperture 9

Master images 9

Versions 9

Projects 11

Albums 11

Folders 11

Stacks 11

A Brief Tour of Aperture's Interface 12

Understanding the Inspector, Browser, and Viewer 12

Inspector 14

Browser 16

Viewer 19

Managing files with Projects and Albums 20

Using special built-in views 22

All Projects 22

Faces and Places 23

Aperture Trash 24

Basic Customization Options 24

Setting library location and other General preferences 24

Changing appearance preferences 25

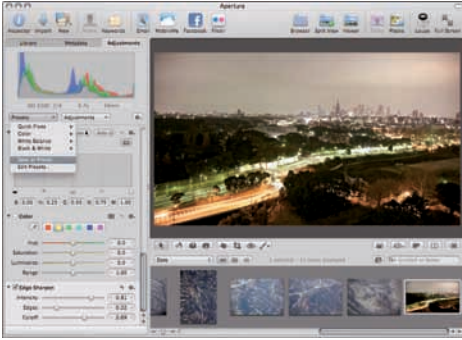
Changing default import behavior 26

Modifying preview preferences 27

Running in 32-bit or 64-bit mode 27

chapter 2

How Do I Import Images? 28



Importing from a Memory Card, Camera, or Hard Drive	30
Touring the Import Panel	30
Using the Different Views in the Import Panel	32
Choosing Import Settings	35
Configuring a destination project for your images	35
Using referenced or managed files	38
Renaming files on import	40
Fixing time zone settings on your images	42
An introduction to presets	42
Setting up and applying a metadata preset on import	43
Setting up and applying an adjustment preset on import	46
Configuring what types of files to import	48
Working with RAW + JPEG pairs	49
Running actions automatically after importing	51
Setting up an automatic backup on import	51
Accessing Images from iPhoto	52
Importing your iPhoto library	52
Importing select images from iPhoto	54

Dragging and Dropping Files into Aperture	55
Moving to Aperture from Bridge	55

chapter 3

What Methods Can I Use to See My Images? 58

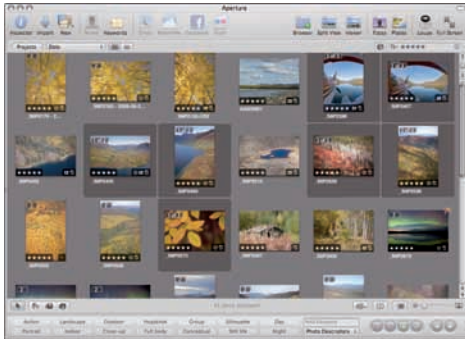


Customizing the Interface	60
Rearranging and grouping library items	60
Using Viewer modes	61
Using the Viewer with multiple monitors	63
Using multiple Browsers	64
Showing hot and cold areas of an image	64
Taking a Closer Look	65
Zooming and scrolling in Viewer	65
Using and customizing the Loupe	67
Viewing in Full-Screen Mode	69
Using Browser and Viewer in full-screen mode	70
Working with the filmstrip and toolbar	71
Working with heads-up displays	73
Additional Viewer Options	74
Using Primary Only	74
Using Quick Preview	75
Viewing the master image	76

Configuring and Using Metadata Overlays	76
Switching between RAW + JPEG Masters	78
Working with Referenced Images	79
Identifying and managing referenced images	79
Reconnecting a missing master	80
Relocating referenced masters	81
Converting referenced masters to managed masters	83
Deleting referenced files	83
Working with Stacks in Browser	84
Creating and Working with Light Tables	86

chapter 4

How Can I Use Metadata to Organize and Find My Images? 90



Using Ratings to Sort Images	92
Setting ratings	92
Working with rejected images	93
Using Flags and Labels to Further Organize Images	95
Setting flags and labels	95
Customizing label names	97

Using the Metadata Inspector	98
Switching and customizing metadata views	100
Setting metadata	102
Managing and applying presets	103
Adjusting Date and Time after Import	105
Working with Keywords	106
The Keywords control bar	108
Editing button sets and keywords	108
Keywords Library	109
Customizing button sets	111
The Keywords heads-up display	111
Adding Custom Metadata	112
Applying Batch Metadata Changes	113
Using the Batch Change tool	113
Using the Lift and Stamp tool	114
Searching for Images	115
Searching within Browser	115
Creating Smart Albums	117
Searching with stacks	118
Writing IPTC Information to a Master	119

chapter 5

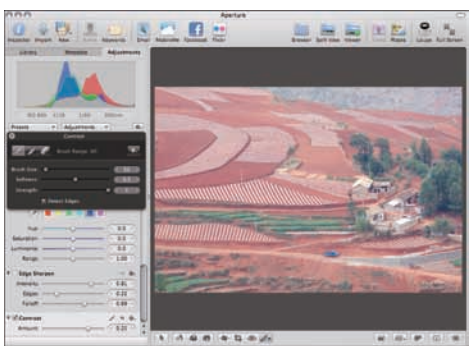
How Do I Use Faces and Places to Categorize My Images? 120



