

XnViewMP for Beginners

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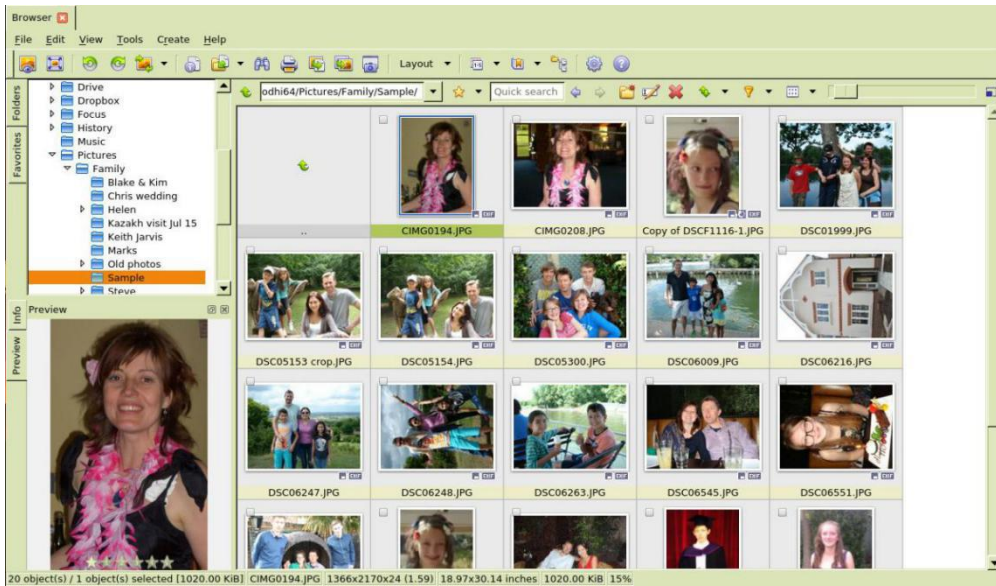
Introduction

XnViewMP is an exceptionally versatile photo organizer and viewer that can satisfy the most demanding of photographers. It provides many features normally found only in paid-for programs, including sophisticated tools to classify and sort photos, batch operations for processing multiple images, the ability to edit metadata, as well as support for over 500 image formats, and exporting to over 70 file formats. It also offers a range of photo editing tools, which while not in the same league as those offered by Gimp or Photoshop, are more than enough for most people. And, most importantly for the occasional user, it is easy to use.

In this guide, I'll begin by showing you how to set up XnViewMP in the simplest possible way, so that you can readily master the basics. Then I'll explain how to move on to more advanced options, should you wish to explore these.

The 'MP' in XnViewMP stands for 'Multi-Platform', meaning it will run on all major computer platforms - Windows, macOS, and Linux, in both 32-bit and 64-bit versions. (This is in contrast to the original 'Classic' XnView, which was restricted to Windows.) I am running XnViewMP on Linux (Ubuntu), and the screenshots in this guide are from that system. To download the latest version of XnViewMP, go to <https://www.xnview.com/en/xnviewmp/>

Browse Mode



XnViewMP, when you run it, opens in *Browse* mode. The figure above shows how this mode looks on my (Linux) computer.

At the top is a menu bar together with a couple of toolbars: these offer a variety of options and tools for organizing your photos. Occupying the main part of the screen below these are three panels:

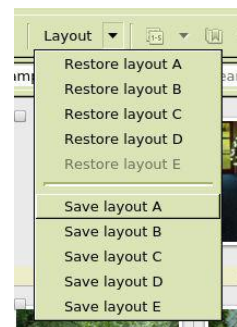
- The large *Thumbnail* panel on the right, showing the contents of the selected folder. Select a thumbnail by clicking it, or multiple thumbnails by holding down Ctrl while clicking, or a range of thumbnails using Shift+Click.
- The *Tree* panel at the top left, showing the folder tree. Clicking on a folder here will open thumbnails of its contents in the Thumbnail panel.
- The *Preview* panel at the bottom left, showing a preview of the selected photo.

The Tree panel and the Preview panel can show a lot more information than their names imply, but let's keep things simple for now.

