



Lightroom Organization Update

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In this lesson, we're going to take a look at some tips for working with Lightroom's Library Module. I have been changing my organizational system a bit and would also like to update you about that.

Controlling panel visibility

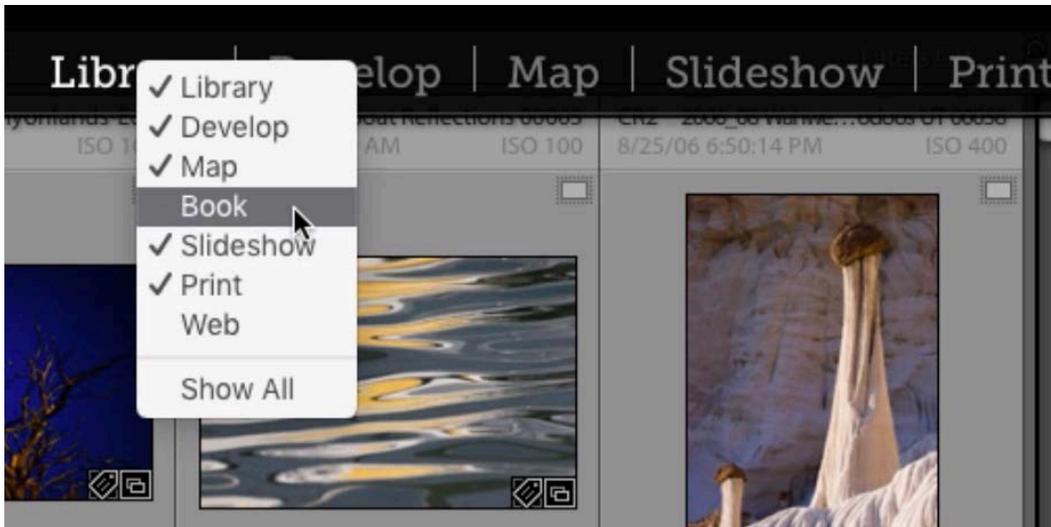
Let's first look at how I set up my Library Module to be most effective. There are panels on the left, right, top and bottom sides of the interface and I set these panels up to automatically show up, automatically hide or to only show up when I manually click on them. When a panel is set up to automatically show and hide, it will open when you hover your cursor over that edge of the interface and it will disappear when you move your cursor away from the panel. You can specify this by right-clicking on the panel's little disclosure triangle and choosing one of the options from the pop-up menu.



To control how a panel behaves, right-click on the disclosure triangle (circled) to access this menu.

The top panel contains the Identity Plate and the buttons for accessing the various modules. I set this panel to the “Automatically Show & Hide” setting because I access my most-used modules via keyboard shortcuts. Tapping G will bring you into the Grid View of the Library Module and tapping the D key will bring you into the Develop Module.

There are some modules that I never use (the Book Module & the Web Module) so I like to hide these buttons from the interface altogether. You can control what module buttons appear by right-clicking within the area where the module names are located. A pop-up menu will appear that lists all of the modules. You can toggle the visibility of the various modules by clicking on them. If a check mark appears to the left of the module name, it means it's visible.



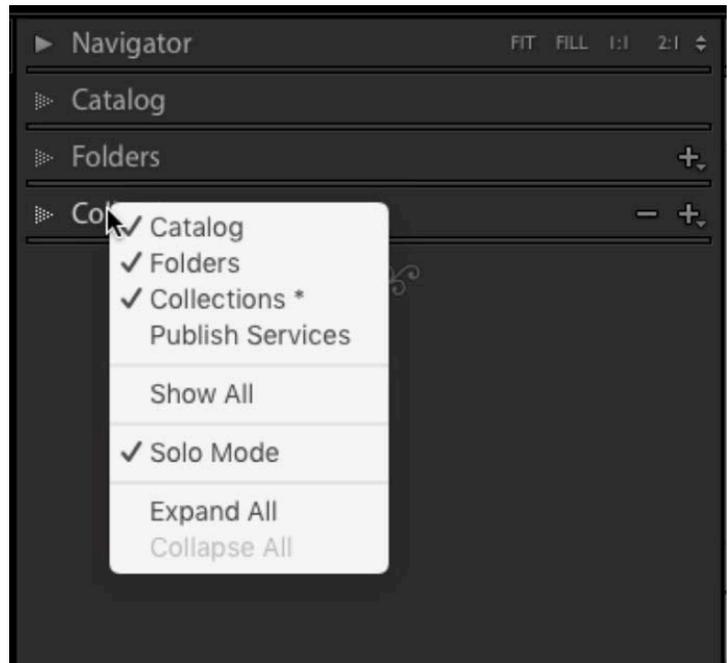
Right-click within the module names to access this menu, which allows you to specify which module buttons appear in the interface.

