

## Quick Guide to Vacation Photos – Part Two: Introduction to the Photoshop Elements 3.0/4.0 Organizer

by Jerry Rabow

*Part One of this Guide, available in the **Digital Photography Tutor Members Bulletin** Number 2 (July 2005), covered tips on how to plan for your digital photography trip and how to use your digital camera while you're on vacation. This edition continues the **Quick Guide to Vacation Photos** with Part Two – Introduction to the Photoshop Elements 3.0 or 4.0 Organizer. Here you'll see an overview of the Photoshop Elements **Organizer**, how to get your photos into the Organizer, and how to arrange the Organizer thumbnails for maximum convenience and efficiency.*

*This series will conclude in the next issue of the Digital Photography Tutor Members Bulletin with **Quick Guide to Vacation Photos with Part Three** – How to use the Photoshop Elements 3.0 or 4.0 Organizer to save, backup, rename, organize and index all your photos so that you'll always be able to find the ones you want to adjust, share, and print.*

*Because the Photoshop Elements 3.0 program for MAC does not include the new Elements Organizer module, these second and third parts of the Guide only apply to PCs running the Windows operating system. (If you're a MAC user, please periodically check the MAC USERS page on my website [www.DigitalPhotographyTutor.com](http://www.DigitalPhotographyTutor.com) to learn the status of Adobe's plans to eventually release an Elements 4 for MAC version.)*

*I hope that you followed the advice in Part One of this Guide and brought back lots and lots of vacation photos. Taking a many, many shots is how professional photographers are able to end up with a few great photos. And now with your digital camera and your ability to apply the power of Photoshop Elements by*

*using the techniques from the Digital Photography Tutor, you can end up with some great vacation photos too.*

*When the digital photography era began, we used to worry about whether digital cameras would be producing too many images for the typical user to manage. Now Photoshop Elements 3 and 4 for the PC have come to our rescue with the Organizer. The vacation photos you bring home are no longer at risk of becoming too much of a good thing.*

*I hope these tips will help you extend and share the joys of your vacation.*

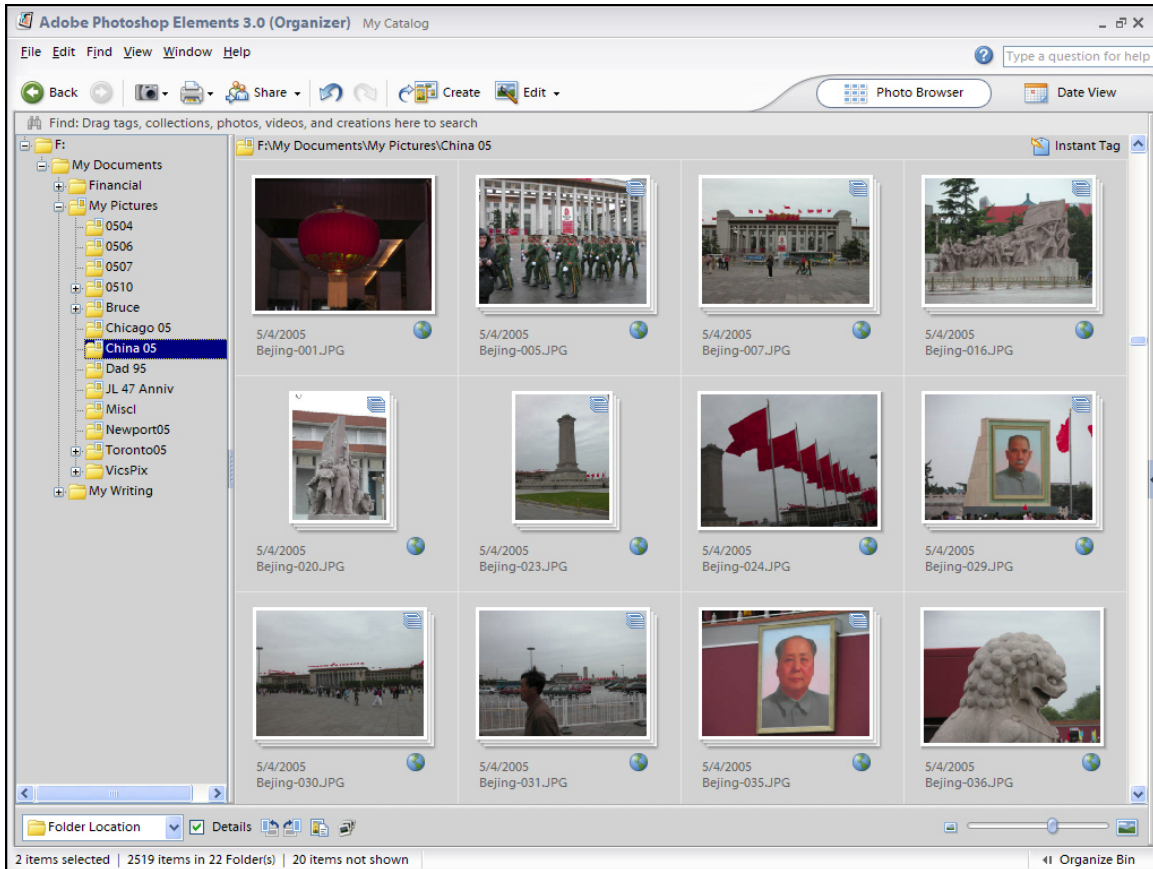
Jerry Rabow

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## **Part Two: Introduction to the Photoshop Elements 3.0/4.0 Organizer**

