



Daminion 4 – Digital Asset Management System

A USER GUIDE BY JOHAN ROTHMANN

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Digital Asset Management system

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This document is not intended to be a comprehensive user guide but rather a simple start-up guide for new users of Daminion.

A Digital Asset Management (DAM) system manages all your digital assets such as digital photo images, video clips, music, audio clips, documents and more. The folder structure of the assets and the file names become less important because the DAM system takes over the organizing and searching of assets. The key ingredient to this process is the metadata.

Metadata

Metadata can be defined as useful information related to digital media.

There are basically two sets of metadata: data recorded into the original asset file by the camera according to a standard, and user defined or customized metadata. All metadata are also referred to as tags.

Tags will have a tag name and at least one value. Tags can have sub-groups and sub-tags to create a hierarchy. When the lowest level of a tag is assigned to an asset, it automatically includes the upper levels of the tag as well.

Example

Place = 'Africa/Botswana/Okavango'

When the tag 'Okavango' is assigned to an asset, it will also include 'Africa' and 'Botswana'. When searching all assets with a tag of Africa, all assets with the tag 'Africa' or 'Africa/Botswana' or 'Africa/Botswana/Okavango' will be found.

The standard metadata as recorded by the camera such as date-time taken, is automatically part of the asset file. The customized tags can also be written into the asset file. This is recommended as these tags are then part of the asset and will remain so when copied or moved elsewhere.

With Daminion, there is no quality degrading of the image or video when tags are written to the asset file. The metadata is separated from the image data in the file.

Metadata will increase the size of the asset file slightly, but in relation to the overall size, this increase is minute.

Once metadata is written to the asset file, it is very difficult to remove (Exiftool has the capability to remove metadata) or change it again. Make sure before using the 'Write to file' feature of Daminion.

The secret to a successful DAM, is a simple and efficiently structured set of tags. Spend time to structure your tags before assigning customized tags to your assets.

Over time, many different structures or standards of tags have been defined. Examples are:

EXIF (photo images and videos)

A standard that specifies the formats for images, sound, and ancillary tags used by digital cameras (including smartphones) that record image and sound files. It covers a broad spectrum:

- Date and time recorded by the camera
- Camera make and model
- Aperture, shutter speed, focal length, metering mode, and ISO
- A thumbnail of the picture

IPTC

The IPTC Photo Metadata standard is an older, widely used standard among photographers, distributors, news organizations, archivists, and developers.

Examples of the tags are description, caption, credit, copyright, title, date, location, news category.

XMP

The Extensible Metadata Platform (XMP) is a data model, originally created by Adobe Systems Inc., for standardized and custom metadata for digital documents and data sets.

QuickTime (in .MP4 and .MOV videos)

This standard was created by Apple to add metadata to video files. It can contain names of people producing the movie, copyright information, location of movie, date information and descriptions of the movie content, make and model of the camera.

ID3 (in .mp3 music)

A metadata container used in conjunction with the MP3 audio file format. It allows information such as the title, artist, album, track number, and other information about the file to be stored in the file itself.

Daminion

Daminion is a DAM system without built-in image editing tools. It is a professional product and the company has offices in the US, Canada, Germany, Russia and South Africa.

The focus in this guide is using Daminion for digital photo images (.jpg) and video clips or movies (.mp4, .mov, .avi). The same principles will apply when using Daminion for other digital assets such as audio, music, documents.

Daminion is available in two versions: standalone for a PC, and a server based version for groups of users. Although the basic operation of both versions will be the same, this user guide is about the stand-alone version for a single PC.

The standalone version is available free of charge. It is restricted to 15,000 assets per catalog file. However, this restriction can be overcome in one of three ways:

1. Buy an upgrade license (\$19.95 for 25,000 assets per catalog; \$49.95 for 75,000 assets per catalog, \$99.95 for unlimited assets per catalog).
2. Write a review or tutorial about Daminion on public media.
3. Have multiple catalogs for your assets, each restricted to 15,000 assets.

