'Some things to consider when running a Digitally Projected Competition'

We have been asked if we could supply some help in this area. These notes are supplied only as basic guidance to anyone who wishes assistance in running digital competitions. As the requirements can vary very much from event to event, we will not be able to cover everything in this Guidance Note but will endeavour to issue others in due course.
There are several different ways to do everything here are a few things to consider.

The Following notes assume you require to 'run' a Club Digital Competition, with members submitting images. The images will be given to an external judge to mark in his home, and the judge will come along and give his assessment on the Club night.

Your basic requirements will be -

a) **What size of images & what format to request from your Club members?** – *see Digital Guidance Notes 6, and 1 & 2 as well as 'Digital File Rules for SPF Competitions' for additional information*

b) **How to ensure that the images and the paperwork are viewed in the same order by both, the Judge at home, and the Club on the Competition night.** – *see Digital Guidance Notes 4*

c) **How to give your images to the Judge & what supplementary information might be useful to him/her.** – *see Digital Guidance Notes 3*

d) **How to show the images on your Club night - What Equipment? & What Software? -** *Items covered in these Guidance Notes*

You should ideally know the answers to most of these questions <u>before</u> you book a Judge <u>so that you can confirm with him/her that they are happy with your requirements.</u>

We will start in reverse order by taking d) first as your equipment and software choices will largely dictate how the work is collected from your authors e.g. pixel dimensions, format etc. and may also impact on how the work is given to the Judge.

WHAT EQUIPMENT? – The main items of equipment are **Laptop or Desktop Computer, Digital Projector & Screen**. You may already have equipment and software already in use as a Club or you may be considering purchasing new equipment. Please see New Additional Notes for the New 1600x1200 size

> **Projector** – this item has been taken first since the native resolution of the projector, available to you, should ideally be the size your authors submitted their images. 1024 x 768 or 1400 x 1050 pixels tend to be the most popular at present, (XGA or SXGA+). **1600 x 1200 pixels is the NEW SPF & PAGB standard** although we will still accept smaller.

> **Laptop or Desktop** – the choice of what laptop/desktop is mainly down to what has a graphics card suitable to run your projector at its native resolution, with images being viewed smoothly, and capable of running the software you wish to use.

> **Screen** – many Clubs are using the screen purchased for use with their slide projector which proves quite satisfactory in most cases. Ordinary white screens are preferred to Silvered or Grey screens for this purpose.

Some other equipment considerations –

If your Club already have equipment - Do you use a PC or a MAC Laptop/Desktop as a Club? - What do your members have? - all PC's?, Or will you have to cater for both? - What will the Judge have? - If you have to cater for both PC & MAC you will have to insure that there are no compatibility issues on opening CD's or memory devices, and it may help decide what software you use, or don't use. It may also increase the need for Calibration equipment.

Test Chart, Test Image, Greyscale Step-wedge - It is a good idea to have a 'test image' such as a 'test chart' or 'greyscale step wedge' available so that it is immediately clear whether there is a difference between your 'set-up' and your members, or the Judge's – this is meant only as a rough guide. Have a few of your

authors been disappointed by how their images have been seen in the Club on your existing set-up? – They, or you, may need to consider Calibration.

Projectors - those that have manual adjustments for brightness, contrast and colour should help you to adjust to avoid blown highlights, blocked up shadows and some colour correction, that may be necessary when viewing your 'test chart' or 'greyscale step wedge', particularly if you do not intend to calibrate.

Calibration Equipment – We suggest that you calibrate your laptop & projector for best results. We would therefore recommend this be added to the equipment list above.

Note – you must calibrate each laptop used with your Projector, the profile made is only right for that combined unit of 'that specific laptop & that specific projector' for the image as displayed on the projector, <u>not</u> the laptop screen. - On PC's you can only run one profile at a time to make either the laptop screen right or the projector – not both (unless you have a dual graphics card).

Acceptable Screen Brightness – If you wish to check this – measured reflection from a white screen, metered at ISO100, an EV in the range 7-9 is generally acceptable. This may require to alter as the size of screen varies.

WHAT SOFTWARE? - For Displaying your Images your main requirement for software is –

How to show a large number of images on your Club night in a particular order, i.e. to match your score sheets; or in score sheet order with the higher scoring images viewed last.

How the Judge is going to view that large number of images in the same order as the paperwork supplied to him/her. He/she ideally also wants to be able to separate the images as he would do with prints or slides into high scoring, middle scoring and low scoring images, this is where the 'lightbox' view can be very useful.

That the images submitted by your members retain all their original quality – that they are not altered in any way, i.e. not resized, and the program is fully 'colour aware' (see additional notes below)

Ultimately this may be decided by what software is available to you as a Club, or your members. And also, which of your members has the knowledge in that software, to collect and organise the member's images ready for the judge.

Here we are not suggesting what specific software you should use, we are making you aware of what some of the different types are, and some of the 'pro's and con's' for each. We have chosen a handful of the familiar ones, and also perhaps one or two less familiar to you. There are loads of different software programs to choose from but many can be put into just a few loose categories **–**

a)   **Slideshow/Audio Visual type programs,** capable of giving you a self executing file ready to give to the judge – the Judge does not require the program, *e.g. Pictures to Exe, or Pro Show Gold*,

Pro -   The Judge does not require to have the program. You do not need to number your images, they can be shuffled into the right order, and the self-executing file ('exe file') will remain in that order. The programs appear fairly easy to use.

Con – The Judge cannot shuffle the images on his/her own computer, when judging, when determining his placings. You cannot view your higher scored images last, on the Club night without making up a new presentation. You require someone with a knowledge of that software and how to do it. The two programs mentioned are not fully 'colour aware'. Will not handle tiff files. Most will resize the image to fill the screen rather than allow you to see the 100% image size (actual pixel size) You require to add titles or numbers to all the images so that the judge can keep track of which images is which.

