FotoCatalog

User Manual

PART 1

Installation and getting started

FotoCatalog is a local Windows application. The catalog and working information are stored on the same computer; the original photos remain in their usual folders.

1. Before installation

FotoCatalog is designed to work with a single catalog that can contain photos from different folders, drives, external storage devices or network locations. Installing the application does not copy or reorganize your photos.

Before you begin, it is recommended that you:

- Close any previous version of FotoCatalog that may be running.
- Have Windows administrator permissions to run the installer.
- Do not move or rename large numbers of photo folders while the first scan is in progress.
- Keep connected any external drives or network locations you want to add to the catalog.

Important: FotoCatalog catalogs existing files. It does not create a new photo library or require all images to be moved into a specific folder.

2. Installation

2.1. Run the installer as administrator

To avoid permission issues during installation, run the installer with administrator privileges.

- Locate the FotoCatalog installer file.
- Right-click the installer.
- Select “Run as administrator”.
- If Windows displays User Account Control, confirm that you want to allow the program to run.
- Follow the wizard until installation is complete.

For future updates, if a new installer is run over an existing installation, it is advisable to follow the same procedure.

2.2. First launch

Once installed, FotoCatalog can be started from the shortcut created by Windows. On first launch, the application automatically prepares the environment required for use.

You do not need to create a database file manually or specify its location. FotoCatalog automatically creates and opens its working SQLite database.

3. The catalog database

3.1. One global catalog

FotoCatalog uses a single global SQLite database. This means you do not need a separate catalog for each trip, folder, drive or camera.

For example, you can scan D:\Foto today, an external drive later, a personal folder, an entire drive or a network path. All of this information is integrated into the same catalog.

3.2. What the database stores

The database stores cataloging and working information, including:

- References to photo files and their locations.
- Grouping of files that belong to the same logical photo, for example RAW + JPG.
- Dates, cameras and other metadata read from the files.
- Tags assigned to photos.
- Information required for searches and the different catalog views.
- Non-destructive editing adjustments and other internal FotoCatalog information.
- Learning information derived from corrections made to visual tag suggestions.

The database does not replace your photos. If the catalog is deleted, the original photos remain in their folders.

4. What happens to the original photos

Scanning and cataloging are non-destructive operations. FotoCatalog reads information from the files and stores references to them in the catalog, but it does not automatically move or copy them.

- Original files stay in the same location.
- You can keep the folder structures you were already using before installing FotoCatalog.
- New folders or drives can be added to the catalog later.
- A single catalog can contain photos from many different locations.
- If a drive or folder is temporarily unavailable, FotoCatalog can identify the files as unavailable without treating them as permanently deleted.

Explicit copy, move, rename, Recycle Bin, export or editor save operations can create or modify physical files. These actions are always initiated by a direct user command.

5. First-time setup

5.1. Empty catalog

The first time FotoCatalog is opened, the catalog does not yet contain any photos. The main screen offers the option to scan a folder to get started.

At this point, you only need to choose one initial location. You do not need to select every folder or drive you plan to use from the start.

5.2. Scan the first location

When you select “Scan folder”, FotoCatalog lets you choose a folder, drive or location accessible from Windows. The application scans the selected directories, identifies compatible photo files, reads the required metadata and updates the catalog.

When the process finishes, the photos appear in Gallery and are also available in the Folders, Dates, Cameras and Tags views.

Detailed catalog scanning, adding more directories and how the views work are explained in Part 2 of this manual.

6. Formats and files

FotoCatalog can work with common image formats and several RAW formats. It also supports HEIC/HEIF photos. When a photo has more than one related file, such as a RAW and its JPG, FotoCatalog can present them as a single logical photo while retaining access to the associated physical files.

Thumbnail, preview and RAW file processing is handled internally. Users do not need to convert RAW files in advance in order to catalog them.

7. Checks after installation

After the first installation, it is advisable to check:

- That FotoCatalog opens without errors.
- That a folder can be selected and scanned.
- That scanned photos appear in Gallery.
- That JPG photos and, where available, RAW or HEIC photos can be opened.
- That closing FotoCatalog also closes the auxiliary processes used by the application.

8. FotoCatalog updates

When a new version of FotoCatalog is installed, the goal is to keep the existing catalog and continue working with the same database.

Before a major update, it is advisable to have your normal computer backup available. The database is important because it contains cataloging work, tags and adjustments that are not necessarily part of the original files.

You should not create a new catalog when updating the program.

9. Part 1 summary

- Install FotoCatalog by running the installer as administrator.

- The catalog SQLite database is created automatically.
- FotoCatalog works with a single global catalog.
- Original photos remain in their folders.
- Different folders, drives and locations can be added at different times.
- The first scan starts populating the catalog.
- Full catalog management is explained in Part 2.