Daminion catalog

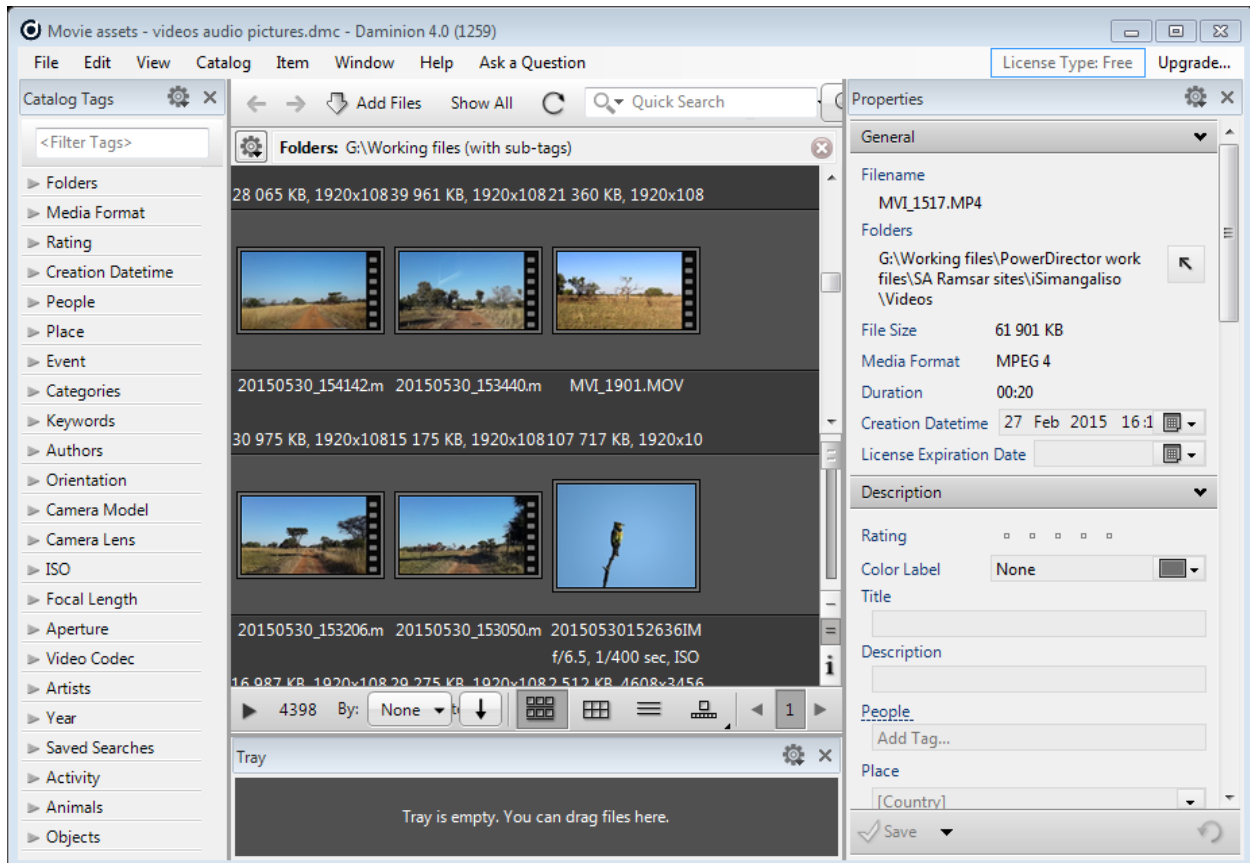
A Daminion catalog is a file with references to digital assets which can reside in multiple different folders. The references in the catalog include the asset's location and its metadata. All metadata of the assets being managed is recorded in the Daminion catalog. There could be multiple catalogs, each referencing different sets of assets. The catalog file can be named by the user.

The catalog files should be backed-up. It can also be moved to different locations without any loss of information.

There is also a hidden **~Thumbs** folder, that contains all the thumbnail icons of the assets in the catalog, in the same folder as the catalog file. When missing, it is rebuilt automatically when displaying assets in the viewing panel.

Daminion user interface

The user interface is similar to most Windows applications. It can be explained in 4 sections:



1. Menu toolbar – top row left

File, Edit, View and more menu items are available. Not all options are described in this user guide. The most important menu items will be explained in the step-by-step section of this guide.

2. Catalog Tags panel –left side of the screen

A selection of available tags is displayed, called a preset. Tags with sub-tags or groups can be expanded or collapsed. Different presets can be defined and customized by clicking on the gear icon to the right of the 'Catalog Tags' heading. It can be very useful to have different presets for different types of assets eg music could have different tags than videos.

This panel is used to assign tags to assets, as well as searching for assets with specific tags.

3. **Center view panel - in the middle**

Information about assets of the currently active catalog are displayed in the center panel. When more than 1 catalog was opened, a menu of tabs appears on the top of the center view panel to switch between the catalogs. Several options are available to change and customize the display - more about that in the Step-by-step section further on in this guide.

4. **Properties panel – right side of the screen**

When an asset is selected in the center view panel, its properties are displayed in this panel. When more than 1 asset is selected, the combined properties of the selected assets are displayed.

