FotoCatalog

User Manual

PART 2

Catalog

Photo organization, search, tagging and management

1. General catalog concept

FotoCatalog works with a single global catalog. You do not need to create a separate catalog for each trip, year, camera or drive. Different folders and drives can be added at different times, and all photos become part of the same database.

The catalog is not a copy of your photos. FotoCatalog stores information about the files, their locations, metadata, tags and working adjustments, while the original files remain in their existing folders.

> **Key idea: you can catalog D:\Foto today, an external drive tomorrow and a network path later. Everything is integrated into the same catalog without physically reorganizing the images.**

2. Scan and update folders

The main way photos enter the catalog is the “Scan folder” action. This command lets you select a folder, an entire drive or a location accessible from Windows.

2.1. What a scan does

- Scans the selected folder and its subfolders.
- Identifies compatible image files.
- Adds new files to the catalog.
- Updates information for files already known.
- Reads required metadata such as capture date and camera.
- Builds or updates logical photos, for example RAW + JPG groups.
- Detects files that used to exist but are no longer accessible.

2.2. Can more than one location be scanned?

Yes. A scan does not replace what is already in the catalog. Each new location is added to the existing set. This allows internal drives, USB drives, personal folders and network drives to be used within the same FotoCatalog catalog.

2.3. Scan again

A location can be scanned again after photos have been added, removed or changed. FotoCatalog updates the inventory without duplicating photos that are already known.

> **Recommendation: if many physical changes have been made outside FotoCatalog, scan the affected folder or drive again.**

3. Logical photos and physical files

FotoCatalog distinguishes between a logical photo and the physical files that make it up. This is especially useful when the same shot exists in more than one format.

For example, a shot may have a NEF file and a JPG. FotoCatalog can show that shot as a single photo in the gallery while retaining access to both physical files.

- Gallery avoids visually duplicating the same shot when RAW + JPG are present.
- The viewer lets you inspect the associated physical files.
- File operations can act on a specific file or on the group, depending on the available action.
- Editing can work directly with RAW files without requiring a JPG to be created first.

4. Main catalog views

FotoCatalog lets you reach the same photos from different points of view. The navigation method changes, not the underlying catalog.

4.1. Gallery

This is the general view of the catalog photos. It shows thumbnails and lets you search, sort, filter, select and open photos.

- Shows one thumbnail per logical photo.
- Indicates when a photo has several associated files.
- Shows basic information such as date, camera and some tags.
- Lets you change thumbnail size.

4.2. Folders

Lets you browse according to the physical folder structure. When a folder is selected, the photos that belong to it are shown and, depending on the view, photos in its subfolders are shown as well.

This view is useful when you want to work according to the original organization of the drive, for example a trip or session stored in a specific folder.

4.3. Dates

Organizes photos using the capture date available in metadata. You can browse by year, month or day.

It is useful for finding a session when you remember when it was taken but not which folder contains it.

4.4. Cameras

Groups photos according to the camera make and model detected in metadata. It lets you view all images taken with a particular camera.

4.5. Tags

Shows existing tags and lets you open the photos associated with each one. Tags are one of the main tools for organizing the catalog across folders, dates and cameras.

5. Common viewing controls

The main galleries share controls so that working methods remain consistent across views.

5.1. Sort

- Newest.
- Oldest.
- Name A → Z.
- Name Z → A.

Sorting is applied to the query, so pages loaded later preserve the correct order.

5.2. Show

The “Show” filter temporarily limits the visible set, for example according to whether photos have a date or whether they belong to a file group.

5.3. Size

Lets you change gallery density using small, normal or large thumbnails. This change affects display only.

6. Pagination: “Load more” and “Load all”

To keep Gallery fast, FotoCatalog does not necessarily load every photo in a set at once. Photos are loaded in batches.

6.1. Load more

Adds the next batch of photos to those already visible. This is the recommended option for browsing large sets without using unnecessary resources.

6.2. Load all

When a search is active, the entire result set can be loaded at once. FotoCatalog continues reading the required batches internally until no more remain.

> **Note: if a search returns thousands of photos, “Load all” may require more memory and loading time than “Load more”.**

7. Selecting photos

Multiple selection lets you apply actions to a set of photos without working on them one by one.

7.1. Individual and range selection

- Photos can be selected individually from the gallery.
- Shift selection lets you select a continuous range between two photos.
- “Select visible” selects all photos currently loaded.
- “Clear selection” removes the current selection.

Selection only affects photos that are loaded and visible at that moment. If a search has more pending results, load them first if you want an action to apply to all of them.

8. Tags

Tags let you describe the content or context of photos and later retrieve them much more flexibly than by using folders alone.

8.1. System tags and user tags

FotoCatalog includes a set of general system tags designed for common concepts such as people, landscape, animals, beach, market or ruins. Users can also create their own tags.

Personal tags are especially useful for place names, trips, people, projects or any custom classification.

8.2. Manual tagging

With one or more photos selected, use the “Tag” action to assign tags manually. A photo can have as many tags as needed.

Tags can also be applied to an entire selected set, for example all photos in a Madeira folder with the tags “Madeira”, “Islands” and “Atlantic”.

8.3. Removing tags

Assigned tags can be removed from photos. User-created tags can also be deleted from the catalog when they are no longer needed. System tags remain available.

9. Smart tag suggestions

FotoCatalog can visually analyze a set of photos and suggest tags. This feature is an aid: no suggestion is permanently assigned without user confirmation.

9.1. Which photo set can be used

Suggestions are not limited to a folder. They can be applied to any set of photos defined by the user, especially a manual selection, but also search results or sets from other catalog views.