### **AFTER YOU RETURN HOME**

The key to handling your vacation photos for the Windows version of Elements 3 or 4 is the new Elements **Organizer**. This powerful program has so many features and capabilities that it's hard to decide which step to do first. But once you understand how Organizer works, you can adopt and regularly follow a logical workflow system and be able to accomplish so much with only minimum time and effort. There's a lot to cover for a program with as many features as Organizer, so I've split up my roadmap of the Organizer steps to take for your vacation photos into two portions. This Part Two of the **Quick Guide to Vacation Photos** provides some crucial fundamental understandings of how Organizer works and how you should begin to work with it.

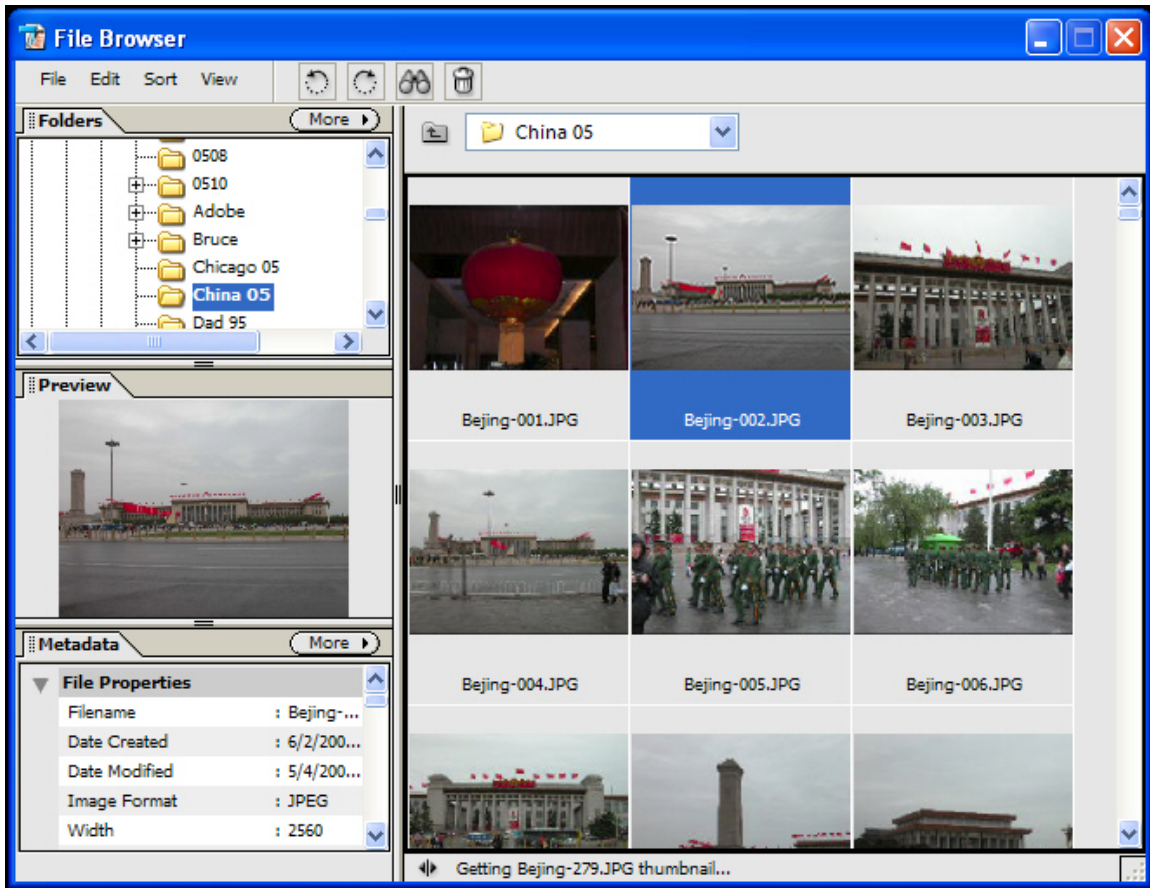


*The new Organizer screen*

## **1. What is the Organizer?**

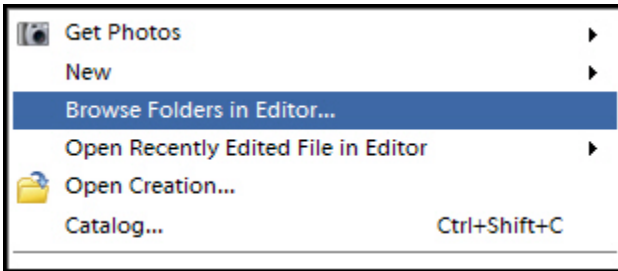
If you're used to working with Photoshop Elements 2 (or perhaps a prior version of the full Photoshop program) you may remember trying to work with the **File Browser** function. The Elements or Photoshop File Browser windows displayed thumbnails of graphics image files in a window that permitted moving through the folder structure and scrolling through the thumbnails for each folder to visually identify the image file you wanted to open. The File Browser closely resembled the familiar My Computer Explorer window, but it was automatically restricted to image file formats that were readable in Photoshop, including the Photoshop PSD format.