A selection of properties is displayed, called a preset. Different presets can be defined and customized by clicking on the gear icon to the right of the 'Properties' heading. It can be very useful to have different presets for different types of assets eg music could have different tags than videos.

The Properties panel can also be used to assign tags to assets. More about that in the Step-by-step section.

There are more panels such as the Tray panel, Map panel, Publish panel, that are not covered in this user guide.

Damion step-by-step

Download and install

Go to <http://damion.net/download> and follow the instructions to download and install the standalone version of Damion. The download file of this version of Damion is 42MB. It should only take a few minutes to download, as will the installation.

System settings

Go to **Edit** (top menu toolbar), **Preferences**, and look at all the options for General, Reading Metadata, Writing Metadata, Color Management, Accelerate Preview. Make changes where the default settings may not be suitable for you.

Start a new catalog

Select **File** from the top menu toolbar and click on **New Catalog**. Select a location and file name for the Daminion Catalog and click **Save**. When using the standalone version of Daminion, it is recommended to store the catalog file in the same directory as the root folder from where you will import your assets. This makes backups easy, and creates a portable catalog file, due to the relative paths of imported folders.

On the subsequent window, select a folder that contains assets to be imported into this catalog. Once the folder is indicated, a window appears to choose the files to be imported. The default options should be sufficient, but you can deselect certain files by clicking in the yellow squares of the image icons.

When ready, click the **Import** button at the bottom. During the import process, the files of all the assets in the selected folders are read, and the metadata plus an image thumbnail of all the assets are copied into the catalog. This may take some time, depending on the number of assets in the folders (see Performance Stats further on in this guide).

More files can be imported to the catalog at any time. There is an **Add Files** button just above the center view panel.

Define customized tags

This should only be necessary if the tags supplied by Daminion have shortcomings for your needs. Carefully analyze the available tags before adding unnecessary or duplicated tags.

Additional metadata tags can be added to a Daminion catalog anytime. It is just easier to assign tags if it is all defined upfront.

Select **Catalog** from the top menu toolbar and click on **Custom Tags**. Press the **New** button at the bottom of the new window. Enter a name for the Tag and complete the other selection options. Press **Create**.

When the newly created tags are displayed in the Catalog Tags panel, you need to add sub-tags and/or values that will be used for the tag. Select the tags in the panel on the left side (left-click once on it), then right-click and select **Add Tag** (or press Ins). Enter the first value for the tag. Press **Create**. Continue to add all values for the tag. Follow the same process to add more levels or sub-tags or values to the tag by expanding the tag name (click on the tri-angular arrow to the

left of the tag name), select the sub-tag or first value, right-click on it and insert the additional levels of tags.

Customized tags are linked to the current Daminion catalog. It will not be available in a different catalog, unless assets with those tags are moved from the one catalog to another.

Defined customized presets

Daminion comes with 3 Catalog Tags presets: General, Business, Minimal. All the presets can be changed and customized, or different presets can be defined. It is recommended to create your own catalog tags presets such as All Tags, Image Tags, Video Tags, Audio Tags.

To do this, click on the gear icon next to the heading in the Catalog Tags panel, then on **Customize**. Enter the name of the preset you want to define, click the tags you want for the preset, and save it.

Daminion comes with a Default Properties preset. Once again, this preset can be customized and more presets can be defined such as All Properties, Image Properties, Video Properties, Audio Properties. Click on the gear icon next to the heading in the Properties panel, then on **Customize**. Enter the name of the preset you want to define, click the tags you want for the preset, and save it.

Customized presets are linked to the current Daminion catalog. It will not be available in a different catalog.

View your assets

After the import of files, thumbnail icons of all the assets in the catalog start to appear in the center view panel. The type of display can be changed by clicking on the icons at the bottom right of the panel (Thumbnails, Compact view, Details, Film strip). There is also a sort option for the sequence in which assets can be displayed, and buttons to advance or reverse a page should there be more assets that can be displayed on one page.

The Thumbnail display can be further customized by clicking on the second sliding bar (change size of icons), or the "-" or the "=" or the "i" on the bottom right edge of the panel. Hover with the mouse above these buttons to see what they offer.

Filtering assets

When a new catalog is started, or an existing catalog is opened, all assets in the catalog will be displayed in the center view panel. By using the different values of the catalog tags in the Catalog Tags panel on the left, you can apply a filter to view a selection of these assets that you want to work with.

