The Reflector

President's Thoughts

O nce again we have had a very successful Wilmington International Exhibition of Photography, our 72nd. This year we tried something new, converting the 35mm slide show to a digital image presentation compiled on a DVD that was played on the club's computer and shown with our digital projector. The diligent efforts of Bob Coffey, Gus Costis, and Ralph Baron, plus a crew of slide scanners, resulted in a smooth, colorful, and wonderful show. The scanning of almost 400 slides into digital format was a significant hurdle, and it will be our approach in the future. There

Karl Leck conducts the 72nd WIEP print discussion "walk about". Photo by Bob Coffey

are important benefits. First, it eliminates the time constraint of the deadline by which the slides must be returned in presenting the show at various venues.

Second, it reduces the wear and tear on the slides. Third, there is much less equipment to transport and set up. And fourth, we have a permanent record of the show.

I want to thank WIEP Chairman, Jeff Smith, and his crew of tireless workers for a fine exhibition. This year we received 2780 images from 433 photographers in 28 countries. This is approximately the same as last year, which is a testament to the continued interest in our exhibition.

Dave

March Program — *Quintessences*

D on't miss Speaker Night, **March 28,** when **Elinor Stecker-Orel** will present *Quintessences,* the smashing images of controversial avant-garde Hungarian photographer, Ronile. Not only will you be astonished by her photographs, but the reading of comments written by one of her highly regarded critics will uncover their depth and hidden meaning. There is a big surprise at the end. This highly

acclaimed program was featured at the 2004 New England Camera Club Conference in Amherst.

Join us for dinner at 6 p.m. for Dinner with the Speaker in a private Cokesbury dining room. **Reservations must be made in advance.** Sorry, no walk-ins. Dinner cost is $14, all inclusive, check payable to DPS. Limit 30. Contact Bob Coffey 610.388.2741 or *bobcoffey@aol.com.*

Coming Events

• *March 7*
7:30 p.m. — Instruction Night

• *March 14*
7:30 p.m. — Slide Night

• *March 21*
7:30 p.m. — Print Night

• *March 28*
7:30 p.m. — Program
Quintessences
Elinor Stecker-Orel
Cokesbury Auditorium

Your DPS Web Site in Action

By Steve Furlong
DPS Webmaster

As with many organizations and businesses, the DPS web site is increasingly becoming our Society's face to the outside world. Although most of our active members have been to the web site at least a few times over the last year, how many of you are aware that the DPS web site is routinely viewed by people around the globe and the number of "hits" to the site now numbers in the tens of thousands per month? Since our web site host provides us with these statistics on a monthly basis, we thought it might be fun to share some of the information about the use of our site. Visits to our site have grown dramatically in the recent past, and some visitors have connected from places that might surprise you!

at more than one page when you visit, this might make it appear that the site is getting more traffic than is truly the case. However another statistic is the number of visits. This is when someone makes a request for a page on our server for the first time. As long as the same user keeps making requests within a given timeout period (30 minutes), they will all be considered part of the same visit. When we look at it this way, the total visits for January was 6,297 or slightly over 200 visits per day. Perhaps the most interesting numbers are how the use of the site has grown over the past year. Other than a slight dip in December, the number of hits to the site has been growing continuously from 13,189 in February 2004 (1,141 visits), a trend that continued from the previous year.