Using Faces	122
Enabling Faces	122
Using the Faces interface	123
Assigning names using Faces	124
Assigning names using the Name button	127
Renaming a person	128
Finding people using Faces	128
Using Places	130
Enabling Places	130
Assigning locations to photos	131
Dragging images onto the map using Places	132
Using the Metadata panel map to assign a location	133
Using the search option in Places to assign a location	134
Creating and assigning custom locations	135
Assigning locations using iPhone GPS information	137
Assigning locations using GPS receivers	138
Assigning location information using Projects view	139
Moving a Pin	140
Removing location information from an image	141
Finding images using Places	141

chapter 6

What Tools Can I Use to Make My Images Better? 144



Reprocessing Masters for Aperture 3	146
Straightening an Image	147
Cropping Images	148
Reducing Red Eye	150
Using the Adjustments Inspector	151
Setting Preferences for making adjustments	151
Working with the histogram	152
Commonalities of all the adjustment bricks	153
Brushing adjustments in or out	155
Making basic adjustments	157
Adjusting the Raw Fine Tuning	157
Setting the white balance	159
Using the Exposure controls	162
Taking advantage of the Enhance tools	165
Using the Highlights & Shadows adjustments	169
Using Levels	170
Taking advantage of the Color controls	173
Sharpening the image	175
Taking advantage of Curves	176

Converting an image to black and white	179
Converting an image to a color monochrome or sepia	180
Adding or removing a vignette	181
Removing chromatic aberration	182
Removing noise	183
Using Quick Brushes	183
Using the Retouch Brushes	184
Using the remaining Quick Brushes	186
Creating and Using Adjustment Presets	191
Using an External Editor	194
Using Third-Party Editing Plug-Ins	195

chapter 7

What Options Do I Have to Create a Physical Copy of My Photos? 198

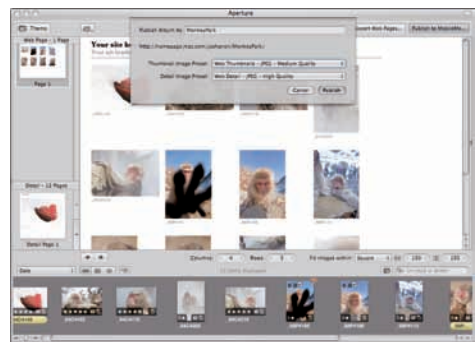


Color Management	200
Calibrating your monitor	201
Calibrating your printer	202
Soft proofing	202
Using Aperture's Print Dialog	205
Configuring a Standard Print	205
Printer options	206
Layout options	206
Image and color options	207
Metadata options	210

Creating a contact sheet	210
Using built-in custom presets and creating your own	212
Clicking the Print button and its settings	213
Ordering Prints	214
Creating a Book	216
Creating a new book album and picking themes	216
Navigating the Book Layout Editor	217
Placing images and text	219
Adjusting metadata boxes	221
Configuring item options	221
Working with Browser's extra book features	223
Using maps	224
Switching page styles	226
Adding and removing pages	227
Customizing page layout	227
Editing master pages	229
Printing or ordering your book	230

chapter 8

How Can I Share My Images Digitally? 232



Exporting Masters and Versions of Images	234
Exporting masters	234
Folder and filename options	235
Metadata options	237
Exporting versions	238
Managing image export presets	239
Adding watermarks	241
E-mailing Images	242
Slide Shows	243
Creating a new slide show	243
Creating a custom slide show preset	244
Using the Slideshow Editor	245
Arranging a slide show	248
Adjusting the show's settings	248
Adjusting individual slide settings	249
Adding video clips	251
Adding music	251
Playing and exporting your shows	254
Web Pages	255
Comparing Web Journals, Web Pages, and Smart Web Pages	255
Creating and configuring a new Web Page	256
Creating and configuring a new Web Journal	260
MobileMe	262
Setting up a MobileMe Gallery album	262
Adjusting the settings on your MobileMe Gallery album	264
Facebook	267
Setting up Facebook access within Aperture	267
Publishing images from Aperture to Facebook	268