When you open XnViewMP for the first time after installing it, you will be presented with a more complex layout showing much more information. For a beginner so much information can be confusing, but fortunately it's easy to set up the simpler layout shown above. Before changing anything, however, I suggest you save this initial layout should you wish to return to it later.

To save this initial layout:

1. Locate the Layout button on the main (Browse) toolbar at the top and click the down-arrow at its right.

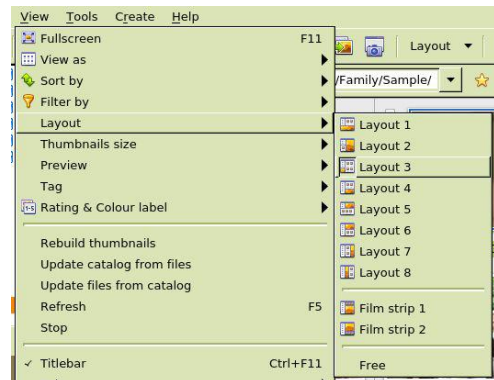


2. On the Layout menu that appears, choose *Save Layout A* (see the figure).

If you do decide to return to this layout later, simply choose *Restore Layout A* from the same menu.

Now to make Browse mode on your computer look like the earlier figure:

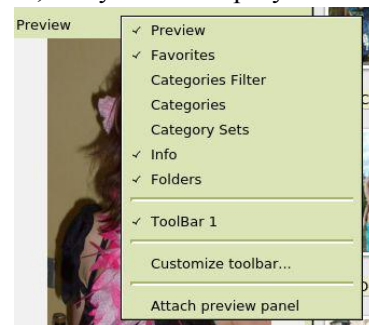
- Open the View menu (on the menu bar at the top of the screen), choose Layout, then Layout 3 - see opposite.



From now on I'll write such a sequence of steps thus:
View menu > Layout > Layout 3.

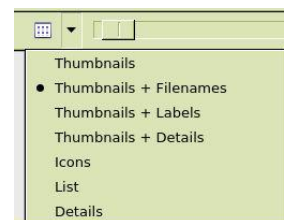
Now you can adjust the sizes of the panels by dragging on their borders, and you can simplify things further by hiding the categorizing and filtering options. (These are extremely useful for more experienced users, but let's stick to the basics for now.) To hide these:

- Right-click on the border between the two left-hand panels or on the menu bar and untick the 'Categories' options, as shown in the figure.



Finally, you can reduce the amount of information shown in the Thumbnail panel as follows:

- Click the down-arrow to the right of the 'View As' button on the thumbnails toolbar (at the top of the screen, towards the right), and from the menu that appears choose *Thumbnails + Filenames*.



When you're happy with all the adjustments you've made, save your layout:

- Click the arrow to the right of the Layout button on the Browse toolbar, and choose *Save Layout B*.

Another adjustment you can make, which isn't saved with your layout but which is restored when you start another session, is to the size of the thumbnails:

- Change the thumbnail size by dragging the slider at the right of the Thumbnail toolbar. Also try the effect of clicking the button at the right of the slider bar.



One of the Tree panel options is to show *Favorites*, i.e. folders that you frequently use and wish to

access quickly. To set a folder as a favorite, navigate to it in the Tree panel and click the star button on the Thumbnail toolbar (to the right of the box showing the currently-selected folder).

Also if you click the down-arrow to the left of this star (i.e. alongside the box showing the name of the selected folder), a list of your recently-opened folders will appear - invaluable if you wish to return quickly to one of them.

If you wish to delve further into layouts, you can try detaching one of the left panels and dragging it around - press the button at the top right of the panel to do this. If you place it on top of the other panel you will merge the two into a single panel, creating the even simpler layout shown in the figure here. (You may find it a bit fiddly to achieve this, but if you mess things up you can always restore your saved Layout B!) If you like this really simple layout, remember to save it (as Layout C).