So, who is using our site? Well,
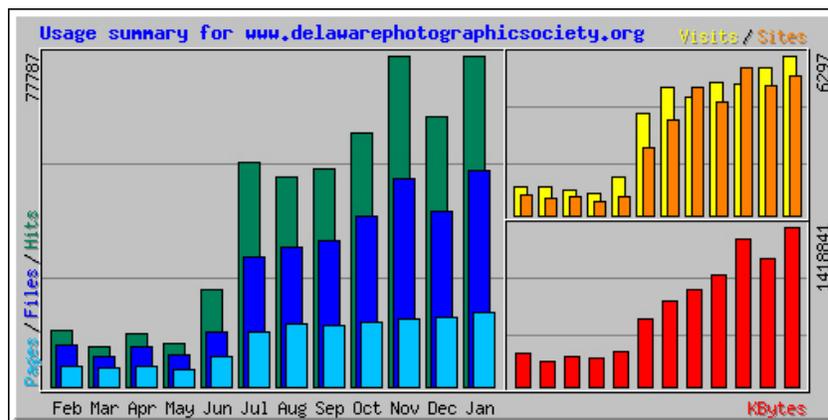
So are you ready for some numbers? Let's start with January, 2005. The total number hits in the month of January was 77,787. This breaks down to an average of 104 hits per hour for the entire month or 2,509 hits per day. Since hits are the total number of requests made to the server when you visit the site and it is common to look
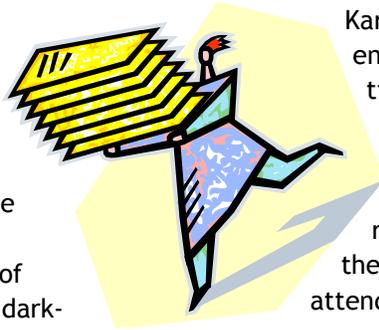
the majority of the hits/visits were from our members as well as photographers from other parts of the US. However, just in the month of January, we had visits from over 60 other countries, including frequent visits from Germany, Canada, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, United

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Instruction Night

Education Director, Karl Leck, plans informative sessions designed to help members at various levels of expertise. These classes are held the first Monday of the month and are free to DPS members.

March 7: By popular demand this meeting will discuss Photoshop Layers and Masks. These tools were only simple devices requiring a lot of work in the traditional darkroom. The digital tools are far more sophisticated and exact so that photo improvements can be made easily and look more natural. Layers allow separate improvements to be made in color, contrast, sharpness, filters and other tools so that they can be individually included or discarded in the final output. Separate layers should always be used in compositing images and adding type. Masks are an alternative method of easily dodging and burning or adding effects. Karl Leck, experienced in the traditional darkroom, and Jane Strobach, working only in the digital darkroom, will share their knowledge with attendees.

The *April 4* Instruction Night has been changed. Sandro Cuccia, a certified Adobe Photoshop Professional, will present an interesting digital photography topic and share his ideas for a new digital special interest group (Digital SIG).

Swap Meet Scheduled

DPS has scheduled a Swap Meet for April 16, 2005, to be held at the First Unitarian Church (corner of Whitby and Halstead Roads) Sharpley, Wilmington, Delaware. Join us in the Parish Hall from 9 a.m.— 2 p.m. Tables are available at no charge to DPS members and a $5 charge to non-members. Admission is $1 per person for everyone. For information, or to reserve a table, contact Bob Hunt at 302.764.1363.

Questions & Answers

Contributed monthly by Erik Kissa

Q. *Can color slides be scanned in glass mounts?*

A. Yes, with some restrictions. The mounted slide must fit the slide feeder of the scanner. The MA-20(S) adapter used in recent 35mm Nikon scanners has a slot for slides and a mechanism for ejecting the slide. The mounted slides must be between 1.0 and 3.2mm thick and from 49 to 50.8mm in width. The popular GEPE mounts are 2.3mm thick and fit easily. However, the Anti-Newton glass surface acts like a diffuser and may decrease the sharpness of the image.

Q. *What is the best way to store digitally acquired photographic images?*

A. The archival storage of digital image is still an incompletely solved problem. A second hard drive is probably the most convenient storage medium but hard drives can crash and any magnetic file deteriorates with time. The optical storage on a CD-R has lost its initial appeal because the disk may become unreadable. The longevity of the images stored on a CD-R disk has been unpredictable; some CD-R disks have failed unexpectedly in a few weeks. High quality CD-R disks now available are claimed to be resistant to optical or mechanical failure (the Delkin's Archival Gold and the Maxell CD-R PRO). If these disks live up to their longevity claims, the software for reading the disk may not be available several years from now.

Remember the 5.25" floppy and the 3.5" floppy disks? A DVD will probably replace the CD-R because of its higher capacity, but this is still a developing medium. New DVD versions are already in the works. Then there is the question of which format the digital files will have in the future. The RAW format has not been standardized, although Adobe has proposed a standard RAW format. The old TIFF appears to be still the most widely used format but this may change.