In the Library Module, the panel on the right side of the interface is the Metadata panel. I set this panel to Manual, which means it will only expand if I click on the little disclosure triangle. I set it up this way because I only use this panel when I want to change the name of a file, keyword a particular image, etc.

On the left side of the screen is the folder and collection list and I set this up to automatically show and hide. When a panel is set to automatically show and hide, you can temporarily override that setting by clicking on the disclosure triangle to open it. If you do this, it will stay open until you click on the triangle again. It will not disappear when you move your cursor away from the panel. After you manually close the panel, it will go back to the automatically show & hide setting.

Tab visibility

Now let's look at the panel that appears on the left side of the Library Module. This is where you'll find the settings for Collections, Folders, etc. Some of the tabs that appear here by default are ones that I barely use (Ex: Publish Services), so I like to hide their visibility completely. You can control which tabs appear in this list by right-clicking on one of the tab names. A pop-up menu will appear, containing a list of all the tabs available. You can toggle the visibility of these individual tabs by clicking to turn on or off the checkbox next to their names.



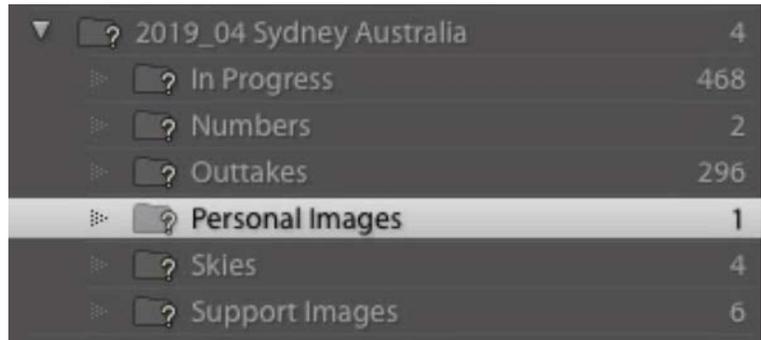
Right-click on one of the tab names to get this menu, which allows you to specify which settings appear in the panel.

Solo Mode

When a tab is set to Solo Mode, it will make it so only one of those tabs can be expanded at a time. I use this both in the left panel of the Library Module and in the panel of the right side of the Develop Module. On occasion, you may need to work with more than one tab expanded. When this is the case, you can hold down the Shift key while clicking on a tab name and it will let you expand more than one tab while in Solo Mode.

The Folder List

As I work through the images in a shoot, I will have a main, base folder that is titled with the name of the shoot and I will have multiple subfolders inside this base folder. You can create a subfolder by right-clicking on the folder name and choosing “Create subfolder inside...” from the pop-up menu. Let’s look at the purpose of these subfolders.



For each of my shoots, I create a base level folder and a series of subfolders inside of it.

In Progress Whenever I start processing the contents of a folder, I’ll create a subfolder within it called “In Progress.” I’ll drag all of the images that aren’t done yet into that folder. When I am done processing an image, I will then move it into the base folder. This way, the only images contained within that base folder are the ones that are ready to show the public or ready to print.

Outtakes I will also create another subfolder within the base folder for a shoot and I’ll name it “Outtakes.” This is where I’ll place any images that are blurry, the composition wasn’t right, etc. Basically, this folder is for images I don’t think I need to look at again.

Skies, Textures, etc. I will sometimes create additional subfolders for specific types of images. For example, I sometimes shoot images of skies and images containing only textures that I can use for compositing purposes, so I will create subfolders that give me a place to store and find these images.

Support Images I will also sometimes have a subfolder called “Support Images” and this is where I will place images that I may use as parts of another image. For example, I will place the individual frames of a panorama or an HDR image here. I will also use this subfolder for any images that were shot as a piece of a composite. Other images I may place here are model releases, white balance card reference images, etc.

