

Title:

Five Reasons Every Digital Photographer Needs A Card Reader

Word Count:

668

Summary:

In the early days of digital photography, the only way to transfer images from the camera to a computer was with a cable. The interface was usually USB, but some early digicams used SCSI or Firewire connections as well. As reusable memory cards became popular, card readers appeared, allowing users to quickly move images from the card to their hard drive.

Surprisingly, even today, many digital photographers still transfer their images to their computer via a USB cable. Card...

Keywords:

digital photography, memory card, card reader, photographer, camera

Article Body:

In the early days of digital photography, the only way to transfer images from the camera to a computer was with a cable. The interface was usually USB, but some early digicams used SCSI or Firewire connections as well. As reusable memory cards became popular, card readers appeared, allowing users to quickly move images from the card to their hard drive.

Surprisingly, even today, many digital photographers still transfer their images to their computer via a USB cable. Card readers are inexpensive, faster and more reliable, yet many digital camera users still haven't acquired one.

1: Card readers offer speedy transfers

Undoubtedly, the biggest advantage to a card reader is speed. Images transfer at a rate several times that of a camera USB connection. Obviously, It is advantageous anytime you can shorten the image acquisition period. As memory cards increase in capacity and cameras offer greater pixel density, however, transfer speed becomes a major issue. My first digital camera only had 8MB of storage memory, and I felt it took a long time to transfer the images to my hard drive by USB cable. Today a single raw image could be twice that size. A card with thirty or forty images of that size would take an eternity to transfer by cable.

2: When reliability is a priority, choose a card reader

While speed is important, reliability is crucial. The problem with connecting a camera to your computer is that the camera has to be on all the time the transfer is being executed. If the battery dies during the transfer, the current transfer will be lost. Even worse, there is a danger that the memory card will be corrupted if the power goes down during a read. It's true that many newer cameras have longer lasting batteries, but memory cards are also getting larger, so that might not be much help. Some camera manufacturers actually recommend that the camera be powered by an AC cord during the transfer, in order to alleviate any problem of the battery dying during the copy.

There are no power consumption worries with a card reader. Power comes directly from the USB or Firewire connection. Unless there is a major power outage or the computer crashes, the power to the card reader will remain stable.

3: Digital camera connections are plug and pray

Connecting a camera to the computer is fairly simple, but I have experienced many instances where the computer refused to recognize the camera. Rebooting the computer typically fixes the problem, but that is still an annoyance.

In contrast, card readers are generally found immediately by the computer. Plug the reader in, insert the memory card and you can start transferring your files.

4: Card readers allow you to walk away

Once you've begun a transfer, you are free to do other things. Eat dinner. Watch TV. Take a walk. Even go to bed for the night. You don't have to "baby-sit" the file transfer process. I wouldn't feel comfortable leaving my digital camera unsupervised in the "on" mode for an extended length of time. Maybe I'm being too conservative, but leaving my camera on overnight just doesn't seem wise. With a reader, there is no off or on. When your file transfer is completed, everything just waits until you return.

5: You are free to use your camera while your files transfer to the computer

If your camera is tied to your computer, transferring files, you obviously can't be off shooting. In contrast, you can load a memory card into your reader, start a file transfer and then load a fresh card into the camera and continue making images. The ability to transfer pictures while you are off shooting new ones is yet another major advantage to a reader.

So what are you waiting for?

If you are serious about digital photography, I suggest you ditch that USB cable and get a good card reader. You'll soon wonder how you ever got along without one!