My personal experience with both the Elements and the full Photoshop browser windows was that opening them up took forever, as they had to identify and create thumbnails for all the image files for each folder. And that great delay was on a lucky day. Many times attempting to use the File Browser would just lock up the program or my entire computer, forcing a reboot.



*The old File Browser screen*

The new Elements Organizer would be a substantial improvement even if it did nothing more than create a workable version of an image browser. Since Organizer uses its own pre-created thumbnail files, it works almost instantaneously. But in addition to simply being a graphics file browser that works well, Organizer brings so many other important new features (detailed later in this Guide) that Elements treats Organizer essentially as a separate program within the overall Elements program. So Elements 3 and 4 now structurally consist of two separate but integrated modules, the **Editor** (which is the current version of the previous Elements programs) and the new **Organizer**.

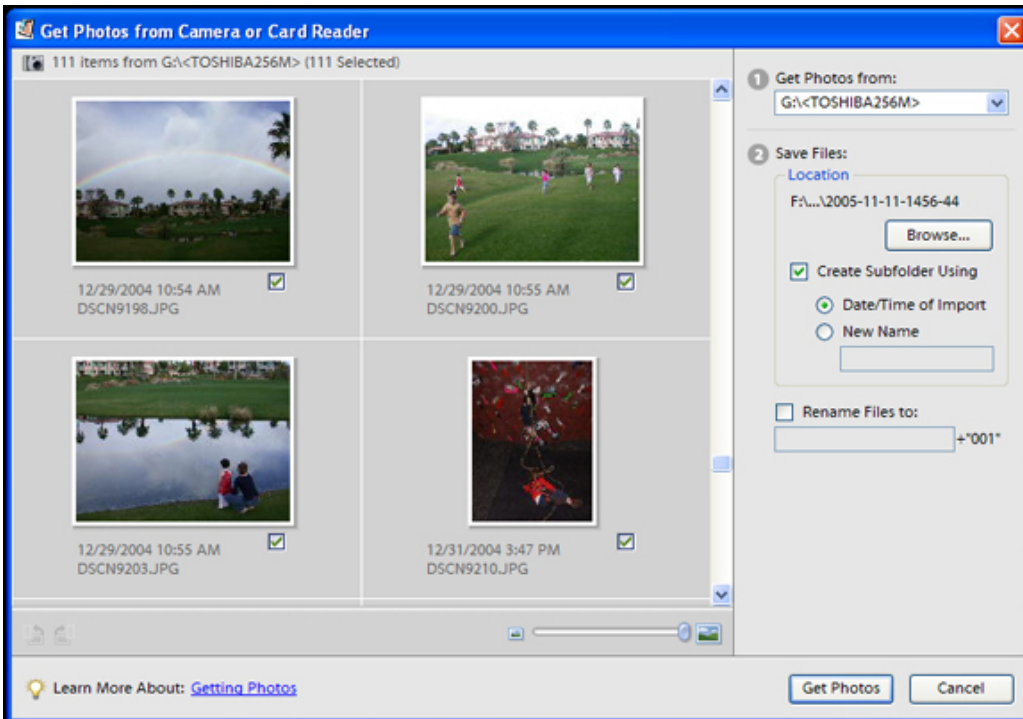


One potential point of confusion is that the Organizer (in its normal view, rather than the specialized Calendar View, called **Date View**) is referred to in both modules as the as the Elements **Photo Browser**. What's confusing is that

both modules still provide a link to the traditional **File Browser** window (*File>Browse Photos in Editor* in Organizer, or *File>Browse Folders in Editor*, with its continuing Shift-Ctrl-O shortcut). Since there are only a few rare circumstances where you'd need to use the old-fashioned File Browser, Elements should have re-assigned the File Browser keyboard shortcut to the Organizer, and also adopted a more distinctive name for what has now become essentially the legacy File Browser function. Organizer is the Browser you'll be using.

## 2. Getting Photos Into the Elements Organizer

Once you have installed Elements 3 or 4 on your PC/Windows computer, Elements will automatically add the photo images from your camera memory card to your Organizer catalog when you place the card into your computer's card reader or connect your camera to your computer. Don't use any image capture or transfer software that may have come with your camera for this; use Organizer instead.