Teaching Images If I know that I am going to be using certain images for teaching, I will create a subfolder called “Teaching Images” and this helps me to easily find those images in the future.

Photo Series (Numbers) I have started a series where I photograph various numbers that I find in a scene, as I may use these for a project sometime in the future. Subfolders can be useful when you have an ongoing series like this because it makes the images easier to locate later.

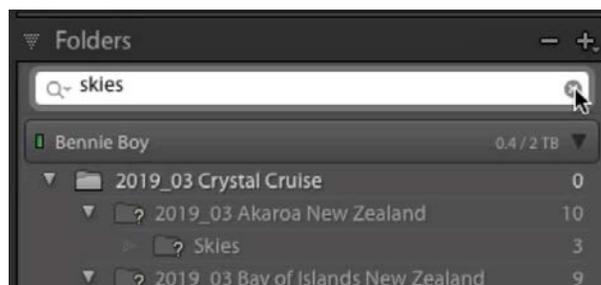
Personal Images The Personal Images subfolder is where I place images of family and friends that I may not want to show the general public.

If a folder of images does not contain an “In Progress” folder, it means that I am completely done working through all of the images in a shoot and have either processed them and placed them in the base folder or I have placed them in a different folder.

In the Folders tab, there will be a number to the right of each folder name. This number can represent either the number of images in that particular folder OR it can represent the number of images within that folder AND all of its subfolders. Specify which of these you’d like by clicking on the Library menu at the top of the screen and toggling the setting called “Show Photos in Subfolders.” I usually keep this turned off because I want my base folder to only display the images I’m ready to show the public.

Searching Folders

Let’s look at how I use these folders. The Search bar is located at the top of the Folders panel and it can be used to search for specific names/words. If I type in the word “skies,” the panel will expand all folders necessary to show me where there is a folder or image with the word “skies” in its name.

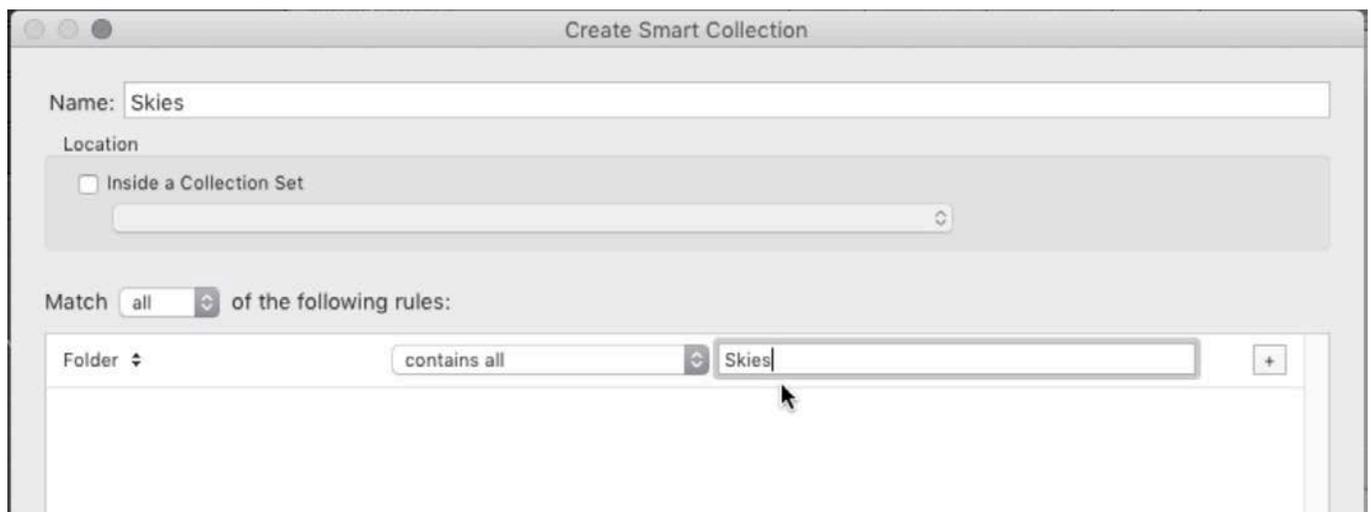


Search the folder list using the search field at the top of the panel.

