julieanne kost
sr. digital imaging evangelist
adobe systems incorporated
www.jkost.com

What's New in Adobe Bridge CS4

I'm excited to say that in this version of Adobe Bridge, the engineers have been focusing on three main primary areas of improvement: speed, stability and discoverability. First of all, Bridge has a notably faster launch time. In addition, you can choose to "Start Bridge Automatically at Login" making it instantly available when you need it (you can control this option through Preferences > Advanced). In addition, Bridge takes advantage of hardware acceleration in Review Mode, Full Screen etc. (more details about that later). Finally, many of the features that previously went unnoticed and therefore, unused have been elevated through the use of icons and other interface refinements to make them more quickly accessible. So, with that stated, this document is intended to get you up and running as quickly as possible with Bridge CS4 so I have purposely kept my descriptions concise as possible!
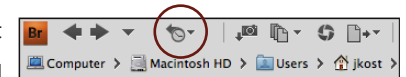
• One of the first things that you will notice is the updated look and feel to Bridge. Across the top, the icons have been updated and now include Forward and Backward navigation arrows to help move through your folder structure more quickly.
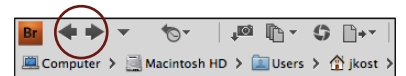
• To move more quickly to a parent folder (one that is above the currently browsed folder in the folder structure on your hard drive) or any of the folders listed in your Favorites panel, use the Go To Parents or Favorites icon (the downward pointing triangle).
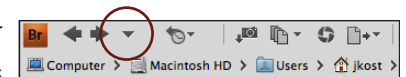
• If you need to jump to a previously browsed folder (without wanting to step through each subsequent folder), use the Recent Folders icon. At the top, you have the option to Reveal All Recent Files. This will display a temporary collection of the files you have recently worked with. Next in the list will appear additional Creative Suite applications that you have installed (including InDesign Illustrator, Dreamweaver and Flash), with the recent files associated with each application easily selectable from the fly out menu. To display all of the recently used files from a single application choose "Recent Adobe Photoshop Files" or "Recent InDesign Files" etc. When you choose to view any of the "Recent (application name) Files" options, the Folders panel displays those options as folders. These Recent Files folders (in the Folders panel) remain accessible until you close the application. Farther down on the list, you will see the recently navigated folders (designate the number of recent folder that you want to see (up to 30) in Preferences > General). Finally, at the bottom of the list, you can choose to clear the recent files and/or folders. *Note: to move quickly back to your previously navigated folder, use the "back" navigation arrow at the top left (see above) or the Path Bar (see below).*

For now, I'm going to skip the more in-depth task bases icons (I promise to cover them below), and move to the Path Bar.

• "Bread crumbs" are visible directly underneath the first row of icons (in the Path Bar) displaying where you are in the "file tree". I find this to be the easiest and quickest way to move "up one level" (since that icon has been removed) as well as move to any parent folder. Clicking on the ">" between any folder lists any other subfolders for quick navigation.
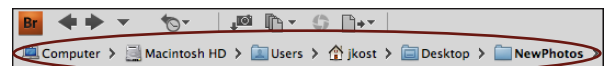
Moving to the top right of Bridge...

• Workspaces are easily selected by clicking on their title. Drag the grabber bar (to the left) to reveal additional spaces. If you're working on a small screen, and you can't see all of the workspaces, right mouse-click (Ctrl click on Mac with a single button mouse) in between the workspaces and

choose the desired workspace to insert (reorder) it. The list of workspaces can also be re-ordered by dragging on the name of the workspace. Like in previous versions, workspaces can be user-configurable - simply layout the panels and options how you prefer, click the downward pointing triangle to the right of the list of workspaces and choose "New Workspace" from the list. Name the workspace, and choose to save Window Location and Sort Order if desired. Your custom workspace will automatically be placed as the first workspace in the list. *Note : because of the keyboard shortcuts the workspaces appear in a different order (in the list) than in previous versions.*

• Searching has become faster and more efficient. Choose to search using either Bridge or spotlight or windows search. Selecting "Bridge Search : Current Folder" will also search subfolders. To refine a search, click the Refine Search icon (that appears at the top of the Content area), or select Edit > Find and select your criteria. Note: when working with Raw files, use Bridge to search the XMP sidecar files for information such as copyright and keywords.

• Although it's not new, (but since I've covered all of the rest of the icons), the Switch to Compact icon displays Bridge in compact and ultra compact mode. When in either compact, Bridge acts like a "floating palette" over any Creative Suite application, allowing you to drag and drop any supported image into any application.