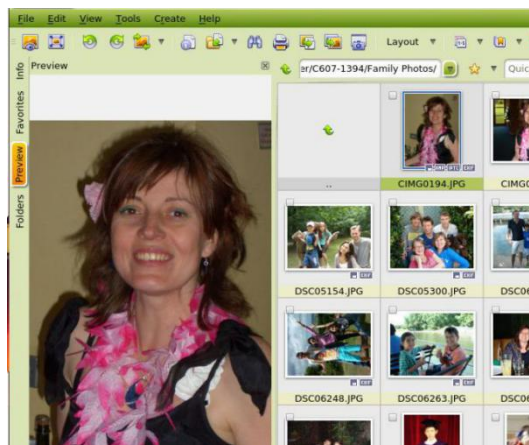
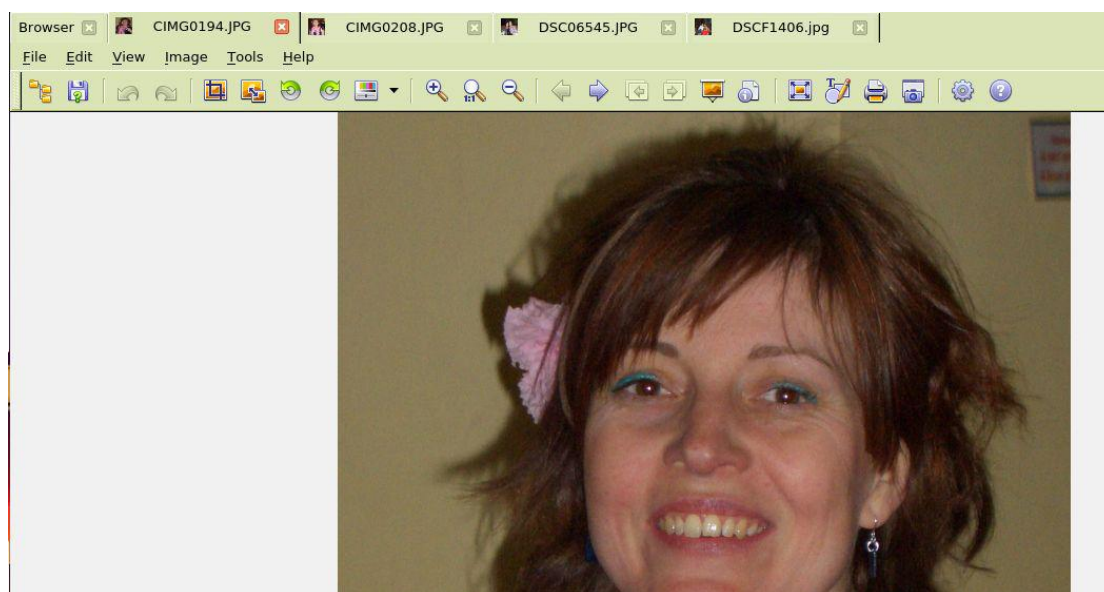


Image View Mode



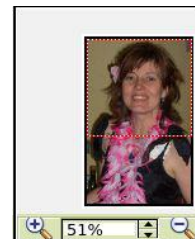
To view a thumbnail's image, double-click it, or simply press Enter if the thumbnail is already selected (or click the Open button at the left of the toolbar). You have opened a separate tab called *View mode* - see the figure above. Look at the top of this figure: there are several tabs open, each holding a different image, and each is instantly accessible simply by clicking its tab. (It's a bit like when you run a web browser with different web pages in different tabs. And, like a web browser, you can close a tab by clicking the 'x' button at its right.)

These images may not necessarily come from the same folder. Often you will want to deal with images from several folders: having selected one, you can switch folders in Thumbnail view and select another (or go to *File > Open* in View mode and navigate to the photo you want in the Open Image dialog box).

View mode has its own menu bar, offering a different selection of tools and options from the Browser mode menu bar, and its own toolbar. Many of the tools and options available here are to do with editing and manipulating the selected photo, and I'll deal with the tools and options that are to do with editing and enhancing photos in the next section.