Flickr	269
Setting up Flickr access within Aperture	269
Publishing images to Flickr	270
Using Other Export Plug-ins	271

chapter 9

How Can I Use Aperture with My HDSLR's Video Files? 274



How Does Aperture Handle Video Files?	276
Importing Video Files	276
Viewing Video Files	277
Editing a Clip	278
Setting the clip's poster frame	278
Trimming the clip	279
Exporting a Video Clip	279
Working with Audio Files	280
Importing audio files	280
Playing audio	280
Attaching and detaching audio files	281
Attaching audio files	281
Detaching audio files	282

chapter 10

How Can Aperture Make My Workflow Smoother? 284



Understanding Badge Meanings	286
Managing Photo Previews	288
Controlling preview preferences	288
Generating previews	290
Previews and stacks	290
Working with Multiple Libraries	290
Switching libraries	291
Moving images between libraries	292
Exporting a library	292
Importing a library	293
Working with multiple computers	294
Controlling Tethered Shooting	296
Configuring a tethering session	296
Running a tethering session	297
Customizing Keyboard Shortcuts	297
Using Aperture with Automator	299
Vaults and Backup	303
Using vaults to back up your images	304
Creating a vault	305
Updating a vault	305
Restoring from a vault	306
Deleting a vault	307

Alternate backup strategies	307
Time Machine	307
Other physical storage	308
Online backup	309

Using Aperture's Database Repair Tools	310
--	-----

Index	312
-------	-----

Introduction

In many ways, Aperture needs no introduction. It's professional photo management done by Apple, the same folks who brought you iPhoto, iPhone, and more. We could lavish it with praise for the next few hundred pages and describe to you how happy we are with the photographic workflows we've developed with Aperture, but while that praise would be completely true (perhaps garnished with a touch of hyperbole to add some humor), that wouldn't leave much room to explain how Aperture can help your workflow. Instead, we'll simply say that Aperture has helped us optimize our digital workflows more than any other piece of software (and between the two of us, we've tried them all) so that we can quickly process thousands of images and spend more time shooting and less time at our computers.

When you first look at it, though, it's tough to understand how this neutral-gray window can do so much, and more importantly, what all these weird words like *stacks* and *projects* mean. Don't worry: we're here to help.

The next few hundred pages will take you through Aperture, from understanding the basic terms in Chapter 1 to advanced topics in Chapter 10. As you read, we encourage you to import some images and videos into your Aperture library and to try clicking the buttons we describe for yourself.

Don't feel obligated to read this book from start to finish, however. While we've tried to build the text so that the chapters follow roughly a digital workflow order and build on each other, feel free to skip around, especially if you've used Aperture before.

Lastly, while it's easy to sometimes feel overwhelmed by all the features in a program like Aperture, don't be. There's no test at the end of this book, and you don't have to use every possible feature to its fullest to integrate Aperture into your workflow. That's part of what's so great about Aperture — it's flexible enough to fit into your workflow instead of forcing you to fit into its workflow.

How Do I Get Started with Aperture?



Aperture in some ways is like iPhoto on steroids, but in other ways it's a completely different beast. Unlike iPhoto, it's designed to be an incredibly flexible image, video, and audio file asset management tool so that it can integrate into your existing workflow. However, this flexibility means that Aperture has more jargon, settings, and buttons than iPhoto. This chapter helps demystify Aperture's jargon and shows you key fundamentals you need to know when using Aperture.

Understanding Why Aperture Is a Key Part of Your Workflow 4

Working with Aperture's File Structure 7

A Brief Tour of Aperture's Interface 12

Basic Customization Options 24

Understanding Why Aperture Is a Key Part of Your Workflow

Most photographers agree that the time you spend behind the lens shooting is the best part of being a photographer, and all the other stuff (processing an image, categorizing it, trying to sell it or use it to promote business) is really just annoying. While digital photography enables you to be more creative as a photographer, from being able to see right away whether you got the shot or not to being able to experiment as much as you want with the only cost being disk space, the “other stuff” arguably gets more frustrating because now you have to manage digital files instead of physical film and learn to use multiple programs to develop and output your images. That’s where Aperture comes into play. Aperture is a central point for all of your image management, from the moment you download an image from camera to computer until you search for an image and click Print to make a physical copy for a client. Aperture makes it relatively easy and fast to organize and manage your digital files, and that lets you spend more time having fun shooting. However, Aperture isn’t the only digital asset management tool out there. Let’s look at what Aperture gives you over iPhoto, Bridge, and Lightroom.

Seeing the difference between Aperture and iPhoto

If you’ve been using iPhoto to manage your images, then you know that our explanation of why Aperture is a key part of our workflow could apply to iPhoto, too. While iPhoto is great for managing images of your family and friends taken with your point and shoot, it’s really limited when you put it under a microscope. For example, while you can make basic retouching adjustments in iPhoto like a levels adjustment, Aperture lets you fine-tune those adjustments to develop your image exactly the way you want it to look, perhaps adjusting the levels in just one color channel or using the quarter-tone controls (which we cover in Chapter 6) to adjust the levels in a specific part of your image. If you really like the effect your adjustment creates, you can save it as a preset to easily apply to other images, even on import. Aperture 3 has the ability to brush those adjustments selectively onto just part of your image, meaning you can make one levels adjustment in the sky and another on the ground, something iPhoto just can’t do. Oh, and if you prefer using curves to levels, Aperture 3 has a curves adjustment, too.

