

Workshops Guide Book

Joseph Miller

NORTHERN VIRGINIA ALLIANCE OF CAMERA CLUBS



Booklet No. 1

1997

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Index

Section A 1

Introduction 1

Planning and Organizing Workshops..... 1

Section B 5

Types of Workshops 5

Section C 6

Possible Workshop Topics..... 6

Section A

Introduction

Planning and Organizing Workshops

A well-run camera club offers a variety of learning opportunities for its members. Among camera club activities workshops, when properly organized and conducted, offer the best potential for members to acquire specialized knowledge from an experienced instructor. But like any camera club event, a workshop does not just happen. A successful workshop requires considerable planning and effort to achieve the desired results.

In the Northern Virginia Alliance of Camera Clubs there is a wealth of photographic talent. Workshops lend themselves to cooperation among clubs — both from the standpoint of finding expert instructors and well as increasing the base of potential attendees. Cooperation among participating clubs will increase the potential for better workshops. It is hoped that this guidebook will help camera clubs improve their workshops program.

From a personal standpoint, the writer has been involved in conducting more than 50 workshops over the past several years. Most have been inter-club workshops attended by members from camera clubs in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

A well-planned Workshop program is perhaps the most important camera club activity, which can offer exceptional educational opportunities to **its** members. A workshop is, first and foremost, a teaching forum. Thus, it is important to always keep in mind that learning is the primary criterion.

This guidebook is written for workshop organizers to help them better plan and carry out their club's workshop activities. While suggestions contained herein are based upon years of experience in conducting workshops, they should be considered only as a guide.

1. What sort of person should be in charge of workshops?

The workshop chair should understand that workshops are a learning opportunity and plan workshops accordingly. The person should be able to organize and develop a program that is informative, instructional and helpful to the participants. Careful attention to details cannot be overemphasized. It is desirable that the workshops chair knows what workshops have been offered by the club in recent years. The workshop chair should also know the special skills and needs of club members.

2. What topics should be selected?

Club members have a wide variety of interests, so no one topic will appeal to all. Indeed, a topic can be narrow in scope and appeal—e.g., black and white printing, and still lead to a very successful workshop. There are many possible workshop topics (see Section C for suggestions). It may be useful for the club to conduct a survey to determine what workshop topics its members would like to see scheduled.

Some clubs schedule two or three workshops a year while others hold a workshop virtually every month. The numbers are not important; it is the quality of the workshops that should be the determining factor. One thing to remember: every activity that a club holds, be it a field trip, workshop, etc., competes with other club events. Each member has only a limited amount of time to devote to the club and attendance at a workshop may preclude participating in, for example, a field trip. It is wiser to have a small number of excellent workshops rather than a large number of ordinary ones.

4. How many participants should attend?

This will vary depending upon the type of workshop. (See Section B regarding types of workshops). If the workshop is a lecture type, the number is limited only by the size of the facility. If the workshop is a hands-on type, the number is determined by how many are able to handle and work with the equipment. For example, participation in a Polaroid Transfer Workshop may be dictated by the number of Day Labs available for use. If the workshop is one with assignments and student presentations, then size will be limited by how many can be accommodated given the time necessary for participants to make a presentation and receive a critique of their work. It should be stressed that a good critique takes time. Nonetheless, the importance of having a body of work judged by a knowledgeable instructor is a valuable learning experience.

5. How long should a workshop last?

There are no fast rules, but usually a workshop should last at least an hour so as to provide sufficient information to justify participants attending. Some may last several hours, particularly those that include a hands-on segment. For workshops that require assignment presentations, a second session is needed which may in itself require several hours to critique the participants' work.