Here, you should note the following:

- The Browse button at the left of the toolbar - this takes you to the folder containing the selected image, and will display thumbnails of the photos in that folder. So if your selected images come from different folders, then each tab would lead, via the Browse button, to a different folder with a different set of thumbnails.
- The left-arrow and right-arrow buttons at the centre of the toolbar - clicking these will cycle through the images in the relevant folder (i.e. images whose thumbnails are displayed in Browse mode). Pressing the left or right arrow keys will do the same.
- The three zoom buttons, to the left of centre of the toolbar - invaluable if you need to work on a photo in greater (or less) detail. The left (+) button increases the zoom, the right (-) decreases, and the centre button sets the zoom to full-size 100%). The + and - buttons are duplicated at the right of the status bar at the bottom of the screen, and here you can also see the percentage value of the zoom. Note that if the zoomed photo is so large you can only see part of it in the viewer, a reduced-size image is shown just above the status bar at the right, with a red rectangle marking the visible area. By dragging this rectangle with the mouse you can move the zoomed photo around in the viewer. To instantly zoom/unzoom the image so that it exactly fills the viewer, press the slash key /.



The Photo Editing Tools

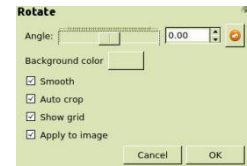
XnViewMP offers a range of editing tools in View mode, including resizing, rotating, colorizing, lightening/darkening, red-eye correction, and inserting drawings and text on the image. These tools are found mainly in the Image menu and on the toolbar. It is beyond the scope of this introductory guide to describe all these, but if you have used similar tools in other photo software you should soon get the hang of things. You can play around with the many options here to your heart's content, as nothing you do is permanent until you actually save the image. I would however draw your attention to the following:

- You can mark out a selection area on a photo by simply dragging over it with the mouse. You can then reposition the selection by dragging it around with the mouse, and you can resize it

by dragging its edges. Alternatively you can open the Image menu and use the selection options shown there: these allow you to set the selection to a definite size or ratio (e.g. A4, or 4:3, or 16:9). When you've finished adjusting your selection, you can e.g. crop it by clicking the Crop tool (towards the left of the toolbar), or apply Red-Eye correction to it (from the Image menu), or apply Spotlight effects (Image menu).

- Watch out for the 'Apply to image' checkbox in some dialog boxes. This has to be ticked to apply your adjustments to the photo.

- The rotate tool (for straightening an image) provides grid lines to help align the photo, as well as automatic cropping of the final result. You will find this in the Image menu (*Image > Rotate > Rotate...*).



- There are a number of drawing tools (at *Image > Draw...*, or click the Draw button towards the right of the View mode toolbar), including one to add some text to a photo. The figure below shows these - note the buttons to zoom and unzoom the image, and to undo and redo your changes. Note too the two overlapping boxes at the left, showing the foreground and background colours - you may wish to change these before applying one of the drawing tools. To do so, click on one of the boxes, then select a colour from the dialog box, or use the colour of selected point on the image.



- After selecting a drawing tool (by clicking its button), you need to drag over the image to apply it. In the case of text, after typing it in the text box you need to click on the image at the point where you want it to appear, then, while your text is still enclosed in a dotted red border, you can move it around with the mouse, alter its size, add outlining and shadow effects, and even change the text. Click OK when you've finished with all the tools to apply your efforts to the image.

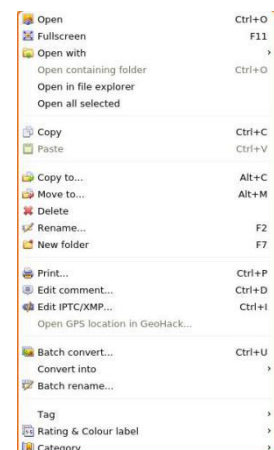
- To sharpen/blur a photo, as well many other effects, go to *Image > Filter...*

- To change the colours or adjust the brightness of a photo, go to *Image > Adjust*.

Finally, note that nothing you do in the way of editing an image is permanent until you actually save the result (using the *Save As* tool at the left of the toolbar). If you quit without saving, your changes are lost and the photo reverts to its original state.

Context Menus and Hotkeys

These provide shortcuts to many XnViewMP features. If you right-click on any screen element - an image, a toolbar, a panel - a context-menu listing actions relevant to that element will appear. The figure to the right shows the context menu that appears when you right-click on a thumbnail (in Browse



mode). All the options on a context menu can be reached via the ordinary menus, but it can take a while to search them out.