• Browsing your files using different thumbnail rendering has been made easier and can be quickly changed on a folder by folder basis with the click on an icon. The first icon (the Use Embedded Preview) allows for browsing using the file's embedded thumbnail which is the fastest way to preview your images (although not necessarily the most accurate). Use this first icon (the Embedded (Faster) preview) when you need to see the content of the image quickly (for example, if you're working on a rush deadline for a news story). Use the second icon to select the other two thumbnail options from a list. Choose "High Quality on Demand" to have Bridge render higher quality / color managed previews when images are selected in the Content panel. Choose "Always High Quality" to see high quality / color managed images (this option will take more initial-processing time depending on the speed of your computer). If you need to see the images larger, choose "Generate 100% Previews". This will speed the loupe and zoom operations but will use more disk space and will also take more initial-processing time when browsing new images. You can also have Bridge Generate Monitor-Size Previews (Preferences . Advanced) which may be a smart alternative to creating potentially very large previews (at 100%) if they're seldom needed.

• Even if you don't have the Filter panel visible, you can quickly filter on the most popular attributes such as star ratings, rejected / unrated or labeled images by clicking on the Filter icon and selecting the desired attribute from the list. Notice that the option to filtering by star ratings (as well as the option to clear the filter) can be enabled by using the keyboard shortcuts listed.

• Sorting has been relocated in order to access it without having the Filter panel visible. Select the desired parameter from the list and click the chevron to toggle the order (ascending/descending). If you drag-reorder images in the Content panel, a Manual Sort option appears at the bottom of the list. Bridge remembers the manual sort order even if you switch to another order (such as Filename) and then return to Manual.

• I know that these are not new icons, but they're worth mentioning. Use the rotate icons to rotate the image preview in Bridge or use the shortcut Cmd (Mac) / Ctrl (Win) + [or]. *Note: in order to rotate the files on disk, they need to be opened and saved*. In order to *open* a recent file (as oppose to just viewing the recent files in Bridge), click the Open Recent Folder icon and select the desired file from the list. Use the New Folder icon to create a new folder and the Trash icon to delete files or folders. Don't forget, the keyboard shortcuts for many of these commands can be found next to the command in the menus.

Moving to the Filter panel (which is displayed in the lower left in the default workspace)...

• Filtering is a fast way to limit the selection of images that you're viewing, and in this version the Filter panel can search on a plethora of file categories (Including Exposure Time, Aperture Value, Focal Length, lens, Model, White Balance, and Camera Raw etc.). Therefore, it might be helpful to only display those attributes that you commonly search on by customizing which filter categories you want to see. Use the Filter Fly out menu, or right mouse-click (Ctrl click on Mac with a single button mouse) in the category header to toggle a category's visibility. To keep the filter active while moving between folders, click the "thumbtack" icon. And a simple way to remove all filter attributes is by clicking on the "Clear Filter" icon.
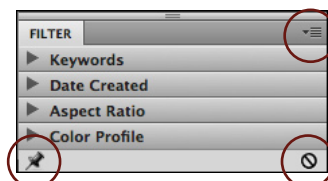
Moving to the lower right...

• Depending on thumbnail size, when browsing images in the Content panel, the bottom row or thumbnails may appear "cut-off" mid image. In order to constrain the thumbnail to a grid showing only "full" images, select the Lock to Thumbnail Grid icon. Regardless of which "mode" you're in, Cmd (Mac) / Ctrl (Win) + plus (+) or minus (-) will increase /decrease the size of the thumbnails. Or, you can always use the thumbnail size slider.

• Choose to display the Content panel by Details (as in previous versions) and / or by List view. If you choose to view by List, you can scroll the list of information while the thumbnail remains in place making it much easier to see what information goes with which image. In addition, you can change column location by dragging the column header to the desired position, click and drag between two columns to resize manually, click the chevron to sort ascending / descending. Right mouse-click (Ctrl click on Mac with a single button mouse), to Add, Insert or Close Columns, Size the Column (or all Columns) and reset to the default columns.

Ok, moving back to the more in-depth task based icons at the top of Bridge...