Expand the tags that you want to use for filtering by clicking on the tri-angular arrow to the left of the tag name. The available values for that tag will appear with numbers and a circular icon (radio button) to the right of it.

The button can have one of 4 different selection actions or states:

- Click (green dot): show all assets with this specific value
- Shift-Click (small green dot): show all assets with this specific value, but no further sub-value
- Alt-Click (red dot): hide assets with this specific value
- Shift-Alt-Click (small red dot): hide assets with this specific value, but no further sub-value

You can also right-click on a tag value and select one of the above four states from a menu.

The two numbers separated by a slash to the right of the tag value, indicates how many assets contain this value with no further sub-values, out of the total assets containing this value.

More than one tag value can be activated for filtering by keeping Ctrl in when selecting one of the four states above. It takes a while for the correct numbers to display when more than one tag value is used for filtering. A smart feature is to select a state of a specific tag value, and then holding Ctrl without selecting more tag values. The numbers for each tag value will then be recalculated to indicate the number of assets in common with the selected tag value.

You have to play around with filtering actions to get the hang of it. A video that further explains the filtering method can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGaiMmknj_A

It is handy to use one of the tags that you know will always display all assets. Example, by selecting the value for the top folder of the Folder tag, all assets in the folder and sub-folders will be displayed and the total number of assets will be indicated at the bottom of the center view panel.

Selecting assets

The result of the filter(s) that you applied is displayed in the center view panel. You now have to select the assets that you want to work with. The most common option will be to select all the assets in the center view panel. Select **Edit** from the top menu toolbar and click on **Select All**, or press Ctrl-A in the center view panel. Left-click on a specific asset to select it, or Ctrl-left-click on multiple assets.

There could be more than one page of assets – keep your eye on the page count at the bottom.

Searching assets

Filtering is one way to obtain a group of assets to work with. Another method is to use the search facilities at the top of the center view panel (**Quick Search** and **Advanced** search) which is beyond the scope of this user guide.

Assign tags to assets

You can assign tag values to all the selected assets by dragging (left-click) the assets from the center view panel onto the specific tag value in the Catalog Tags panel on the left. Make sure the tag values that you want to assign, are available in the current Catalog Tags preset and the tag values are exposed by expanding the tag.

A second method to assign tag values to all the selected assets, is to use the Properties panel on the right side. Make sure the tag values that you want to assign are available in the current Properties preset. Enter the value for the tag where it is displayed in the panel.

Write tags to file

Assigning tags to assets, only records it in the Daminion catalog. To write it into the asset file is optional, but recommended as mentioned earlier.

Make sure all the assets are selected as described above. Select **Item** from the top menu toolbar and click on **Actions**, then **Write tags to file**. This will write all the

tags and values that were assigned to the selected assets into the metadata inside the assets' file.

There is another option available that can be used to write the tags to the metadata inside the assets' files: use the **Sync** menu on the top right of the center view panel.

Repeat with more catalogs

The steps described above can be repeated over and over again as more assets are acquired. New catalogs can be created, or the new assets can be imported into the existing catalog.

Explore all the other features of Daminion. There are many more that were not covered in this user guide.

Daminion help

There are several help options available under the **Help** menu in the top menu toolbar. I found the Wiki-styled help (under **Contents**) not very helpful. For a start, I will rather recommend the videos on Youtube, specifically on the DaminionDean channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/DaminionDean>).

New online documentation at <http://help.daminion.net/introduction/> is in progress and will eventually replace the Wiki-styled help.

The technical support that I experienced from Daminion, deserves a standing ovation. I received a response to my email queries within 24-hours everytime.

The best way to get familiar with Daminion is to experiment with a small selection of your digital assets. Don't use the original items in their original folders. Rather copy a few asset files of different types to a separate folder, start a test catalog, and import that folder into Daminion. Once you feel more confident, you can delete the catalog file, the ~Thumbs folder, and the temporary asset folder that you used to experiment with, before you start a catalog with your original asset folders.

Example of structured customized tags

Apart from the standard tags that are part of the metadata supplied by the camera, I found that the following tags should be sufficient for most users:

- People
- Animals
- Objects
- Place
- Events
- Activity

You can add as many levels to a tag as you wish. For example, **Animals** can be broken down into the following sub-tags or sub-values:

- Animals
 - Birds
 - Mammals
 - Reptiles
 - Fish
 - Pets
 - Farm Animals

Should you need more detail values for your assets, each of these sub-values can have further sub-values that can be assigned to assets.

Further reading

<http://www.videouniversity.com/articles/metadata-for-video/>

<http://www.controlledvocabulary.com/blog/top-metadata-myths.html>