

# Introducing dpBestflow.org: Ultimate Digital Photography Knowledge

Launched in November, the dpBestflow.org Web site aims to provide the most comprehensive answers to best practices for digital photographers. The site, which is free and requires no log-in, is spectacular both in its depth and level of authority. Although geared for all professional photographers, the site is focused on RAW capture workflows.

“The entire site is built from the ground up to address best RAW practices,” says Richard Anderson, dpBestflow.org’s project director, a commercial photographer and leading expert in digital photography best practices. Anderson notes that even RAW photography diehards need to work with multiple file formats—if only as PSD and JPEG derivative files—so dpBestflow’s coverage extends far beyond RAW issues alone. However, the site’s default perspective is that RAW is the preferred capture method, and this ensures that its content remains squarely ahead of photographic trends. It’s a RAW world for professional photographers, and dpBestflow.org is a resource that most photographers will value greatly.

DpBestflow.org was funded by the Library of Congress, which became interested in Anderson’s pioneering work as the managing editor of the Universal Photographic Digital Imaging Guidelines (UPDIG), an online document of best practices. A much more robust evolution of UPDIG, dpBestflow.org is an initiative of the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP), which is overseeing the funds from the Library of Congress as well as sponsoring nationwide seminars to spread the word about dpBestflow.org.

Peter Krogh is the other key player in the development of dpBestflow.org, partnering with Anderson as the senior project manager. Krogh is a widely respected digital asset management guru, author of the brilliant *The DAM Book: Digital Asset Management for Photographers* (O’Reilly, 2009, second edition). “DpBestflow.org is basically everything we know about digi-



tal photography,” Anderson says. “This turns out to be a hell of a lot.”

While the meat of dpBestflow.org’s content is based on Anderson and Krogh’s years of independent research that led up to the project, they reached out for content and input from diverse photography experts. In keeping with the mission of the ASMP, all contributors to dpBestflow.org are committed to sharing information that benefits the photographic community as a whole.

The dpBestflow.org Web site is authoritative, in-depth, thoughtfully organized and features excellent video tutorials and a great glossary. All professional photographers can benefit from dpBestflow.org—for quick, general reference or in-depth learning. However, a word of caution is in order. The sheer scope of dpBestflow.org almost ensures that, with only a quick glance, the site will overwhelm many photographers while underwhelming many others. To overcome this hurdle and fully appreciate the true value of the dpBestflow.org, photographers will need to thoughtfully explore the site in relation to their own needs. The following information will make this process easier.

## For a Knowledge-hungry Audience

“DpBestflow.org is designed for both professional and intermediate/advanced

amateur photographers,” Anderson tells me. “It is also for digital imagemakers of any type, graphic designers, art directors, studio managers, picture editors and photography and digital imaging students.” Who is it not for? I ask Anderson. “People who don’t want to get the most out of their digital images and ensure the long-term preservation of those images,” he replies.

Indeed, the focus on image preservation is at the heart of the dpBestflow.org Web site, and is exactly why the Library of Congress funded this project. “The Library of Congress is concerned with the archiving of all media,” Anderson says. “Best practices in digital imaging preservation has been a moving target, and so they came to us to present clear answers that would serve the needs of all people working with images.”