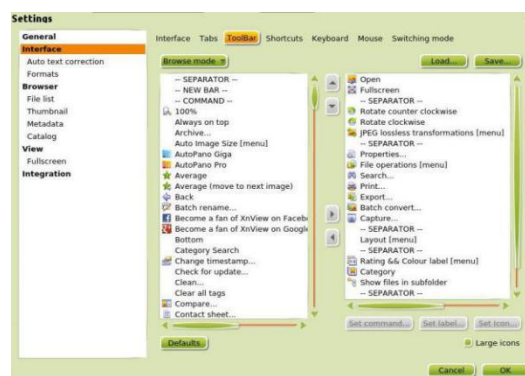
You will also notice that an alternative way of reaching many menu options is by pressing a hotkey, i.e. a key combination such as Ctrl+I. For experienced users, this is a very fast way of getting to frequently-used features.

Why not take a short break and try right-clicking different elements in both Browse and View modes and examining the context menus that appear, including trying some of the menu items? Note too that there are further context menus in some dialog boxes, such as the Save As dialog box - have a look at these. Note in particular the *Show all files (recursive)* option, available when you right-click a folder in the Tree panel. This will open thumbnails of all images in the folder and all its subfolders.

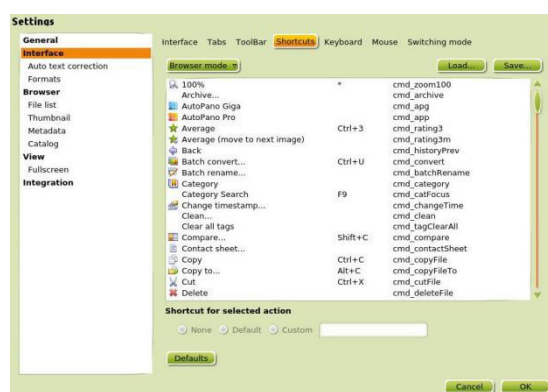
Settings

Settings, accessed by clicking the gear button at the right of the toolbar (in either Browse mode or View mode), allows you to customize a multitude of features in XnViewMP. It is impossible to cover the many possibilities here, but I will draw your attention to the following.

If you select Interface (from the menu at the left of the Settings dialog box), then the Toolbar tab, you will see that you can modify the toolbar by adding or removing items, or by reordering items (by selecting an item then clicking one of the arrow buttons in the middle). Notice the Mode button towards the top left - this allows you to select either the Browse mode toolbar or the View mode toolbar.



The Shortcuts tab (next to the Toolbar tab) shows the default keyboard shortcuts (hotkeys) that have been set up for a number of tasks - see the figure. As you can see from the top item (for example), pressing the * key in View mode, will show the image full-size (100%). Another hotkey is Ctrl+A, which selects all thumbnails. You can if you wish set up further hotkeys of your own at this tab.



It's worth spending a few minutes examining every tab under every option in Settings. It'll make you aware of XnViewMP's many features and customization possibilities - there are far more than I can possibly cover here!

File Operations

Nothing exemplifies XnViewMP's versatility more than these. Besides the essential file operations (*Open*, *Save*, *Save As*, and *Export*), XnViewMP allows you carry out file-handling tasks normally associated with a file manager, such as renaming, copying, moving and deleting folders and files, and creating new folders. And most of these operations can be accessed in a variety of ways: via the menu system, the toolbars, context menus, or via hotkeys - the choice is yours. If you frequently use an operation which is not available e.g. on a toolbar (*Save* being one example), you can easily add it - go to *Settings > Interface > Toolbar*, as explained in the last section. Add to this the fact that XnViewMP can handle an astonishing 500 different image formats and 70 different file formats, and you can see it really stands out from the crowd.

You might wonder why you might want to use XnViewMP rather than a file manager to carry out file operations such as copying, moving, or renaming. The reason is that XnViewMP will update its database when it performs those operations, meaning that any categories that you assign to your photos (see below) will be copied or moved as well.

XnViewMP's file operations are fairly self-explanatory, so I'll restrict myself to the essentials.

Open: You can open folders in Browse mode either via the Tree panel, or via the folder name box at the left of the thumbnail toolbar, or by choosing *File > Open...* Note that in View mode, *File > Open...* allows you to navigate through the file system to open an image directly in that mode, bypassing Browse mode. (If you now click the Browse button at the left of the View mode toolbar, you will open the contents of the folder containing that image in Browse mode, replacing the previously-selected Browse mode folder.)