9.2. Workflow

1. Select the set of photos to analyze.
2. Click “Suggest tags”.
3. Run the visual analysis.
4. Review the thumbnails and proposed tags for each photo.
5. Keep, uncheck or add tags as appropriate.
6. Apply decisions in bulk when several photos share the same tag.
7. Confirm the changes.

Until confirmation, proposals are temporary suggestions only.

9.3. How the analysis works

Visual analysis uses a local model that compares the image with text concepts. The process can use the GPU when possible and has a CPU fallback mode.

FotoCatalog also includes consistency filters to reduce known false positives. For example, it tries to prevent photos of people from being interpreted as regional wildlife or a simple but intact building from being marked as a ruin.

Despite these improvements, the system is not infallible. Its purpose is to speed up tagging, not replace human review.

10. Learning from corrections

FotoCatalog can learn from the way visual suggestions are reviewed. This learning is local and is stored in the catalog database.

10.1. What it learns

- If a suggested visual tag is kept and confirmed, it counts as an acceptance.
- If a suggested visual tag is unchecked before confirmation, it counts as a rejection.
- Tags added manually do not take part in this learning.
- Tags derived from folders or metadata do not affect visual learning either.

10.2. Effect of learning

The effect is deliberately conservative. One or two corrections do not change behavior. Several decisions must accumulate before a tag receives a small confidence adjustment.

Learning does not retrain the visual model. It only makes a slight adjustment to the priority of future suggestions. This lets FotoCatalog adapt to real use without making the system unstable.

11. Search

11.1. General search

The search bar lets you find photos using text related to the logical name, file name, path, camera, date and confirmed tags.

Search is useful when you remember a specific word but do not want to browse manually through the different views.

11.2. Advanced search

Advanced search lets you build a selection using explicit catalog criteria. It is especially useful for combining tags with year or camera.

- Tags: one or more can be selected.
- “All” mode: the photo must match all selected tags.
- “Any” mode: matching one selected tag is enough.

- Year: restricts results to a specific year.
- Camera: restricts results to a specific camera model.

FotoCatalog shows the search expression that will be generated before running it. Once applied, the results appear in Gallery.

> **Important: tags selected in advanced search are treated as tag criteria, not merely as loose words from the file name.**

12. Operations on photos and files

When photos are selected, FotoCatalog displays an action bar grouped by type. Colors help distinguish the nature of each operation.

12.1. Selection actions

Selection controls are shown in blue. They include actions such as “Select visible” and “Clear selection”.

12.2. Tagging

Tag-related actions are shown in green. They include manual tagging and tag suggestions.

12.3. Files and export

File operations are shown in amber. Depending on context, they include copy, move, rename, resize or export.

12.4. Recycle Bin

The Recycle Bin action is shown in red because it is potentially destructive. Whenever that action is available, FotoCatalog sends the file to the Windows Recycle Bin instead of deleting it directly.

13. Physical files in the viewer

When a photo is opened, the viewer lets you inspect its associated physical files. This is especially useful for grouped photos such as RAW + JPG.

From this area you can perform operations on a specific physical file, such as rename, copy, move, export or send it to the Recycle Bin.

14. Export

Export creates a new copy of the photo in the selected format and size. Depending on context, formats such as JPG, PNG or TIFF can be used.

- You can keep the original size or limit the long edge.
- Quality can be adjusted for formats that support it.
- Confirmed tags can be copied to the exported photo when the export is added to the catalog.
- You can choose whether or not to add the newly exported photo to the catalog.

The latter option is useful when you only want an external copy to send, publish or copy to a USB drive.

15. Unavailable photos and files

If FotoCatalog had cataloged a file but it is no longer accessible at its location, it may appear in the “Unavailable” section. This can happen, for example, when an external drive is disconnected or a network location is unavailable.

A file marked unavailable is not necessarily deleted. It can become active again when the location is available and the catalog is updated.

16. Recommended workflow

8. Scan the folders or drives you want to add.
9. Browse Gallery, Folders, Dates or Cameras to locate sets of photos.
10. Use multiple selection when you need to work with several photos.
11. Assign manual tags to sets that are easy to identify.
12. Use “Suggest tags” to speed up visual tagging.
13. Always review suggestions before confirming them.
14. Use general or advanced search to retrieve sets of photos.
15. Use copy, move or export only when physical files need to be modified or created.

17. Practical examples

17.1. Tagging a trip

Select the trip photos, apply general location tags in bulk, then use visual suggestions to add concepts such as people, landscape, animals, market or architecture.

17.2. Finding specific photos

For example, to find photos tagged “Madeira” taken in a specific year, use advanced search and combine the tag with the year.

17.3. Preparing photos to share

Select the photos, export them to JPG at an appropriate size and uncheck “Add export to catalog” if you only want external copies.

18. Part 2 summary

- FotoCatalog maintains a single global catalog containing photos from many locations.
- Scans update the catalog without requiring originals to be moved.
- RAW + JPG can be grouped as a single logical photo.

- Gallery, Folders, Dates, Cameras and Tags are different ways to browse the same catalog.
- Multiple selection lets you tag and perform operations on sets of photos.
- Visual suggestions always require confirmation.
- FotoCatalog gradually learns from corrections to visual suggestions.
- Advanced search combines tags, year and camera.
- Large searches can be loaded in batches or with “Load all”.
- Copy, move, rename, export and Recycle Bin operations act on physical files.

Photo editing and RAW development are explained in Part 3 of the manual.