Smart Collections

A Smart Collection gives us a way of automatically filtering images based on certain criteria. It is essentially a saved search. Create a Smart Collection by clicking on the little plus icon to the right of the Collections tab name and choosing “Create Smart Collection” from the pop-up menu. A dialog will appear and this is where we enter in the search parameters, specifying what images should automatically be added to the collection.

Let’s say that I want to create a smart collection that contains all of my sky images. At the top of the dialog, I’ll enter in a name for the collection (Skies). The main area of this dialog is where you set the “rules” for what images should be included in the smart collection. I’ll click on the menu on the far left side and choose Source > Folder. This is because I want Lightroom to look for all the images within my “Skies” folders. The next menu to the right will be set to “contains all” and then I will enter in the word “Skies” in the field to the right. This will tell Lightroom to look for all the folders titled “Skies” and include all of the images within these folders in the smart collection. I’ll click the Create button at the bottom of the dialog and the smart collection will be created.

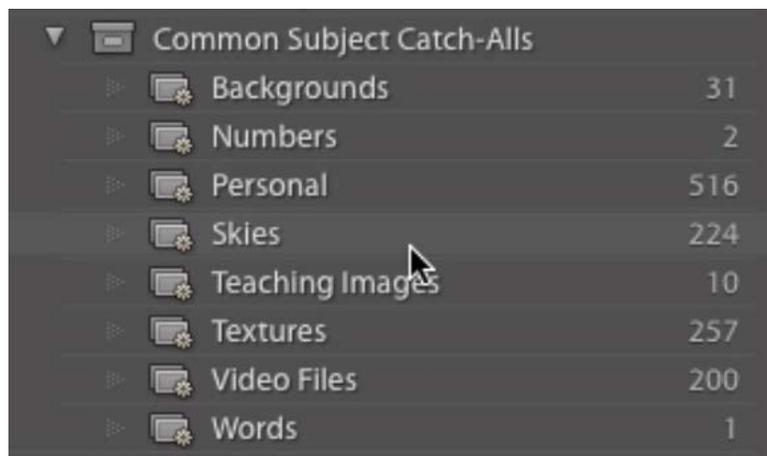


This is the dialog used to create a smart collection. Above you can see the settings used to create a smart collection that is set up to automatically include all images contained within the folders named “Skies.”

When you're looking at the images within a collection, you can quickly navigate to the location of the image by right-clicking on the image thumbnail and choosing "Go to Folder in Library" from the pop-up menu. This will take you to the original source location in the folder list.

Collection Sets

Collection Sets can be useful for creating different categories of collections. I like to create a collection set that includes all of the collections containing images I have shot for a certain series (numbers, skies, textures, etc.). I call this collection "Common Subject Catch-Alls." Create a collection set by clicking on the little plus icon to the right of the Collections tab header and choosing "Create Collection Set" from the pop-up menu.