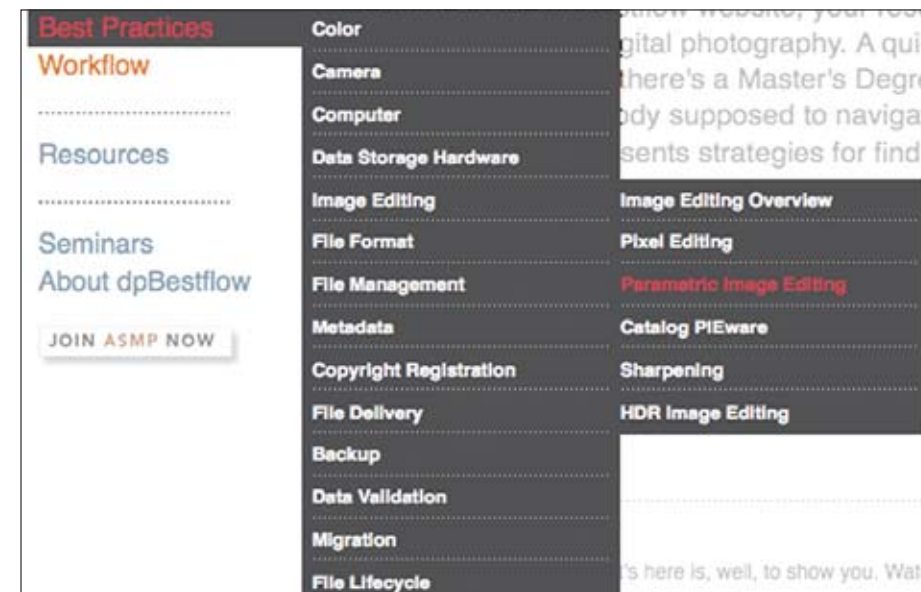
This archival focus of dpBestflow.org might seem to suggest that the site does not have practical information for deadline-driven photographers. Actually, just the opposite is true. The information is highly precise and highly practical, although this is not “learning made easy.” This is the highest value of information presented to dedicated photographers committed to constant learning and the evolution of digital.

## Ongoing Team Approach to Quality

“The site is really a shared labor of love, with Peter and me working together in close collaboration,” Anderson explains. “We are the driving forces behind the dpBestflow.org.” This is good news for photographers. Krogh’s expertise in digital asset management is as unquestionable as Anderson’s expertise in best practices. They are both collaborative minded, and have folded years of extensive research into the one source of knowledge that is dpBestflow.org. Besides firsthand experience and their extensive research with diverse imaging professionals, the team sought information directly from every key hardware and software developer in the industry.

Although not clear from its presentation, dpBestflow.org is actually still a work in progress, with Anderson and Krogh continuing to refine content, especially in relation to feedback since the site’s launch. “You have to realize, no one has ever tried to do this before, and we are very interested in people’s reactions,” Anderson tells me.

## Best Practices and The Ecosystem of Digital Imaging



The “Best Practices” section of dpBestflow.org is broken down into 14 sections, all featuring extensive and widely accepted digital imaging knowledge.

“We are all about what Peter calls the ecosystem of digital imaging,” Anderson explains. “We are concerned about how everything in digital imaging works together.” This, Anderson notes, is the

crux of what makes dpBestflow.org unique from all other digital photographic resources—the books, the online resources and the training seminars that photographers rely on. Anderson makes it clear that dpBestflow.org is not meant to replace these resources; it offers a common ground that supports all.

“Almost all photographic resources are focused on specific programs, and they are usually based on one photographer’s workflow,” Anderson says. “We take the view that all programs are interrelated and that photographers need to understand how to approach each program in relation to the whole.” Anderson says that one specific workflow might work fine today, in one context. “But will a digital file from this workflow be available for use in the framework of the ecosystem of digital imaging in the future? That’s the framework we are addressing. That is the part of dpBestflow that is unique.”

When multiple workflow options meet the unique needs of each photographer, defining best practices is extremely difficult. “We realize that a wedding photographer’s workflow will be different than a commercial photographer’s,” Anderson

## Five Stops You Should Hit on dbBestflow.org

This hands-on tour will help you gain the best sense of how dpBestflow.org can meet your needs. Before starting, write down three imaging topics that you have been wanting to know more about, such as “color profiles” and “derivative files.” Also write down two bigger workflow goals or bottlenecks, such as “How to use cataloging software?” and “When to convert to DNG?” Keep these questions in mind as you make the stops on your introductory tour.

**Stop #1: Intro Video.** Watch the “Take the Tour” video, hosted by Peter Krogh, found under “Start Here.” Krogh breaks down the site’s structure and suggests learning tips.

**Stop #2: The Glossary.** Found under “Resources,” the glossary is an amazing resource in itself. Quickly scan all entries. “Having a universal, agreed upon vocabulary is critical for everyone working in the photo industry,” Richard Anderson explains.

**Stop #3: “Best Practices” Section.** Pick one of the 14 “Best Practices” that is most relevant to your questions, and then quickly scan the entire section. This is not the time to study, but rather the opportunity to understand the structure, content and voice of dpBestflow.org.