Q. *Why are digital cameras said to be inadequate for wide angle photography? My digital camera has a 17-35mm wide angle lens*.

A. A 17-35mm lens on a digital camera with a CPS-C size sensor (all Nikon, Konica Minolta, Pentax, Fuji, and most Canon digital cameras) is not wide enough for super wide angle photography. The 17mm wide angle on a Nikon digital camera corresponds to the 26mm focal length of a film camera and to the 27mm film equivalent of a Canon digital camera. For film cameras the 24mm focal length is quite useful and the 17mm wide angle is not excessive. This means that the 11-16mm focal length range is needed for a CPS-C digital camera. Lenses in this range are now available, but consider the weight, price, optical performance and the zoom range. A 17-35mm zoom corresponds to the 26-53mm film equivalent, but a film camera has lenses with a 24-120mm zoom ratio or even the 28-300mm zoom ratio. Single focal length lenses for film cameras

combine the low weight, small size, and a large aperture with a relatively low price. The 24mm/2.8 Nikkor uses a 52mm filter, weighs only 9.5 oz, and costs less than $300. Canon has a 24mm/1.4 wide angle lens. Clearly the digital cameras with the CPS-C sensor are on the defensive in wide angle photography, although it is amazing what the optical industry has accomplished so far.

Q. *Does cold weather cause problems for a digital camera?*

A. A cold weather can cause problems for any camera, mainly because the batteries may fail. Some cameras have an accessory battery holder which can be placed under the coat and connected to the camera with a cable. My experience with a digital camera at the 20 degree temperature has been quite encouraging, though. The camera functioned well and tolerated the cold temperature better than my fingers after 60 exposures.

Certain precautions are needed to operate at low temperatures. Set the camera controls to manual focus, to manual exposure and turn the image stabilizer off. Keep the camera in an insulated fabric camera bag from which the camera can be easily retrieved. I have found the Adorama Swinger to be very convenient. When the camera is not in the bag, keep your hand on the grip where the batteries are to protect them against cold.

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Questions & Answers

Place the camera in a plastic bag before taking to the inside of the house and let the camera warm up before taking it out of the bag. Otherwise moisture may condense on the camera.

Q. *How many images can be stored on a 512 MB memory card?*

A. This depends on the scene being photographed, the camera, and the file format used. The RAW format is not universal and the storage capacity depends on the version of the RAW format used by the camera. When shooting with a 6 MP camera using NEF, the Nikon RAW format, about 80 images will fit on a 512MB memory card. The 5.6 MB file downloaded to the computer is converted to a 34.4 MB 16-bit (really a12-bit) color file when opened. The compression of the NEF file is not lossless, as claimed by Nikon, but the losses are negligible for practical purposes.

The JPEG format will allow hundreds of images stored on a 512 MB card. A high quality JPEG format will store about 140 images on the card. The maximum number of images stored on the card in a 8 MP camera is smaller, approximately by one third. All JPEG format files are saved to an 8-bit color format.

It is easier to change a memory card than to change film. It makes therefore sense to have two 512 MB cards instead of one 1 GB card.

Change your DPS home page shortcut to:

www.delawarephotographicsociety.org

Q. *What is the best way to get images from the camera into the computer?*

A. Images can be downloaded into a computer by using the cord supplied with the camera. However, the transfer directly from the camera to the computer has important disadvantages. The transfer is slow and drains the battery in the camera. If the battery fails during downloading the images are lost. A safer and faster way is to use a card reader for the downloading of images.

Q. *Why do the digital cameras have a shutter? The exposure could be terminated by switching the sensor off?*

A. Yes, this is possible. The focal plane shutters of film cameras control exposure by opening the shutter for the desired fraction of a second. Above a certain shutter speed, which is 1/250 s or slower for some cameras, higher shutter speeds are attained by narrowing the slot of the shutter. The synchronization of the shutter with an electronic flash is limited to the highest shutter speed which has the shutter slot fully open.