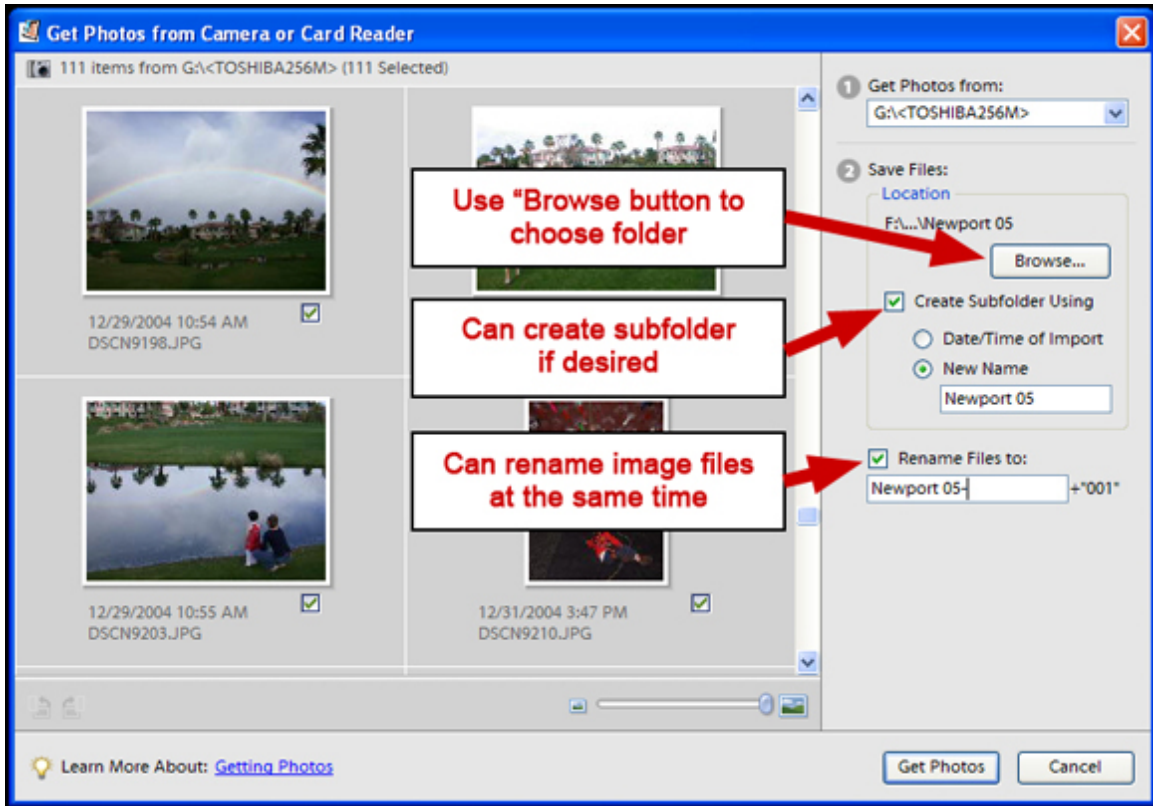


It's important to understand just what Organizer does at this stage:

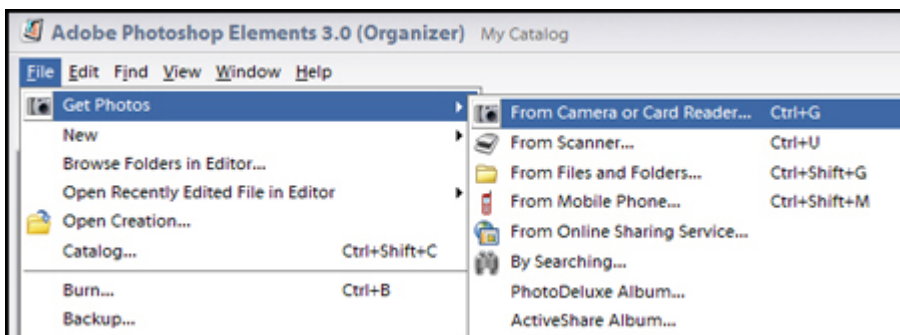
- **Card Reader:** Organizer treats a camera card in a card reader as if it were a still in a camera connected to the computer. And rather than actually connecting your camera to the computer, you may find it more convenient to use a separate card reader, especially for vacation photos when you've brought home several memory cards. Note that your computer treats a card reader simply as a removable media drive, which is how the reader is described in My Computer, so if you have occasion to import or copy images without using Organizer's "Get Photos" function, you can do so through the standard Windows Explorer drag and drop functions in My Computer.
- **Catalog:** Organizer keeps the information about your photos in a structure it calls a catalog. A catalog is not the same thing as a hard drive folder, and a catalog can include image files in several folders. Because the various Organizer functions, such as searching for keyword tags, will only operate in one catalog at any time, you'll probably want to keep all of your photos in the single default catalog ("My Catalog") initially created for you by Organizer.

(Note that an Organizer catalog can't be expanded infinitely without eventually slowing down computer processing time, but you may never reach this limit. It's been recommended that for most computer systems you won't need to start a new catalog until you exceed a maximum catalog size of about 10,000 images.)