**Stop #4: “Workflow” Video.** Watch one of the eight videos in the “Workflow” section that illustrate an “Optimized Image Workflow” and a “Batch Process Workflow.” Again, this is not the time to watch for learning but to focus your understanding of what dpBestflow.org has to offer.

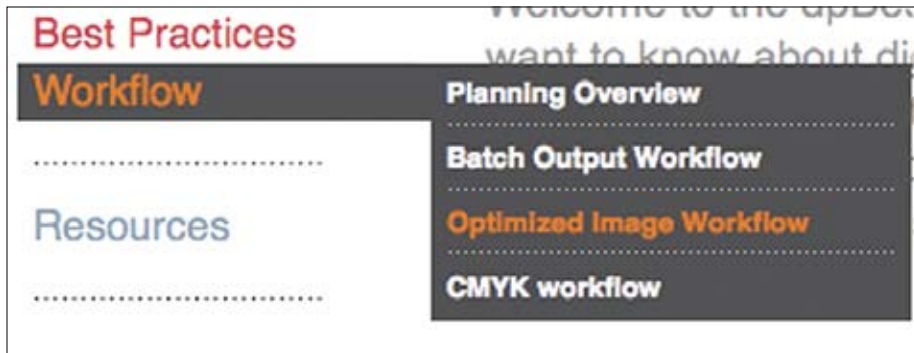
**Stop #5: Search Field.** The site has a powerful search feature. Now that you know the lay of the land, search the words and phrases you wrote down before starting, and see where dpBestflow.org leads you.

## Best Practices + Workflow = “Bestflow”

DpBestflow.org is broken down into two main sections: “Best Practices” and “Workflow.” Combining these two names, Anderson and Krogh arrived at the term “Bestflow.” Not only did this become the name of the site itself, but “bestflow” also represents a way of thinking about digital imaging. “Bestflow” is photographic workflow built on best practices.

Anderson explains that the “Best Practices” section is “all about the technology” and that it is the clearest outgrowth of UPDIG, although greatly expanded and refined. “Best Practices” is currently broken into 14

says. “So we provide different options and explain for whom they are best suited.” These different options can be confusing, as they often force readers to grapple with the underlying concepts of workflow. However, the photographers who grapple these tougher issues become the most knowledgeable and best prepared for further imaging evolutions.



The “Workflow” section of dpBestflow.org puts the knowledge from “Best Practices” into action, highlighting ideal workflows.

sections, from “Color Management” to “File Lifecycle,” and includes topics such as “Camera,” “Metadata” and “Migration.” There are currently 77 subtopics, including “Hard Drive 101,” “Parametric Image Editing” and “Optimized File Delivery.” The conceptual ideas and specific data comprising “Best Practices” would fill many books on photography, and all are considered best practices.

“‘Workflow’ refers to how we string together that set of best practices into a step-by-step progression,” Anderson explains. “For example, ‘Best Practices’ is where you find out how to calibrate a monitor—both in terms of the technical underpinnings as well as the specific steps. ‘Workflow’ is going to teach you how

to string together your work steps in the most logical, efficient manner for your needs—from ingesting and editing to final output. When you do this, because of color management best practices, you will know you are looking at your work on a profiled monitor.”

One of the four dpBestflow.org video tutorials that guide photographers through a “Batch Output Workflow.”



## Get to Know dpBestflow.org

Drawing on the support of others, Richard Anderson and Peter Krogh have put enormous energy into creating dpBestflow.org for the good of the entire photography industry. It seems appropriate that we show our appreciation for this effort by carefully investigating how dpBestflow.org can best serve our best-flow needs.

“I see things really moving forward,” Anderson tells me in terms of how photographers are continuing to embrace best practices. He says that he feels very positive about where the industry has moved in relation to best practices since he began his work on UPDIG in 2005. “It’s like with DNG. First, it didn’t exist. Then it was a foreign concept. Now, every year I see more people who are understanding and using the DNG. It takes a long time

for people to understand a new technology, and then the level of understanding starts to snowball. It’s like a drip, drip, drip that becomes a rushing river.”<sup>OC</sup>

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