Save: Accessed from the File menu in View mode or by pressing Ctrl+S. If you modify a photo, this option will overwrite the original file on the disk.

Save As: Accessed from the File menu in View mode, or by pressing Ctrl+Shift+S, or by clicking the *Save As* toolbar button. This allows you to save a modified image under a different filename, or in a different file format (e.g. PNG instead of JPG, to give just two out of 70 possibilities).

Export: Accessed from the File menu in View mode or the toolbar in Browse mode, or by pressing Ctrl+Alt+S. This allows you not only to change the filename and file type but to remove all metadata and to reduce the quality (to reduce the file size), as well as other changes.

Other file operations: Renaming, moving, copying, deleting and more can be accessed from the File menu in View mode, or by the hotkeys shown there, and from the context menu in the Thumbnail panel and Tree panel (obtained by right-clicking in these panels), and from the Thumbnail panel toolbar. To copy a folder, for example, you must right-click its thumbnail in the Thumbnail panel (having selected its containing folder in the Tree panel), then choose the Copy option from the context menu.

Batch operations: You can select multiple thumbnails by holding down the Ctrl key while clicking. You can then apply most of the file operations listed above to the selection. You can even rename them all in a single operation by choosing *Batch rename...* from the Tools menu (or clicking the *Rename* button on the Thumbnail toolbar), then entering a new name in the *Name template* field of the dialog box that appears. XnViewMP will apply that name to each slide, plus a sequential number.

You can also convert all the files in the selection to a different file format by choosing *Batch convert...* at the Tools menu. There are many options here, and a description of them is beyond the scope of this beginners' guide.

Note that you can't export a batch - you have to export singly.

Screen Capture

You can capture the entire screen, or part of a screen, using this tool. It works not only within XnViewMP itself but also in other applications, provided XnViewMP is running in the background. The images in this guide were obtained using this tool, which I find is nicer to use than similar tools provided by other software.

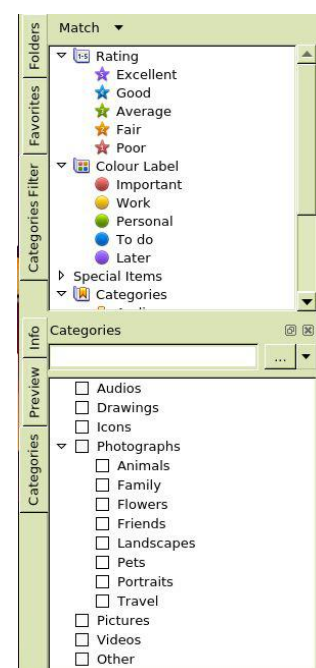


If you click the Capture tool (at the centre of the Browse mode toolbar, or right of centre on the View mode toolbar) a dialog box like that shown here appears. The default hotkey to activate the tool is F1, but I prefer Shift+F1 as this is less likely to conflict with the function key bindings that another application might use. When you press the hotkey, the desktop, or a selected portion of it, is captured and displayed in View mode. You can then if you wish edit the result then save it for inserting into a document such as this.

Cataloging, Filtering, and Sorting

XnViewMP excels at this. You can categorize your photos by subject (Family, Landscapes, Flowers, etc, plus categories of your own choosing), you can rate photos by their quality (Excellent, Good, etc) as well as by a further range of classifications such as Important, Work, Personal, To Do. Having cataloged your photos, you can then filter them, so that, for example, all your photos of flowers stored on your computer in various folders appear together in the Thumbnail panel. And here you can sort the order in which they appear, by name date, folder, or whatever.

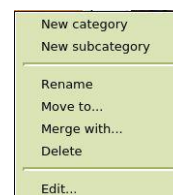
At this point you may wish to restore two items that were turned off at the Tree and Preview panels at the beginning of this guide, namely



Categories Filter and *Categories*. You can do this by right-clicking on the top border of the Preview panel and selecting them from the context menu, or simply by reselecting Layout 3 from the View menu (*View > Layout > Layout 3*). Categories and Categories Filter should now appear as tab options at the left of the screen, at the Tree or Preview panels.