- **Image File:** Organizer does not hold a full copy of a photo's actual source file (the source file is a large file, typically one megabyte or more, containing all the image and related text information captured by your camera for any photo). Instead, for each photo in its catalog Organizer creates and holds a lower resolution (but still surprisingly clear) thumbnail image together with the text information created by the camera (date, time, camera settings, camera file name and number, etc.), plus a pointer or set of directions to the storage location where the original image file is located (a folder on an internal hard drive or an external storage medium such as an external hard drive, CD, or DVD). Since Organizer doesn't actually import a copy of the source file, Organizer calls the acquisition command "Get Photos" rather than the more typical "Import".



- Copying to Hard Drive:** The Get Photos screen for Organizer lets you specify a hard drive location for copying the image files from your camera memory card as part of the process of adding their thumbnails. If you fail to use this option to copy your camera memory card files when you get their thumbnails into Organizer (or make copies at some other time before you erase the camera memory card), the camera card will continue to hold the only full source files for those photos, and those files will be permanently lost when you erase or reformat the camera card. That's why using this option to copy camera memory card files to your hard drive should be a step in your regular Organizer work flow.

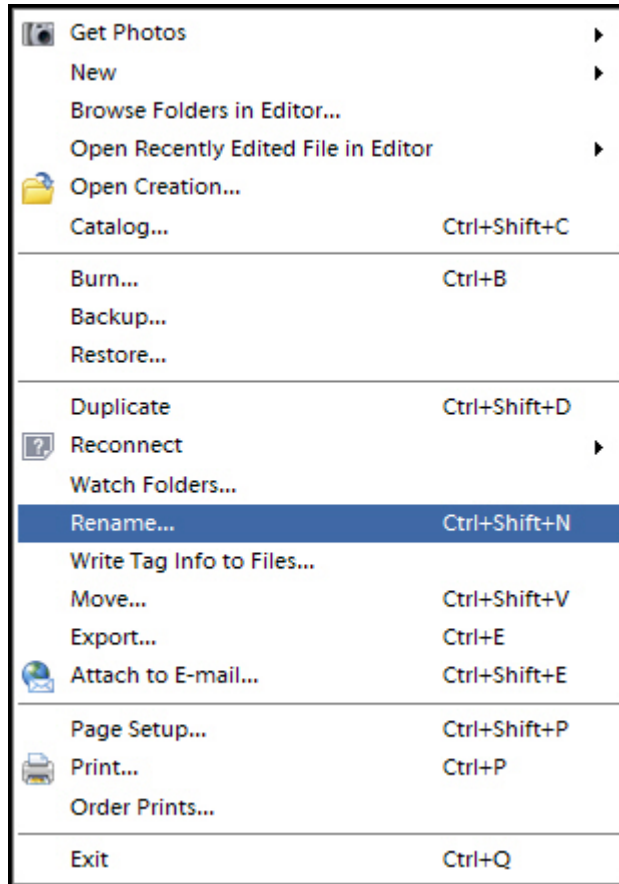


- Off-Line Files:** While the automatic Organizer procedure recognizes cameras or camera cards when you connect them to your computer, you'll

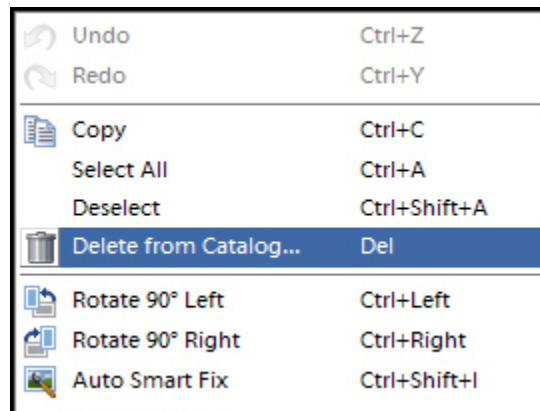
probably start off having some older photos already on your hard drive or on CD/DVD disks that have not yet been added to your Organizer catalog. You can also add those files to the catalog manually with Organizer's *File>Get Photos* command.

- **Changing Image Files or Locations:** The consequences of Organizer's file system are extremely important. So long as you use only Elements to make all your changes to image files, including modifying the images and changing the file structure or location where the full image files are stored, Organizer does a good job of updating to keep track of the current files. But except for using the Elements Editor module, if you make changes to any photo file **in a procedure that does not start in Organizer**, or if you use Windows Explorer to change the name or folder location of any image file, you may have to separately update the Organizer thumbnail and file pointer information (using the Organizer *File>Reconnect* command). Organizer also "watches" folders with existing Organizer thumbnails, and will offer to update itself when it notices a change. If the reconnect process can't find the full file, Organizer won't be able to deal further with the image.