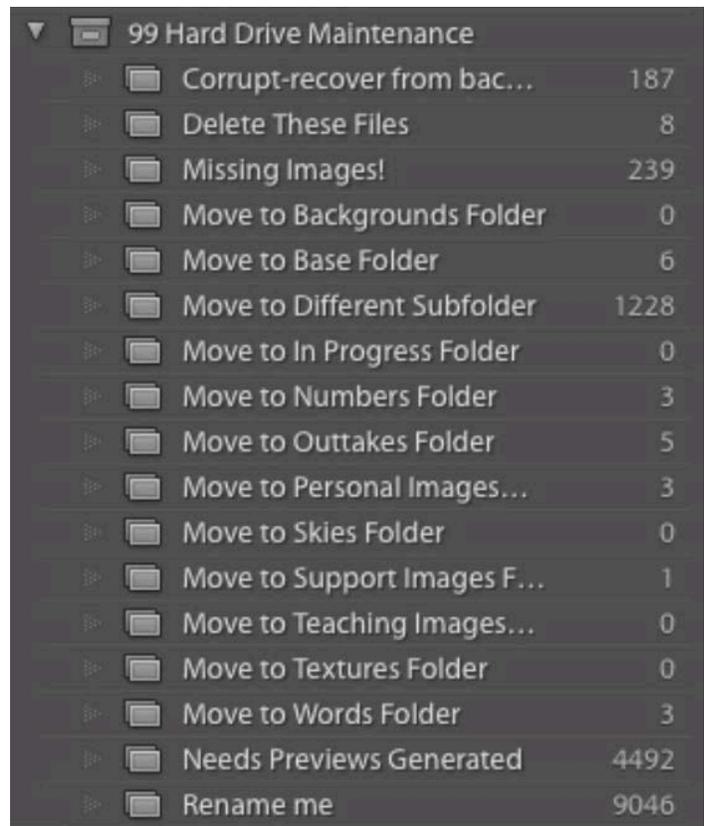


Here, you can see the collection set, titled "Common Subject Catch-Alls" and the various smart collections that have been placed inside of it.

You can only move images into subfolders when the hard drive containing the original files is connected to the computer. This can make it tough when you travel a lot and may not always have your hard drives with you. Here's how I get around that. I'll create a Collection Set called "Hard Drive Maintenance." This is where I remind myself of what I need to do when I get back home and re-connected to the main hard drive that contains all of my images.

The names of the collections inside this collection set contain instructions, such as “Move to Base Folder,” “Move to Skies” folder, etc. This way, when I get home, I can take all of the images within these subfolders and move them to where they ultimately need to go. Some of the other collections I use to remind me of what to do later are as follows:

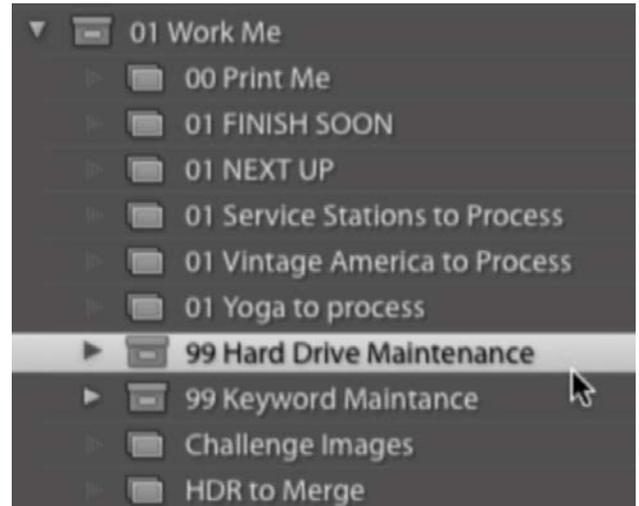
- Corrupt-Recover from backup
- Delete these Files
- Rename Me
- Missing Images! (This reminds me that some images could not be found and need to be located on the backup drive.)
- Needs Previews Generated (If I ever go to a folder and find that the thumbnails don’t show up at all, it means that the images don’t have previews and I need to create previews for them.)



The collection set, “Hard Drive Maintenance,” contains collections that are designed to remind me of tasks that need to be done later, once my main image hard drive is available.

The order of collections & collection sets

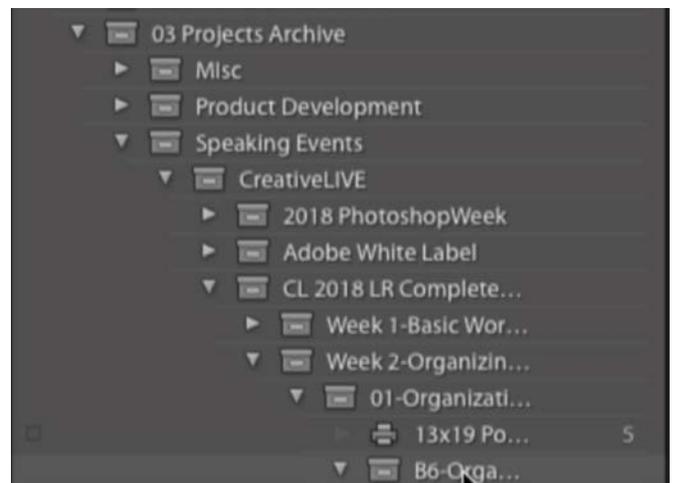
Collections are listed in alphabetical order within the Collections panel, but I sometimes want control over the order. When this is the case, I will include numbers at the beginning of the collection name. For example, the collection that is named “00 Print Me” will appear first in the list, and the collection that is named “01 Finish Soon” will appear second because of the numbers at the beginning of their names. I use this numbering technique with both collections and collection sets. Additionally, if there are any collections that are especially important, I will make their name be in all caps so that they stand out to my eye.