The focal plane shutters of digital cameras do not have to narrow the shutter opening to increase the shutter speed. Instead, above a certain shutter speed the electronic switching of the sensor takes over. As a favorable result, a high speed flash synchronization is possible. The maximum synch speed of the Nikon D70 is 1/500 s.

Although the sensor can be switched on and off, the digital camera needs a shutter because the photosites with their colored

filters may deteriorate when the sensor is constantly exposed to light.

Send questions to ekissa@aol.com or call 302.478.6737.

Gold Is Back

Erik Kissa reports that Delkin Devices, Inc. www.delkin.com/ has introduced an archival CD-R containing a phthalocyanine dye and a real gold reflection layer. The price of a 10-pack is $17.99. The 25-disk spindle costs $36.99, and the 100-disk spindle $135.99.

Your DPS Web Site in Action

Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Poland, Argentina, Switzerland, Japan, Thailand, Brazil and Mexico. There were even a few visitors from places like Croatia (Hrvatska), Czech Republic, Russian Federation, Romania, Estonia, Seychelles and the Cayman Islands. If you'd like to take a look for yourself at the entire list of countries or find out what time of day or day of the month is most popular to connect you can view lots more details at: *www.delawarephotographicsociety.org/stats/*

More important, if you have been putting off pulling together your personal gallery to post on our site, maybe now is the time to send in your gallery and make sure your images are also seen around the globe! ✍

Panorama Perfection

THE GRAND CANYON
SOUTH RIM

by Sandro V. Cuccia
svcphoto@comcast.net

Panoramas are BIG, in more ways than one — and indeed, they can be a very rewarding aspect of your photography. From the standpoint of setting up your panorama digital capture, there are many "gotchas" in obtaining perfect results, such as camera placement, exposure considerations, proper focal length, and others, but that's all for another article. This article will focus on what I have found to be the best method of digitally processing your panoramas and putting <u>you</u> in control of your image stitching.

There are two methods for creating panoramic images. One method is the one-shot, dedicated panorama with special cameras that have the capability of capturing very wide images. In "swing lens" cameras, the lens actually swings from side to side while exposing a section of film that is held stationary on a curved plane. Examples of such cameras are the Widelux and the affordable Russian Horizon. The other method for creating panoramic images, which we discuss here, involves the process of taking sequential overlapping images of your scene — captured digitally or scanned — and "stitching" them seamlessly via software to form one continuous panoramic image. There are several dedicated panorama stitching software programs (eg; Panorama Maker by ArcSoft), and stitching functionality built into image editing programs such as the Photo-merge function found in Adobe Photoshop CS and Photoshop Elements.

There are two principle components of the stitching process — merging your panorama images, and blending them. I prefer to process my panoramas manually — this allows me to be in total control of the final result. Let's say your panorama will consist of stitching together three overlapping images that you captured of a particular landscape from left to right. Here are the steps for processing your panorama:

1. COPY your images to a working directory. Never work on your original images.

2. RENAME your images from left to right; something simple like a.jpg, b.jpg, c.jpg

3. Create a NEW file — let's call this the "Pano" file. Make the resolution the same as your images, and select white as the background. Make the height the same as your starting image, and the length approximately three times the length of your starting image. You will crop at the end.

4. Concurrently open your three images from the Photoshop Browser by command-clicking (Mac) or control-clicking (PC) to select your three images and select OPEN from the Browser's File Menu.

5. With Photoshop's Move tool, drag the image of your "a" image from its window into the new "PANO" image window. You can now close the "a" file.

6. Let's begin the stitching process by moving the "b" image into the "PANO" image, and then close the "b" file. Photoshop will place each image in its own layer. Name the layers accordingly — "a", "b", and "c."

7. Select the "b" layer in the Layers Palette, and set the OPACITY setting to about 60%.

8. With the "b" layer active, go back to the image window and with the Move tool, move the "b" image over the "a" image until you are satisfied that common elements are aligned in the overlapping region. To fine-tune your adjustment use the

Panorama Perfection

keyboard arrow keys. Because of perspective and other factors, it's likely that you won't attain perfect alignment. Don't worry about it now, but make sure that at least your important image details are aligned, such as the horizon line. The lowered opacity of the "b" image assists in visualizing the alignment. When done, reset the "b" opacity to 100%.