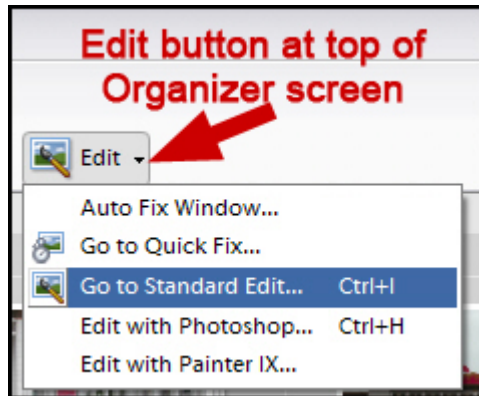
To avoid these problems, **start all file changes in Organizer** (or from the Elements Editor module), so that Organizer can keep track of the changes.



- To **move** or **rename** files, use the Organizer *File* menu commands *File>Move* or *File>Rename*.

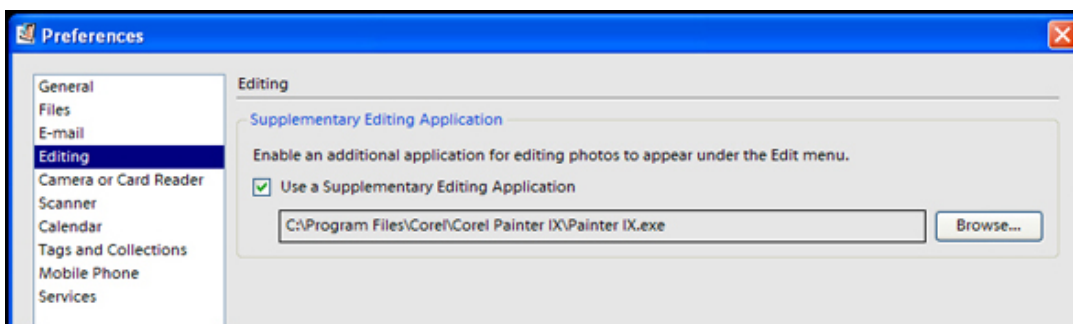


- To **delete** an underlying image file you must work outside of Elements, using Windows Explorer in My Computer, for example. But if that file has previously been indexed in Organizer, you should then manually remove it from the Organizer catalog with the Organizer *Edit> Delete from Catalog* command (DEL).



- To **edit** a file in the Elements Editing Module, or in the full Photoshop Program (for example, Photoshop CS2) if you have it installed on your computer, begin by clicking on the Organizer *Edit>Go to Standard Edit* (to use Elements) or *Edit>Edit in Photoshop* (to use PS CS2 or another full version of Photoshop). These commands also have keyboard shortcuts (Ctrl-I or Ctrl-H), or can be clicked on from the drop-down Edit icon menu at the top of your Organizer screen.

Because of the integration between the Elements Organizer and Editor modules, you can also start making edit changes directly from Editor, so long as you check the Include in the Organizer option in the Save or Save As dialog boxes.



- If you want to edit an image file using some other graphics-editing program (for example, Corel Painter IX), Organizer can keep track of those changes also, provided that you open the editing program from the Organizer. First you must add the outside program to the Organizer editor list by naming it in *Edit>Preferences>Editing>Use a Supplementary Editing Application*. From then on, simply select a file in Organizer and open the outside editing program by clicking on it in the Organizer *Edit* menu or from the drop-down Edit icon menu at the top of your screen.

### **3. Arranging Images in the Elements Organizer**

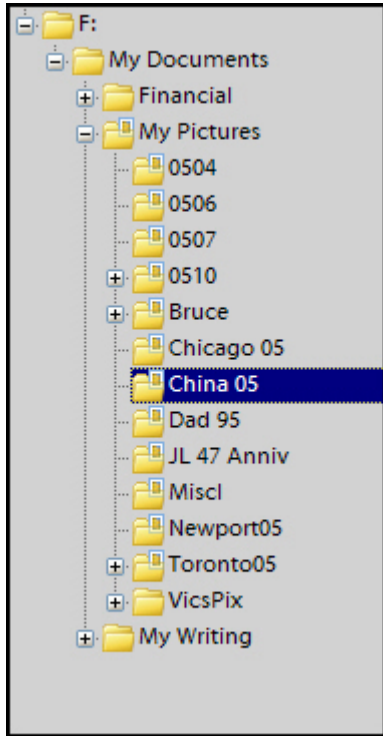
Now that we've explored how Organizer actually works and how to include and update image thumbnails in the Organizer system, let's take a look at how to arrange those thumbnails in the Organizer screen.

- **Simplify Folder Structure or Not?** When you connect your camera or card reader to your computer, Organizer's Get Photos panel allows you to designate the location and folder on your hard drive where you want to copy those images.