Because collections and collection sets are listed alphabetically, you can use numbers in the beginning of the collection names to control the order.

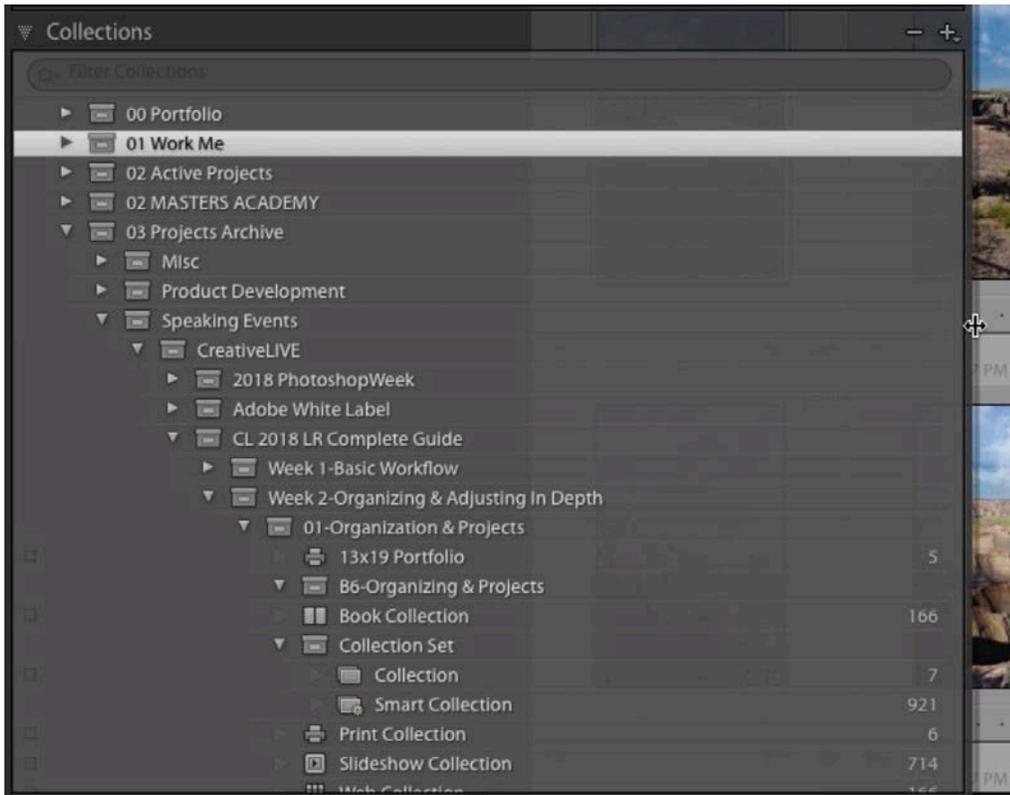
Override the maximum panel width

If you try to expand the panel on the left side of the interface to make it wider, you will find that it has a limit where it can not be expanded any further. This can become an issue when you use lots of subfolders within subfolders within subfolders, etc. This is because each time you create a subfolder or a collection within a collection set, the new subfolder or collection becomes indented as if it were in an outline. Once there are enough indented subfolders, it gets to



Once there are many subfolders within subfolders, the folder names begin to get cut off on the right side.

the point where the names become cut off because the panel cannot be expanded far enough. How do you get around this? Hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) while dragging the side of the panel to expand it. When the Option key is held down, there will be no limit as to how far you can expand the panel.