• To download files from a camera, choose the Get Photos from Camera icon. When you first choose this option, Bridge offers the preference to have Adobe Photo Downloader automatically launch whenever a camera or card reader is connected. On the Mac, this option can be changed at any time in Preferences > General. On Windows, use the operating system options to specify what to launch when you plug in a device. Click the Advanced button to have the downloader display thumbnails for the media on the camera. Bridge will download digital still images as well as movies and you can review them (including audio) in the Preview panel in Bridge. If you want to apply additional metadata (beyond Creator and Copyright), create the metadata templates (using File Info), save them and then select your custom template under "Template to use".
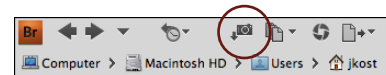
• The new Refine icon allows quicker access to the new Review Mode as well as Batch Rename and File Info. Review Mode (Cmd (Mac) / Ctrl (Win) + B) automatically takes advantage of any available hardware acceleration, and is an excellent way to review images. Use the left or right arrow to move through the images, and the down arrow to remove any images from your selection (or use the icons in the lower left). You can rate and label your images while in Review Mode using the keyboard shortcuts (Cmd (Mac) / Ctrl (Win) + 0-9). *Note: if you prefer to use only the numeric keys (without a modifier) while rating and labeling images, in Preferences > Labels uncheck "Require the (Cmd (Mac) / Ctrl (Win) Key to Apply Labels and Ratings".*
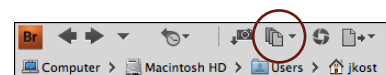
To Zoom in on an image to check focus, click the Loupe tool icon in the lower right or simply click directly in the image. *Note, if you prefer to use a keyboard modifier to access the Loupe, choose Preferences > General "Cmd/Ctrl click opens the loop when Previewing or Reviewing".* While in Review Mode, tapping "R" will access the Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) plug in, where you can make any necessary adjustments. Click done to return from ACR to Review Mode. When finished, tap the escape key to return to Bridge, or, click on the "X" icon in the lower right. Note the Collection icon - if you want to automatically create a user defined Collection you can do so from with in Review Mode (more on Collections below).

If you prefer to see single images full screen, select View > Full Screen Preview (or use the shortcut - Spacebar). Identical to Review Mode, pressing the left and right arrows moves through the selected images, 0-9 will rate and label and "R" accesses Adobe Camera Raw. To exit Full Screen Preview tap the Escape key.

• The Open in Camera Raw icon makes opening JPEG and TIFF into camera raw a single click! Of course, if you are working with any of the more than 200 raw camera file formats that we support, you can simple double click to open the file. If however, you are working with TIFF or JPEG and want them to open in ACR, in Bridge CS4 all you need to do is select them, and click the Open in Camera Raw icon (Cmd (Mac) / Ctrl (Win) + R). If you prefer that double clicking on a file opens it in Bridge, set this in Preferences > General.
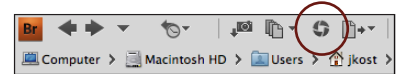
Also, Bridge and Photoshop now share (ACR) preferences (as opposed to Photoshop and Bridge having their separate preferences). Now, when changing the ACR preferences in Bridge, they will also be modified in Photoshop (and visa versa). *Note: if any setting have been applied to TIFF and JPEG files (for example setting made previously in Photoshop or in Lightroom), they will be applied (by default) when opened but this can be changed if needed in the Camera Raw Preferences.*

• The new Output icon displays the Output to PDF or Web option. At the top of the Output panel, choose to output to a PDF or Web Gallery by clicking on the icon. Start with a template or move directly to the sub-panels to begin refining the options. Click the Refresh Preview icon to update the Output Preview panel. There are too many options to go through one by one, but in general, this is the easiest way to create a contact sheet, or multi page PDF to send to a client with security (such as locking the ability to print). You can set up the document size and layout of images per page as well as add overlays and watermarks. For presentations, the playback options include (but are not limited to) full screen mode, user defined page duration and transitions including dissolves, wipes etc. Since there are several panels with options, there is a preference General > Output to "Use Solo Mode for Output Panel Behavior" which allows you to click on a panel header to display it's options while automatically hiding the rest of the panel options.
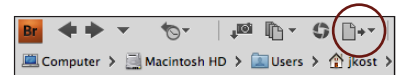
When outputting to a Web Photo Gallery, decide between HTML and Flash and customize everything from colors to thumbnail size, pagination and image size. In addition, you can upload galleries (via FTP) directly from Bridge to your site helping to save time (posting event photos or collaborating on client reviews for example).