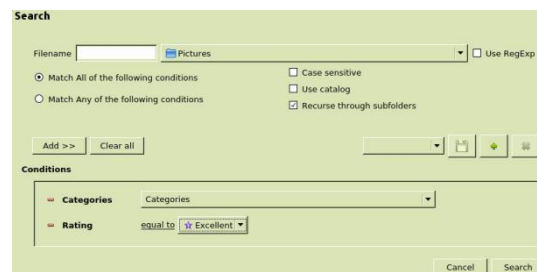
You can now select a batch of e.g. family photos in the Thumbnail pane, then, if you select the Category tab, you can instantly mark them all as 'Family' by clicking that category in the Categories panel. You can also select a batch of thumbnails that you wish to rate as 'Excellent', or 'Important', or whatever - in this case you have to click the arrow to the right of the Rating and Colour Label button on Browse mode toolbar and choose from the list that appears.

Note that you can add further categories of your own own by right-clicking in the Categories panel and selecting the appropriate option from the context menu that appears (see the figure). You can also change the Colour Labels from 'Important' etc to labels of your own choosing. To do this, go to *Settings > Metadata > Labels*.



Having classified your photos in this way, you can filter them (from all folders on your computer) by category, rating, or label, or by a combination of these. To do so, make sure the Categories Filter tab is selected (at the left of the Tree panel), then click on the required item (Rating, Colour Label, or Category). You can select multiple items here by holding down Ctrl while clicking - this has the effect of ANDing the items - i.e. the resulting thumbnails will have all the selected attributes.

For a more versatile search, allowing you to use OR as well as AND, and also specifying e.g. the search folder, go to *Tools > Search...* (or press Ctrl+F, or click the Search button on the toolbar). The Search dialog box is shown alongside.



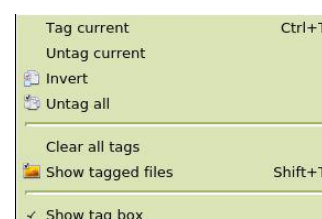
You can also filter thumbnails within a selected folder. To this, click the down arrow to the right of the *Filter by* button on the Thumbnails toolbar. This allows you to e.g. show just images in the Thumbnail pane, or just those that are labelled 'To do'.

Finally, I should draw your attention to the sorting facility available in the Thumbnail panel. Click the small arrow to the right of the *Sort by* button on the Thumbnail toolbar, and choose your desired sort criterion from the list.

Note that categorization data is not stored with the photos but in a separate database file.

Tagging

This provides a simple way of marking photos across multiple folders that you wish to select for some further operation (such as bringing



them together by moving them to a single new folder). To tag a photo, or a group of selected photos, right-click on the selection and from the context menu choose *Tag > Tag current* (or press Ctrl+T).

To show all tagged thumbnails from all folders, choose *Show tagged files* from this dialog box (or press Shift+T). They will all appear in the Thumbnail panel. You can now sort them e.g. by Name or Folder or Date (using the Sort button on the Thumbnail toolbar), display them as a slideshow (see next section), or select them all and use the context menu to e.g. move them all to a new folder. To return to showing all images, click on the Filter button on the Thumbnail toolbar and choose 'All'.

To untag all tagged thumbnails in the selected folder, choose *Untag all* from this dialog box. To untag all tagged thumbnails across all folders, choose *Clear all tags*.

Slideshow

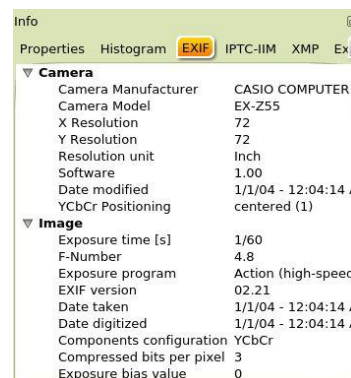
XnViewMP offers a basic slideshow facility, just a single 'Quick Slideshow' button to the right of centre on the View mode toolbar. This will run through the images from the Thumbnail panel in turn, beginning with the image that's open in View mode. Note the following:

- To show just a some of the images, select them in the Thumbnail panel (by holding down Ctrl while clicking on them), press Enter to show the first in View mode, then click the Quick Slideshow button.
- To show a selection of images from several folders, tag them first as described above, then press Shift+T to assemble them in Thumbnail view, then sort as required, then open the first image in View mode and click the Quick Slideshow button.
- To change the speed of the slideshow, go to Settings > View > Misc > Quick Slideshow.