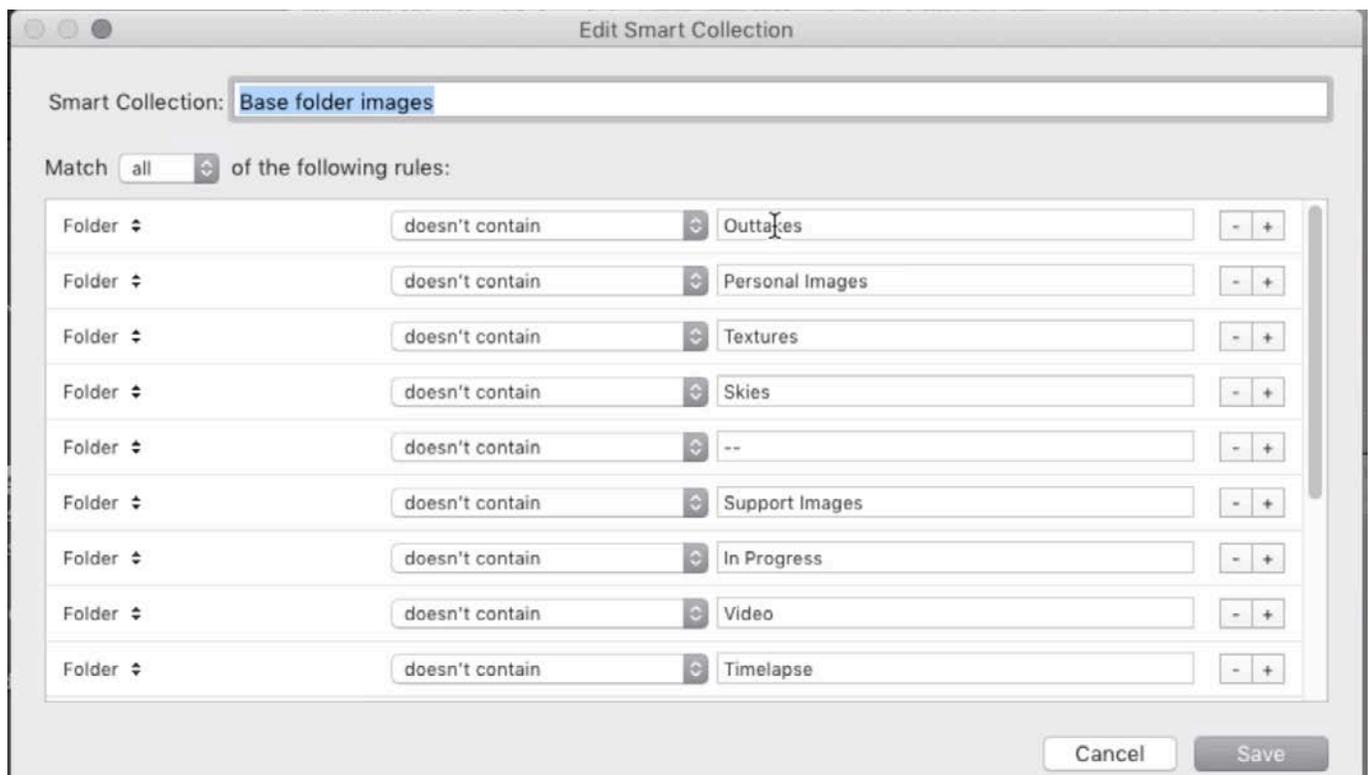
The Option key (Alt on Win) is being held down while the edge of the panel is being expanded. This makes it so there is no limit as to how far the panel can be expanded.

View base folder images

This can be a smart collection that is useful if you use the same folder structure as I do. I keep all of my finished images in the base folders, and I sometimes like to see all my finished images at once (to show in a slideshow perhaps). I will create smart collection, titled “View base folder images” for this purpose. This can be tricky to set up because each base folder has a different name. Here’s how I go about it. I will click the plus icon at the top of the Collections panel and choose to Create New Smart Collection. The dialog will appear, where I can specify what images should automatically be included in the smart collection.

At the top of the dialog, I'll enter the name "Base Folder Images." Then, I'll set the first search parameter menu to Folder. To the right of that menu, I'll choose "doesn't contain" and then I will type in the name of one of the subfolders I use, such as "In Progress." This tells Lightroom that the smart collection should not contain any images within the folders named "In Progress."

Then, I'll click the little plus icon to the right of this search parameter. This will add a second search parameter and I'll do the same thing, entering in another of my subfolder names, such as "Outtakes." I'll continue doing this until I have included the names of all my various subfolders. After doing this, the only images left will be the ones in the base level folders and so that's all the collection will display. I'll click the Create button when I'm done and the smart collection will be added. Note that if I ever add a new subfolder that has a different name, I will need to update the parameters for this smart collection, adding the name of that new subfolder.