Because Organizer permits easy photo searching with keyword tagging and date searching, Adobe claims as an advantage for its program that you no longer have to take the time to save your images in an elaborate folder and subfolder arrangement in your hard drive. You may choose to keep all your photos in a single My Documents\My Pictures folder, especially if you don't take many photos, but I recommend that you continue to use at least a modified folder and subfolder structure for your image files. Folders offer several important advantages:

- Placing all your photos in a single folder really only works well if you know that you'll always put in the time and effort to add search tags (Organizer's graphical system of keywords) to all of your photos as soon as you add the image files to Organizer. Since this article was originally scheduled for publication last month, I know a little bit about the dangers of presuming that things will always be done timely. Professional photography studios can hire staff people or part-time interns to handle indexing tasks on time, but non-professionals need to plan more realistically. A logical file structure can help you find images even if you haven't yet gotten around to applying search tags or keywords.
- Keeping image files in a file folder structure allows you to access groups of image files without using Organizer. This can facilitate making and accessing your storage or back-up CD/DVDs, or sharing them with family and friends.
- If you've already taken and stored a lot of photos, they're probably already in a folder structure, so it's easy to import them into Organizer without immediately having to add keywords for indexing.

- And if you store your images in a logical folder structure, you get to use Organizer's Folder Location thumbnail viewing option (discussed below). With the Folder Location arrangement, you can always click in the standard folder tree panel at the left of the Organizer screen so that you're immediately looking at the panel of thumbnails you're interested in, without a lot of scrolling, and without having to remember any dates.



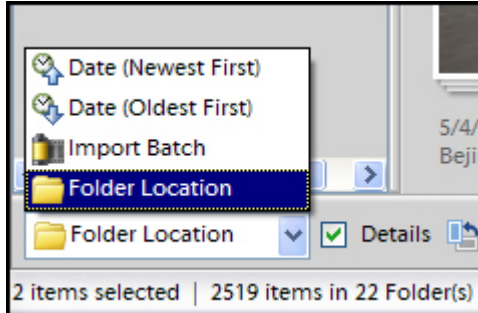
So instead of storing all your photos in a single My Pictures folder, consider making a special subfolder for each major trip or other event where you've taken many photos. Place the remaining miscellaneous images into a single folder for each year (or month, if you have more than a few miscellaneous photos).

- **Thumbnail Arrangement:** The Elements Organizer lets you order the thumbnails in several ways, using a menu at the bottom-left of your screen. If you don't use subfolders to identify your images, you'll probably want to arrange the Organizer thumbnails according to date and time. As already mentioned, this really relies on you to promptly tag the images for keyword searching, which will be discussed in detail in Part Three of this Guide.

If you choose to arrange your thumbnails by date and time, you can specify the sorting direction (placing the latest photos either at the top or at the bottom). Placing the latest thumbnails at the top causes the Organizer to open with a display of your most recent photos. This is efficient because it avoids having to move through multiple screens to see what you're most likely to be interested in – your most recent images. However, you may find that it feels more logical to arrange your

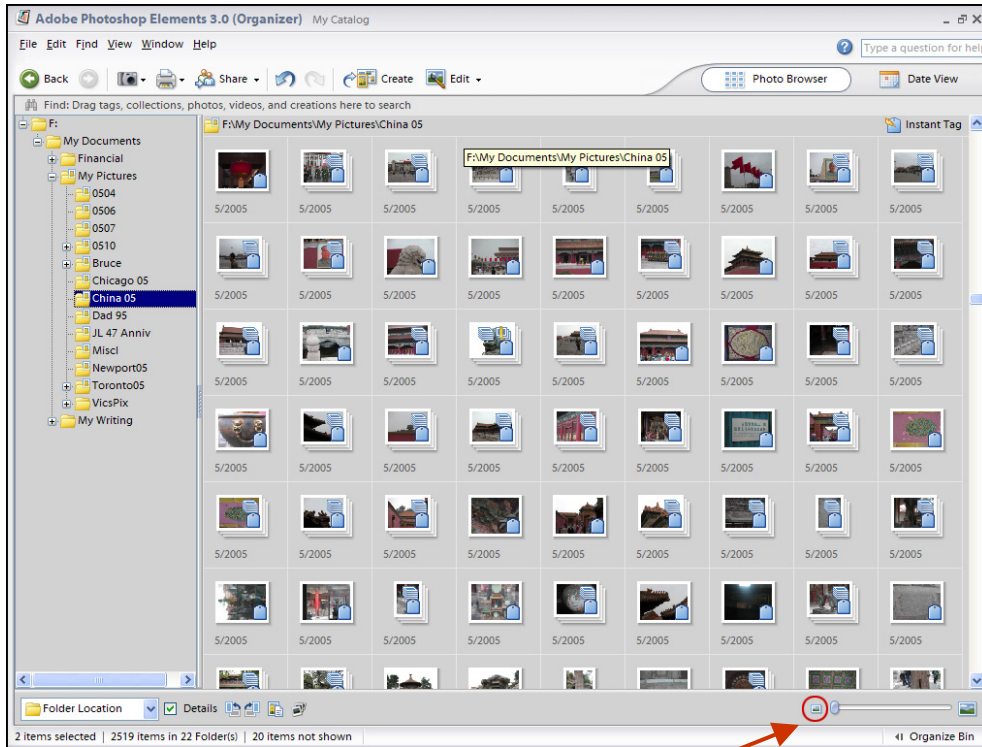
thumbnails with the older (first) images at the top, so they appear in chronological order. Try both methods and decide which you prefer.