Metadata

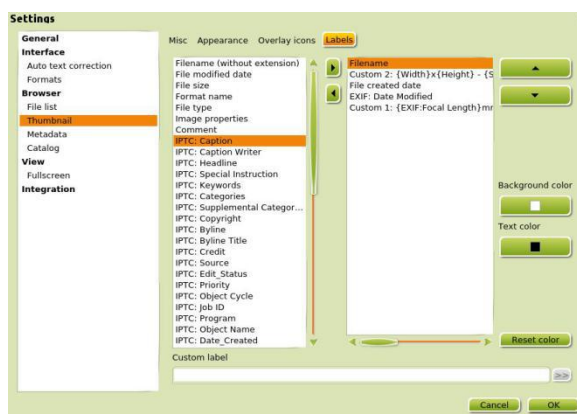
This is data about a photo, stored as part of the photo file. It includes data about the camera, the exposure, the date of the photo, and much else besides (see the figure). You can view this data by clicking on Info at the Preview panel (in Browse mode), then navigating through the various tabs. The use of metadata is too big and complex a subject to cover in this beginner's guide, but I will briefly explain the process of adding captions to photos (part of the IPTC-IIM metadata) and how to display those captions in Browse view.



To edit metadata, you must be in Browse mode. Select a photo, then choose *Tools > Metadata >*

Edit IPTC/XMP... (Alternatively, simply press Ctrl+I.) As you can see from the dialog box that appears, one of the items of information that you can add as metadata is a caption. You can then display those captions below the photos in the Thumbnail panel.

You can choose what items of metadata to display with thumbnails in Settings. Go to *Settings > Thumbnails > Labels*, where you can remove items you don't want from the right-hand pane and add items you do want (such as Caption) from the left-hand pane. For example, you might decide to include just the Filename and the Caption in the right-hand pane. Click OK when you've finished.



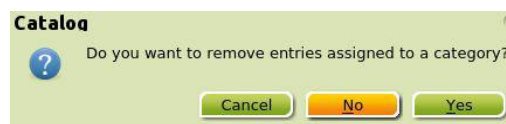
To display your chosen metadata below the thumbnails, click the down-arrow to the right of the 'View As' button on the thumbnails toolbar, and from the menu that appears choose *Thumbnails + Labels*.

I've briefly covered adding metadata to individual photos. However, XnViewMP makes it easy to add metadata to batches of photos, and there is a YouTube tutorial on this at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhttWmflcY8>.

Thumbnail Cache Maintenance

Sometimes an error may creep into the thumbnail cache, so that some images in a folder have the wrong thumbnail picture associated with them. You can fix this at *Settings > Catalog > Catalog*, where you can delete the thumbnail cache for a selected folder, or for all folders. Deleting the cache occasionally may also speed up access to your photos. XnViewMP will automatically rebuild the thumbnails when you select that folder in the future.

Note that when you delete thumbnails, you will also delete any category settings that you may have assigned to them. You can get round this by only deleting those thumbnails to which categories have not been assigned: when asked *Do you want to remove entries assigned to a category?* choose 'No'.



And there's more...

There's much more to explore than I've been able to cover in this introductory guide. For example, you can create collages, mosaics, contact sheets and more at the Create menu (in Browse mode); there are many range of photo editing and enhancement tools on the in View mode that I've only briefly mentioned or ignored; and much else besides.

One example is Spotlight (on the Image menu in View mode). This allows you to emphasize a selected area of an image by e.g. brightening it relative to the rest. The best way to find out more about this is to simply try it out and examine its various options.

There is a fair amount of online help available for XnView Classic, and much of this is applicable to XnViewMP, although the interface and options are somewhat different. You will find this at:

[https://www.xnview.com/wiki/index.php/XnView_\(Windows\)_User_Guide](https://www.xnview.com/wiki/index.php/XnView_(Windows)_User_Guide)