# Photoshop Camera Raw Version Control

If you're a Mac-based Photoshop Camera Raw user who shoots raw, then this simple package of droplets and Automator actions will let you easily create and manage multiple versions of your raw images. One of the great advantages of raw files is that they can be processed in different ways to yield completely different images. While Photoshop CS2 doesn't provide any built-in facility for handling multiple versions of a raw file, with free package of utilities, you can easily create and manage a set of raw versions.

When you edit a raw file in Photoshop Camera Raw, your original raw file is not altered. Instead, the adjustments you make are stored in a database. Any time you view that raw file in Bridge or Camera Raw, your Mac looks up the edits, applies them to your original raw file, and renders an image. By default, the conversion data for each image is kept in an internal database. However, with a simple preference change, you can tell Photoshop Camera Raw to store your edits in a "sidecar .xmp" file - a small text file that sits in the same directory as your image.


_MG_0952.CR2   _MG_0952.xmp
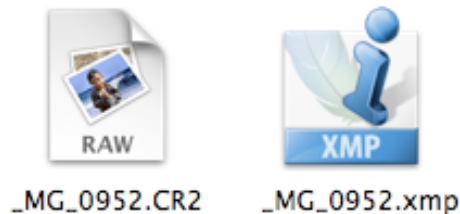
With your system configured this way, any time you open a raw file, Camera Raw automatically looks for an XMP file with the same name. If it finds one, it reads the settings from the XMP file and configures the raw dialog box accordingly. If no XMP file is found, then the program resorts to its default settings and behavior.
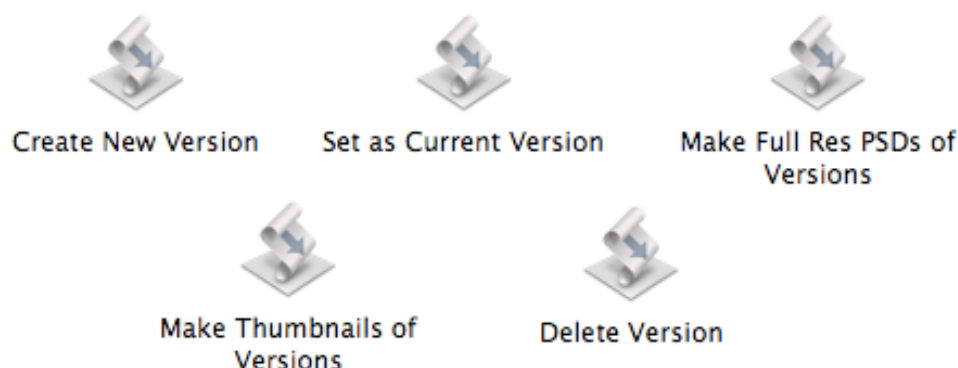
With ACR Version Control, you can easily create additional versions of any raw image. To begin, you must configure Photoshop Camera Raw to create separate XMP sidecar files. In the Camera Raw dialog box, open the pop-up menu in the upper-right corner, and select Preferences.
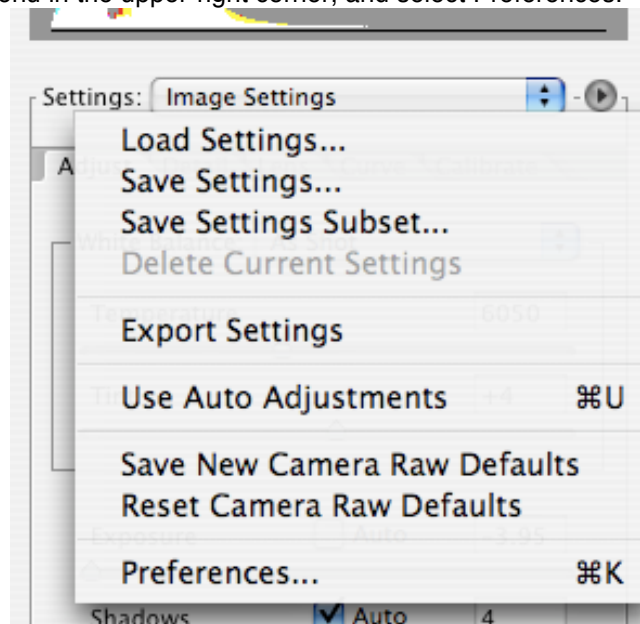
In the Preferences dialog, change the Save image settings in pop-up menu to "Sidecar".xmp" files.
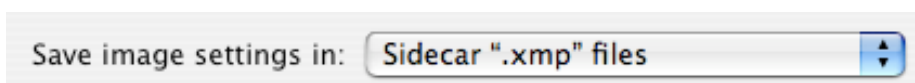
This tells Camera Raw to create a separate XMP file (which is nothing more than a small text file, usually between 4 to 10 kilobytes in size) to hold all of the settings that you define for the processing of each particular raw file. This XMP file represents one version of your image. You can easily create and manage multiple versions by dragging XMP files onto the appropriate droplets.