Note that using the drop-down menu at the bottom-left of your screen to set the Organizer to display thumbnails according to “Date (Oldest First)” or “Date (Newest First)” is not the same thing as the “Date View” icon at the top-right of your screen. The Date View icon calls up a Calendar display, which you’ll find useful only for special circumstances.

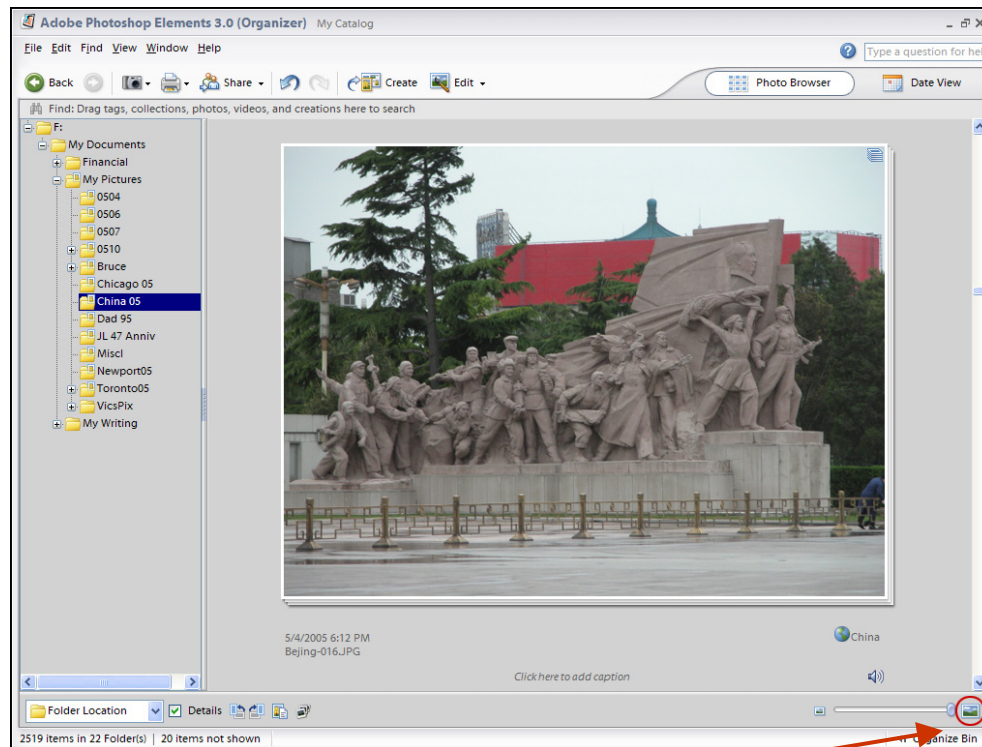


If you prefer to arrange your photos under a logical folder structure as recommended earlier (for example, *My Documents\My Pictures\Travel\China 05*), choose Folder Location from the thumbnail arrangement drop-down menu at the bottom-left of your Organizer screen.

- **Thumbnail Size:** Another display adjustment appears as a slider at the bottom right of your Organizer screen. You can click or drag the size slider to change the size of the thumbnails so that they’re displayed at a size that’s comfortable for you. You can even click on the icon at the right of the slider to get an immediate large single-photo view of a selected thumbnail, or click on the icon at the left of the slider to display the maximum number of very small thumbnails for quick navigation. (On my screen, if I close the Organizer Bin (the right-hand panel showing tags or collections) by clicking at the bottom-right of the screen, the smallest thumbnail view will display approximately 70 thumbnails per screen, which is nice in theory, but not large enough to be generally useful.)



*The smallest thumbnails*



*The largest thumbnail*

- **Your Default Organizer Workspace:** The Organizer workspace settings in effect when you close the module will become your default for later sessions, so it may be helpful to reverse any special changes you've made to the settings before you close Organizer.

Now that you have explored the underlying workings of Organizer, and how to arrange your thumbnail images for maximum convenience, please look for the next issue of your the *Digital Photography Tutor Members Bulletin*, scheduled soon. That will contain the concluding Part Three of this Quick Guide to Vacation Photos. There you'll be guided through the actual Organizer workflow steps for using the Photoshop Elements 3.0 or 4.0 Organizer to save, backup, rename, organize and index all your photos so that you'll always be able to find the ones you want to adjust, share, and print.

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Meanwhile, if you have any particular digital photography questions, please remember that as a registered buyer of the **Digital Photography Tutor** eBook, all you have to do is email me at [JerryRabow@DigitalPhotographyTutor.com](mailto:JerryRabow@DigitalPhotographyTutor.com) to receive a personal reply. The question and answer may even be able to help others as an anonymous posting on my **Ask the Tutor** page at [www.DigitalPhotographyTutor.com](http://www.DigitalPhotographyTutor.com).

And be sure to visit the website periodically to keep up with the latest developments and catch the latest tips and tutorials for your digital photography.

Jerry Rabow  
The Digital Photography Tutor

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