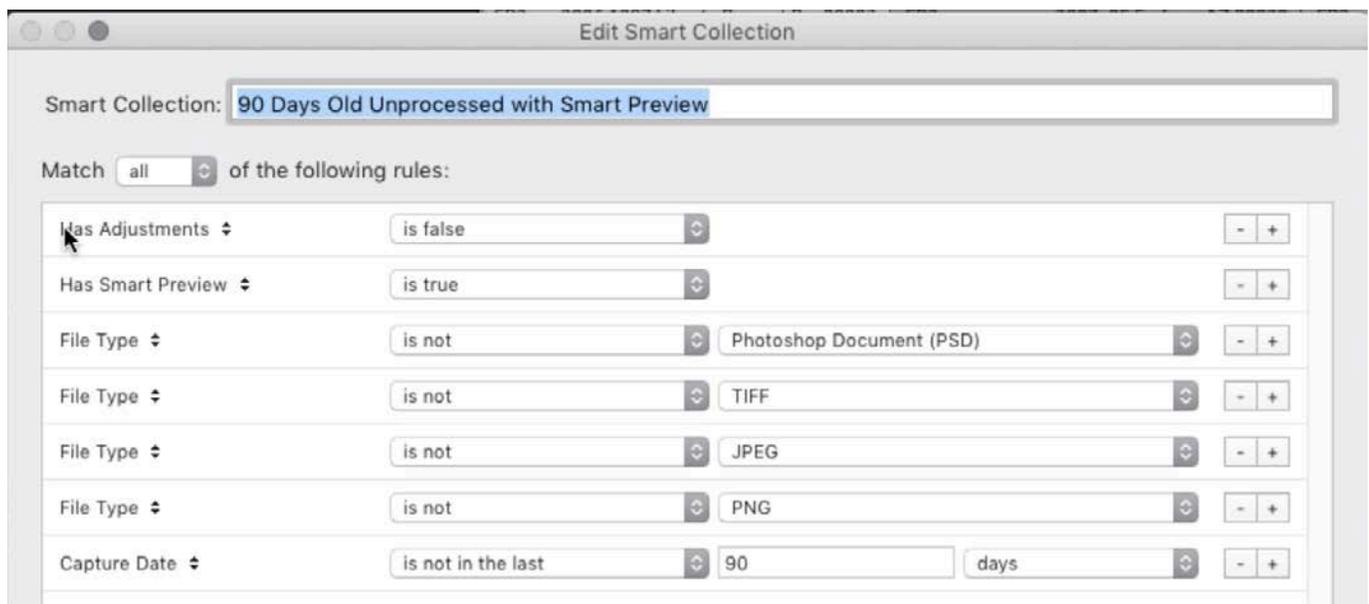


Above, you can see how the "Base Folder Images" smart collection is set up. The "rules" are used to exclude all images that are stored in folders other than the base level folders.

“Clear Hard Drive Space” Collection

I create a collection set called “Clear Hard Drive Space” that contains a few smart collections that are designed to find files that are unnecessarily taking up hard drive space. One of these smart collections is called “Outtakes with Smart Previews” and it is set up to include all images that I’ve placed into an Outtakes folder that have smart previews attached. Smart previews will allow you to adjust an image even when the hard drive containing the image file is not attached. They take up more hard drive space than smaller previews and they are unnecessary for outtake images, which are the images I have deemed unusable. When I see that this smart collection is accumulating a lot of images, I can select all of those images and remove their smart previews in order to clear my hard drive a bit.

I also have a smart collection called “90 Days Old Unprocessed with Smart Preview.” As the name implies, this collection is set up to automatically include all images that have been uploaded more than 90 days ago, which have not been processed and also contain smart previews. If the images are that old, it means I may never get around to processing them, and I should look at these images and evaluate whether they really warrant having smart previews.



The smart collection being created here is designed to include all images that are at least 90 days old and have not yet been processed. It is set to exclude the TIFF, JPEG and PNG file formats because these are images that are the result of processing in Photoshop or elsewhere.