However, more advanced image adjustment controls aren’t the only difference between iPhoto and Aperture. Aperture provides tools to manage a far larger library than iPhoto can manage. For example, Aperture lets you make complicated searches for images, such as the search in Figure 1.1 that finds all your top-rated images taken in 2010 that were taken in San Francisco and have the keyword *water*. If you want to know specifics about Aperture’s tools to help categorize and search

for images, check out Chapters 5 and 6. Aperture is also a lot more flexible with managing your photos, and unlike in iPhoto, images in Aperture can easily be stored on multiple hard drives. Aperture 3 also adds great new tools to merge and split off collections of images, making it easy to share image collections between two machines.



1.1 An image search that's easy to do in Aperture but just not practical in iPhoto.

Lastly, while there are similar features in iPhoto and Aperture, like Faces, Places, books, and slide shows, they are just more powerful in Aperture. Aperture's Book tool, which we cover in Chapter 7, has advanced layout options that let you completely customize the image and text boxes on your page, or even use a photo to create a two-page background spread. Aperture's slide shows, explored in Chapter 8, let you go beyond iPhoto's click-and-play slide shows, creating custom titles, transitions, and music. You can even include HD video within an Aperture slide show.

In summary, while iPhoto is great for the casual consumer, just as you move from a point-and-shoot camera to a dSLR to upgrade your photography, moving to Aperture from iPhoto lets you upgrade your image-management tools.

Choosing Aperture over Bridge and Lightroom

For many photographers, Adobe Photoshop is the number one tool of choice for image work, and we certainly agree that it's a great image-manipulation program (although Aperture's adjustment tools combined with third-party Aperture plug-ins have made it so that we do more than 90 percent of our manipulation work in Aperture instead of Photoshop). You might be asking yourself why you shouldn't just use Adobe products, such as Adobe Bridge or Adobe Lightroom.

Bridge

Bridge, which comes free with your copy of Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, gives you basic organization features, such as letting you add keywords and captions to your images, and because it lets you open your RAW files in Adobe Camera Raw, you can adjust your images in it, too.

However, the key reason to choose Aperture over Bridge is that Bridge is really more of a File Browser that lets you do a couple of basic tasks with your files. Aperture, on the other hand, is a full asset management tool with a database behind the scenes tracking all your images. With Bridge, it's still up to you to manage where your files live, and tasks like searching for a particular image are quite clunky compared to an asset-based tool like Aperture. Furthermore, because Adobe wants to promote Lightroom over Bridge, Bridge lacks many features that are useful to photographers, like being able to spell-check keywords and captions. Adobe has explicitly chosen to omit those features.

Lightroom

While in some ways the Lightroom versus Aperture debate is a bit like a religious Mac versus PC debate, there are specific reasons that we find Aperture to be a much better choice than Lightroom for our workflows. The main reason is that Lightroom has different modules that you must switch between for different tasks, whereas Aperture does not. Practically speaking, adjustments affect editing decisions, and it's faster to make those decisions in Aperture than in Lightroom. For example, you may frequently look at an image and say, "This is good, but if I straighten it, will it be great?" In Aperture, you can press one keyboard shortcut and then drag the mouse to straighten the image. In Lightroom, you need to switch from the Organize to the Develop module, adjust the image, and then switch back to the main module to continue making editing decisions. Less time having to switch modes to make a decision means more time shooting and having fun!

We prefer Aperture for specific, technical reasons as well. One is that Aperture has a more powerful hierarchy (we dig into the specific parts of its structure shortly) that you can customize, such as moving albums wherever you want them to be, whereas Lightroom has a relatively flat hierarchy with limited customization options. In Aperture 3, like in Lightroom, you are able to brush adjustments onto an image, but Aperture provides far more control over how those adjustments are applied, such as only affecting the highlights or shadows. Furthermore, only a few adjustments in Lightroom can be brushed onto an image, whereas most adjustments in Aperture can be selectively applied. Aperture's new curves control is far more powerful than Lightroom's parametric curves, too. Then there are also features that Lightroom just doesn't have; for example being able to manage audio files and being able to make a book. Lightroom also lacks any form of Faces and Places.

We should mention that while we far prefer Aperture to Lightroom, Lightroom is not a bad program, and if you have a PC, it's a very good choice. However, if you have a Mac, we enthusiastically recommend that you use Aperture.