9. At this point we need to blend in the area where "a" and "b" join. This is the core of the "stitching" process! There are several ways to accomplish this (as is generally the case with Photoshop!) Here's my favorite way. Make sure the "b" layer is still active, and create a LAYER MASK by clicking on the layer mask icon at the bottom left of the Layers Palette. You will see a Layer Mask thumbnail appear on the layer to the right of the image thumbnail in layer "b." Make sure the layer mask thumbnail is selected and not the image thumbnail. Select the Brush Tool and a large soft brush, and reset your foreground color to black. You will paint with black on the layer mask for layer "b." Remember the rule: "black conceals, white reveals" when using masking techniques. We want to blend pixels from the "b" image/layer so that there is a smooth transition into the "a" image/layer. Paint away until you are satisfied and have a good stitch. You may have to adjust both the opacity and brush size, but keep it at its maximum softness setting. If you overdo it, switch the brush to white and paint the image back in.

10. Repeat steps #8 and #9 with the "c" image, aligning it with

"b." Once your panorama components are stitched together, you may notice different tonalities and/or color casts between the separate image components. This is generally due to having captured your images in an auto exposure mode instead of by manual exposure, but other factors may come into play. Now you need to blend the tonalities so that you have a final seamless and perfect panorama. The way I like to do this is by making a midtone levels adjustment on each RGB channel of the separate image components/ layers.

11. Let's assume you want the tonality of the "b" and "c" components to match "a." First, make the "b" layer active. Zoom into an

area of the seam where you see a tonality difference between "a" and "b." In this landscape example, we zoom into a portion of the sky where "a" and "b" meet.

12. With the "b" layer active, click on the CHANNELS tab on top of the Layers Palette. Turn on the eyeball only for the R-Red Channel. This will show you a monochrome image reflecting the Red Channel information. Open the Levels dialog box, and move the midtone slider until you are satisfied with the blending. Use the keyboard arrow keys to make fine adjustments. Repeat with G-Green and B-Blue Channels. Periodically

switch to RGB (composite) within the Channels Palette to monitor your progress. You may have to go back in the individual channels and do some fine tuning, and you may have to look at other areas of the image (you can use the spacebar to get the Hand tool while the Levels dialog is still open).

13. Repeat steps #11 and #12 for the "c" layer, blending it with "b."

14. Once satisfied with the results, crop your image to remove the excess canvas.

Congratulations, you've created the Perfect Panorama! I recommend that you save this image as a Photoshop PSD file so that you can come back to it later for any eventual tweaking. What I usually do is create a new merged layer that I use for sharpening depending on whatever purpose I have in mind. From here, you can convert to whatever color profile you require and save as a JPG or TIFF for sending to a commercial printer. I have had good success with commercial printing of panoramas by EZPRINTS.COM. If you try them, be sure to download their ICC profile so you can properly color manage your system to match their printing. You can't go wrong if you apply Color Management to your digital printing -- but that's a whole other subject!

(Panorama, page 5, was stitched from 4 images taken at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon in January 2005) ✍

Member News

✍ *Lynn Maniscalco* was named the 2005 Communicator of Achievement by the Delaware Press Association. This is the first time a photographer has won this journalism award which is given in recognition of a lifetime of achievements in communications and exemplary service to the community, humanity, and the profession of journalism. The award is yet another accolade for Lynn. She was the recipient of the PSA Ollie Fife award for the best published photo of the year, was named PSA Photojournalist of the year for 2000, and was the only person in the US, and the only woman worldwide, to achieve the Master Photojournalism rating.

✍ *Erik Kissa's* slide, *Blue and Yellow,* is included in the PSA 2005 Color Slide Tops Collection which contains 134 slides from 134 photographers. Photographers are from 16 countries and most, but not all, are PSA members.

✍ *Jeff Smith* will exhibit images from his "Ordinary People" series at Copy Maven, 126 E. Main Street, Newark, from March 1—30.