6. How should workshops be publicized?

Obviously, the club's newsletter represents the best way to reach the entire membership. The workshop chair should write the publicity in such a manner that the reader fully understands the benefits of attending. The usual "who, what, when, where and why" should be covered in the article. When appropriate, the workshop chair should mention how the workshop will help members enhance their creativity. In addition, the workshop chair should announce the workshop at club meetings, pointing out the salient features of the workshop. There should be a sign-up sheet available. Since workshops are in addition to normally scheduled club meetings (usually a program night and a competition night) it is important, indeed, critical, that workshops be scheduled well in advance to allow potential participants time to arrange their schedule so as to be able to attend should they wish. Newsletters articles and club announcements notwithstanding, telephone calls by the workshop chair may represent the best way to recruit attendance at a workshop. Web sites should be used too. This may be a good recruiting device for people looking for a workshop,

7. Who should attend?

Generally, club members should be considered first. However, there is wisdom and merit to including members from other clubs. Often it may be necessary to invite

recruit a sufficient number to hold the workshop. Such an example was the Freeman Patterson Workshop in Canada where participants came from three different clubs. It should be remembered that a good workshop is like the "chicken or the egg" analogy. A good instructor will not be interested in preparing a workshop if it is not likely that a sufficient number will sign up. On the other hand, many club members will not sign up for a workshop unless there is a good instructor with the expectation of a good program. This is a critical point, especially from the standpoint of advanced members. The opportunity to teach may also help keep the very advanced members from leaving the club.

8. Who should not attend?

There is one important criterion, which must be followed in accepting or rejecting one's participation in a workshop.

That is the requirement that all participants, regardless of skill level, be serious and committed to learning. While it may not be easy in a camera club to deny participation at a workshop, if one is not serious about the workshop or is unwilling to do the work if work is required, then that individual should not take up space that a more committed participant would like to have.

9. To what level of skill should the workshop be directed?

It is usually desirable to have a mixture of experience among the participants. If the workshop is well planned, novice and intermediate members should be comfortable attending with advanced participants. It is never wise to talk down to participants, nor should the workshop be too advanced for most attendees. Thus, the workshop chair and the instructor must be aware of, and tailor the workshop to, the skill level of all the participants. This is never an easy task. However, the advanced members can be counted on to help the less experienced members.

10. What about costs?

Most workshops are free to camera club members. But there is no reason not to charge for a workshop if there are expenses involved. Some workshops require the purchase of materials, or a rental fee for the facilities. Some instructors require payment for their services. If it is necessary to charge for the workshop, keep it as low as possible.

11. Where should workshops be held?

To some extent, the subject matter will determine the location. However, it is essential that the place selected lend itself to a learning experience. For some workshops it may be necessary to rent space in order to provide the right facility.

12. Who should be the instructor?

Obviously, the instructor should be very knowledgeable about the workshop topic—not just a little knowledgeable, but very knowledgeable. Frequently, the instructor comes from the ranks of the club and volunteers his or her time without charge. The opportunity to present a workshop may be the best way to keep older, more advanced members active. The instructor must be fully prepared—well in advance of the workshop date. Because the workshop may be free does not mean it should not be excellent. Knowing the subject matter is not enough. Since the instructor must impart knowledge to the attendees, a basic awareness of teaching skills is important.

13. What kind of preparation is required?

Simply stated, a lot. Regardless of one's experience, it is always desirable for the instructor to have a "dry run" prior to the workshop, including paying careful attention to the time required to make the presentation. It is incumbent upon the instructor to realize that even though the workshop may be free, participants expend valuable and scarce time to attend and deserve an excellent session. If slides and/or other audio visual aids are used they should be prepared carefully.

14. What about handouts?

Since workshops are a learning opportunity, handouts are usually desirable and often necessary. If there are copy costs, there is no reason not to charge a modest fee for the handouts. The handouts can serve as notes which allow the participants to devote full attention to the presentation. Handouts often are an integral part of a good workshop and should be done well. Many are retained for reference so the pages should be numbered and they should be stapled or bound to provide some permanency.

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15. When should workshops be held?

There is no best time to hold a workshop. Some are held in the evenings during the week and others are held on weekends. Both times have advantages and disadvantages. During the week means the participants have to attend after work and rush hour traffic. On the weekends many people often have other commitments. Nonetheless, Saturdays or Sunday afternoons seem to work well in most instances.