• Although collections aren't new to Bridge, in CS4 not only are they much faster, but they're also more intuitive! There are two types of collections: User-defined (displayed in red), and Smart collections (displayed in blue and sometimes referred to as "saved queries"). If the collections panel isn't visible, choose Window > Collections. Both types of collections are "virtual" (meaning that they don't physically move files around on the hard drive they are only pointers to the files), and both types of collections can contain files from any number of folders. To edit a collection and/or create a new one, use the icons at the bottom of the Collections panel.
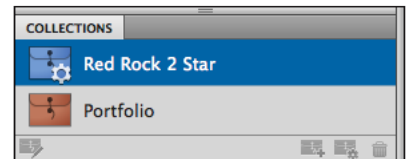
User-Defined collections are for those of us who like to drag and drop files into different groupings. Smart collections are for those of us who like Bridge to create dynamic collections based on search criteria (such as file name, rating, keywords etc.). The advantage to a Smart collection is that when additional files are added that meet the criteria, they are automatically added to the collection. When creating a Smart collection, you can select a folder (and include all subfolders), determine the criteria (file name, keywords, copyright etc) and then refine the Match parameters (if files match ALL the criteria, or ANY of the criteria etc). There is an option to include "Non-indexed Files" but it might take longer as the files in the folders have not been cached. If you wanted to index files ahead of time, select your topmost folder (that you want to search) and select Tools > Cache > Build and Export Cache (the cache handles both thumbnails and metadata for files - once cashed, the search will be faster). You can also add the collections to your favorites panel by right mouse-clicking (Ctrl click on Mac with a single button mouse) on the collection or select File > Add to Favorites. Note: as was previously mentioned, after using the Review mode to edit a group of images, click the collection icon to save a user-defined collection.

• File Info is now a Flash-based panel giving developers the ability to extend it's capabilities. As in previous versions, you can view and (in most cases) add metadata information to all panels. If your monitor isn't large enough to see all of the categories, use the arrow to scroll through the panels, or use the drop down menu in the upper right to select a specific panel. Drag and drop the panel's tab to rearrange their order. Clicking on the Import button will allow for importing, exporting (or saving) templates. By default it will save them in the templates folder (which can be displayed) so that they may be shared across Adobe applications.
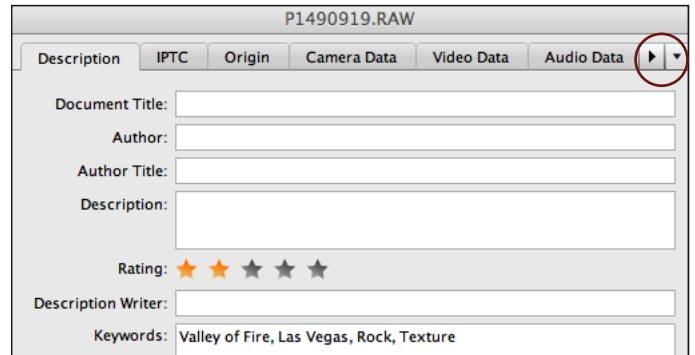
• There are some phenomenal new automation tools in Bridge as well. The first is found under Stacks > Auto-Stack Panorama/HDR. When selected, Bridge will look at the metadata and collect images that it believes should be panoramas or HDR sets (it does this based on time, focal length, overlap and exposure values). Selecting Tools > Process Collections in Photoshop will hand off stacks of images to Photoshop, create the panoramas/HDR images, save them and display them in Bridge. In addition, if you select several images and want to open them all in Photoshop as individual layers in a single document, select Bridge > Tools > Load Files into Photoshop Layers.

Finally, a grab-bag of additional features definitely worth mentioning:

 • On laptops equipped with a multi-touch trackpad (like the MacBook Air), the swipes gestures can be used to navigate: swipe right and left to move through history, swipe up to go to the parent folder or swipe down to go inside the selected folder or open the selected file(s). In addition, swipe gestures also work in Review Mode as well as in Slideshow.

• If you were wondering where the option went to display a flattened view of images (the folder icon in the Filter panel in previous versions of Bridge) it's been moved to a menu item - View > Show Items from Subfolders. In addition, you can also choose to view the contents of subfolders by clicking on any ">" in the path bar.

• When working with audio and video files, you may or may not want them to automatically play when selected in the content panel. To toggle this feature, select Preferences > Playback.

• To control the size, location and additional options for Bridge's cache file (especially useful when working with high volumes of images) choose Preferences > Cache.

• Bridge now has the ability to preview 3D renderings.

• If you prefer to use the legacy Web Photo Gallery, Contact Sheet and Picture Package, they will be available to download from Adobe.com, but they won't be installed by default.