Condolences
Our sincere condolences to Susan Dods on the recent loss of her mother.

Proposed 2005-2006 Slate

The nominating committee has presented the following nominees for the 2005—2006 officers of the Delaware Photographic Society:
President — Jeff Smith
1st VP — Bob Hunt
2nd VP — Joe Bernofsky
Recording Secretary —
   Elinor Blankenbaker
Treasurer/Corporate Secretary —
   Tom Hallenbeck
Education Director — Karl Leck
Programs director—Bob Coffey
Slide Director — June McKenney
Print Director — Ray Magnani
   The election will be held on Program Night, March 28. Members are asked to remain after the program for the vote to be taken. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor, provided that the nominee has agreed to serve if elected.
   Nominating Committee
   Bob Coffey, Chairman
   Karl Leck
   Herb Sargeant

Photo Essay Contest

Annual DPS Contest
April 25 • 7:30 p.m.

Start preparing your entry for the Annual DPS Photo Essay Contest. Your essay may be in prints, slides, or CD for digital projection. The same rules apply for digital entries as for slides. Your entry must tell a story, evoke emotion or set a mood. Complete entry rules and applications are available at Society meetings. For information, contact Photo Essay Chair, Laszlo Hopp, 610.444.9670 *l* or *hopp@comcast.net.*

DPS Members Shine at 72nd WIEP

Exhibit attendees, Don Shenk and Dave Hutton

DPS members received a total of 73 acceptances in this year's competition...a fifty-five percent increase over 2004!

Ralph Baron, Steve Berkowitz, Gus Costis, Doug Donor, Ray Firmani, Marvin Gerstein, Dave Hutton, Erik Kissa, Ray Magnani, June McKenney, and Herb Sargeant each achieved an acceptance. Ray Magnani was awarded an Honorable Mention in mono prints and June earned a DVCCC medal in commercial prints.

Laszlo Hopp, Peter Lindtner, Don Pivonka, Marion Sargeant, and Jeff Smith had two acceptances. Peter received an Honorable Mention in commercial prints, as did Don in color prints. Marian won the DVCCC medal in color slides.

Frank DiPietrapaul, Roland Fulde, Steve Furlong, and Bob Hunt each achieved three acceptances. Bob received an Honorable Mention in color prints. Frank won the DVCCC medal in mono prints, and Steve won the DVCCC medal in color prints.

Joe Bernofsky, Bob Coffey, Lynn Maniscalco, and Jane Strobach each had four acceptances. Jane received Honorable Mention in color prints. Bob Coffey won the DVCCC medal for photojournalism prints, and Joe won a DPS Bronze medal in photojournalism prints.

Tom Oathout had five acceptances. Tom Canby, Lilian Fulde, and Bill Talarowski each received six. Tom Canby won the DVCCC medal in photojournalism slides, and Bill won a DPS Silver medal in mono prints.

Monica Nagy had ten acceptances, including a DPS Bronze medal in commercial prints, the IIWF Gold medal in commercial prints, and the PSA Silver medal in photojournalism prints. Her achievement also met the requirements to be recognized as an WIEP Associate.

Karl Leck achieved twelve acceptances, including an Honorable Mention in photojournalism prints, a DPS Bronze medal in PJ prints, a DPS Silver medal in color prints, and the IIWF Gold medal in PJ prints.

All told, DPS members won 14 medals, including all six DVCCC medals, and received 5 Honorable Mentions. Congratulations to all the successful entrants.

PSA

The Photographic Society of America (PSA) is the largest organization of its kind in the world, bringing together amateur and professionals in all the varied fields of photography, including color slides, nature, pictorial prints, stereo (3D), electronic photography, video/motion pictures, photojournalism, travel photography, and devotees of every process in which the world-wide membership is interested. Help from experts and educational programs is available to all members. Find out more about the PSA from these websites: *www.psaphoto.org* and *delawarephotographicsociety.org.*

Assigned Subjects

March — Brr …it's Cold
April — *Flying*
May — *Broken or Abandoned*