Create New Version   Set as Current Version   Make Full Res PSDs of Versions

Make Thumbnails of Versions   Delete Version

To create a new version, first place your raw image and its current XMP file in their own folder. This whole scheme will quickly get confused if you try to have two different images - each with multiple versions- in the same folder.

Next, drop the existing XMP file on the Create New Version droplet. (You have to have already edited the raw file at least once, to create a first XMP file.) The version will be duplicated, and the old version will be given the name Version 01.


_MG_0952.CR2   Version 01   _MG_0952.xmp

Now, open the raw file in Camera Raw. You should see exactly the same image that you saw before, because this version is an exact duplicate of your last version. Edit the new version to taste.

To return to the old version, drop the Version 01 document onto the Set as Current Version droplet. Version 1 will be retitled <imagename>.xmp and the existing .xmp file will be renamed with the appropriate version number.

_MG_0952.CR2   _MG_0952.xmp   Version 02

You can create up to 99 versions of a document by dragging any version document onto the Create New Version droplet. The new version will be an exact duplicate of the version that you dragged and will be set as the current version (meaning it will get the name <imagename>.xmp). The old current version will return to its proper version name.

_MG_0952.CR2   Version 01   Version 02   Version 03   Version 04   _MG_0952.xmp
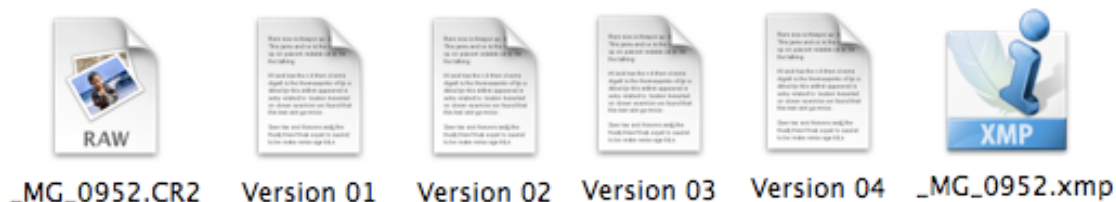
If you want to delete a version, don't just throw it in the trash, as the version numbering system will get messed up, which can confuse the droplets. Instead, drag the version you want to delete to the Delete Versions droplet, which will remove the version and re-number all subsequent versions accordingly.

Drop any version document onto the Make Thumbnails of Version droplet, and thumbnail JPEG files of each version will automatically be generated via Camera Raw and Adobe Photoshop.

Similarly, drop any version onto the Make Full Res PSDs of Versions droplet and you'll get a full-size Photoshop document for each version that you've created.

Note that each of these version files is very very small. Using this versioning scheme, you can easily manage multiple versions without taking up a huge amount of disk space - it's the raw file that contains the big data. Each version file contains nothing more than a little bit of text.

Automator Actions

If you're an Automator user, you can use the enclosed Automator actions to create thumbnails and ful-res PSDs of your versions.

First, install the actions by placing them in your Home > Library > Automator folder. If such a folder doesn't exist, create one.

Next, launch Automator while holding down the option key. The actions work just like the droplets: pass them a single version file from a series, and thumbnails or full-res versions will be created from all of the versions in the group. (Be careful, if you drop more than one version from the same series, then you'll end up with multiple versions of ALL of the files in the series.)

To learn more and to check for updates, go to www.completedigitalphotography.com

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