Section B

Types of Workshops

There are three kinds of workshops, which are appropriate for camera clubs. They are: lecture workshops, hands-on workshops, and workshops with assignments. There are, of course, combinations of the three types. The first two types are generally used by camera clubs, although the third type may be the best teaching and learning forum.

1. Lecture workshops.

As the name implies, these workshops primarily are a lecture by the instructor. They may, in some cases, be similar to a program session at a camera club, although often the subject matter is more narrow and specialized. Indeed, while a camera club program generally should have wide appeal, a workshop can be designed for a limited audience. Usually the lecture lasts one to two hours and often it is accompanied by a slide presentation. Arguably, these may be the least effective type of workshop as there is no "work" required by the participants. Therefore, the instructor must take particular care that the lecture points will be remembered. A summary of the main points made available in a written handout might be useful.

2. Hands-on workshops.

In these workshops the participants become involved in doing a project, e.g., matting, doing black and white printing, etc. They may be, and often are, preceded by a lecture presentation by the instructor. These workshops can be very instructive and helpful as they allow the participants to actually do work and see the results of their efforts—a workshop on making Polaroid transfers is a good example. Since equipment is involved, the number of available "work stations" generally limit the number of participants. Assistants might be useful so that more personal attention is available. Hands-on workshops often present special logistical problems as equipment must be transported and set-up. Invariable, what can go wrong, will, so the instructor should be prepared for the worse and have back-up equipment if possible

3. Workshops with assignments.

These workshops usually require two separate meeting dates, one for the program, and another, perhaps several weeks later, for the presentation of the assignments and the critique by the instructor. Because this type of workshop requires the participants to actually put into practice the points made during the instructor's program, these workshops generally make a lasting impression on the participants. Since most participants usually have only weekends to do their assignment, and weather is always a factor, it is best to allow the participants several weekends to do the required work. The instructor's critique should be gentle so as not to embarrass the participant, but at the same time it should be informative and point out ways in which the work could be improved.

Section C

Possible Workshop Topics

Abstracts
 Accessories
 Achieving Sharpness
 Animals
 Architecture
 Astrophotography
 Basic Photography for Beginners
 Bird Photography
 Black Light
 Black and White Printing
 Equipment - New and Used - Where to Buy
 Caring for/Preservation of Photos
 Children
 City Scapes
 Color Printing
 Composition/Visual Design
 Creativity
 Digital imaging
 Equestrian Photography
 Equipment
 Exposure/Metering
 Film – General
 Film – Special Types
 Filters – General
 Filters – Special Effects
 Flowers – Inside
 Flowers – Macro
 Flowers – Outside
 Flash – Fill
 Flash – For Macro
 Flash – On Camera
 Flash – Outside
 Framing/Matting
 Glamour Photography
 Hand Coloring
 Holiday Photography
 Impressionism
 Infrared
 Indexing/Storing Slides and Negatives
 Landscapes
 Large Format
 Lenses
 Lighting
 Macro – Hash for
 Macro – Inside
 Macro – In the Field
 Matting/Framing
 Medium Format
 Metering/Exposure
 Multiple Exposures
 Nature
 Night Photography
 Nudes
 Pets
 Panoramas
 Patterns
 Photo Journalism
 Portraits – Environmental
 Portraits – Informal

Portraits – Studio
Preservation/Caring for Photos
Reflections
Sandwiching Slides
Setting up a Darkroom
Shadows
Slide Duplication
Slide Mounting and Cropping
Slide Shows
SO-279 Film
Special Effects – In-Camera
Special Slide Mounts
Sports Photography
Stock Photography
Storing/Indexing Slides and Negatives
Table Top Photography
Travel Photography
Visual Design/Composition
Wedding Photography
Wildflowers
Wildlife

Should the reader have any questions, please contact the author:

Joseph Miller – 703-754-7598 (evenings preferred)

E-mail: furnfoto@aol.com