Some will run on Mac & PC as 'exe files', depending on the Version, and some will not run on both.

Summary – These programs appear the easy solution to get the images into order to give to the Judge, but do this at the expense of quality of the image and the flexibility for the Judge.

b) **Viewers/Browsers/Converter type programs,** most often associated with looking at loads of digital images from your camera, converting raw files, and some allow image editing – many of those allow you to show all images as thumbnails (lightbox view) or as full size images (slideshow view) *e.g. Microsoft Explorer Viewer, ACDSee, Breeze Browser, Capture One,*

Pro - That everyone, Judge & Club member, has one of these on their Computer already. You can view both the 'slideshow' view and the 'lightbox' (thumbnails). Other than the Windows one, you can also shuffle them and rate them, as you require. You can also rename them making it very easy for either the Judge or the Comp Sec to renumber the highest ones for the Club night. They will accept jpeg or tiff images. Other than (Microsoft & ACDSee), the other programs are all fully 'colour aware', and can therefore manage the colour of your photos much better. Again, other than (Microsoft & ACDSee), these programs will allow you to see the 100% image size (actual pixel size)

Con - Your CD of images must be numbered for the Judge and the Club night to keep them in order, you need someone who knows how to do this. You require someone with a knowledge of the viewing software and how to do it. Unless you ask the Judge you may not know what program he is judging your images in.

Summary – The last three programs give solutions to all three of your requirements above – for Club Night, Judge & Quality. See our Digital Guidance Notes 4 for some info on renumbering.

c) **Larger comprehensive Image Editing Programs,** although full image editing programs, they will also do all you require *e.g. Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Lightroom, which all have Adobe Bridge*

Pro - Many clubs already have one of these programs, as will many Judges, – this makes it possible to specify to the Judge which program to use. Many Members and Judges already have knowledge of these programs and use them frequently for viewing their images. They are all fully 'Colour Aware', allow you to view images at actual pixel size (100%), allow you to view as 'slideshow' or lightbox' view, and you can shuffle, rate or rename images as you require, mainly through 'Adobe Bridge' They will accept jpeg or tiff images.

Con - Are expensive Programs if you do not require it otherwise. You require someone with a knowledge of the software to know how to use it for Competitions.

Summary – These programs give solutions to all three of your requirements above – for Club Night, Judge & Quality. We use Adobe Bridge for Judging our SPF Projected Image Competition & Scottish Salon. Images shown at the Salon opening are also viewed in this**.**

d) **Specialist Programs**, which cater specifically for Club Competitions and digital File handling from members to Judges *e.g. iview Media Pro, Photo Comp Software, Dig Comp Viewer, Image Comp Pro, Dicentra, K-Salon* or consider a website that will handle this (Same idea as SPF Competition uploads) *e.g. Findlay Design, Dumfries who designed the SPF and Scottish Salon websites* www.cameraclubwebsites.co.uk

Pro - Once it's all set up the scoring & viewing order is all done for you. Some programs will allow some of the work of entering information to be done by the members entering the images e.g. Title, author name etc. The competition secretary just finishes off the entry. Many will give you print outs of results etc. Very good for Inter-Club events.

Con - Someone has to figure out how to make it work, and put in a lot of information. You may have to explain more to the Judge on how it works. - Some of the programs are more complicated than others. Some require members & Comp Sec to have knowledge of metadata. Specific File-naming conventions are often a specified requirement of this type of software. Often you require 'to adapt' your Competitions, to suit the program. Some are not fully colour aware. Some do not allow for images bigger than 1024x768 as they were written when most projectors were this resolution. Some will allow the judge to mark, remark and shuffle. Some may not be fully Vista compliant.

Summary – Some of these programs give solutions to all three of your requirements above – for Club Night, Judge & Quality, but you will have to trial them to see which one does all you want it to do, and suits you best. Good to consider for more complicated Inter-Club events if you can tailor your event to suit. (Some of these companies will adapt their software to your needs)

ADDITIONAL NOTES -

- **Can the images be viewed at actual pixel size? (100%)** - for optimum quality you require to be able to do this. You should not view the image beyond 100% (actual pixel size) or below 100%, particularly when checking for sharpness. *Also;* ***If you don't have projector capable of the new 1600x1200 size, stick to the size you are able to project for your own Club events.***

- **Does the software resize the image?** – It should never do this. If an image is resized, the quality of the image is degraded and your image may not look sharp. Don't fill the screen with an image smaller than the full resolution – *e.g. On a 1920x1080 a 1400x1050 (or 1024x768) image should appear smaller* – **See the NEW Guidance Notes – An Insight in to Resolutions**

- **Will you have to open and resave jpeg images** – if so the quality of the image will be degraded

- **Programs that are not fully 'colour aware'** may not show your images correctly – Not all of the software listed below is fully colour aware – Just because it mentions Colour Management, it does not necessarily mean it can do all colour spaces.
- It is recommended that if you use software that is not 'colour aware' that you still ask for images all to be in the one colour space e.g. sRGB
- If a program is 'colour aware' this means that the program can read and use the colour space tag/profile embedded in the image data file by the author e.g. sRGB, and modifies the file accordingly for correct display e.g. It supports Colour Management, however some programs automatically assign their own settings in some circumstances e.g. Windows Photo Viewer for example
- If using a program that is 'colour aware', and an image has no profile or tag then sRGB is automatically assigned to that image. – this is not the same as, or as good as, the author embedding the profile

- **Adobe Bridge –** The SPF use Adobe Bridge for all our competitions. You can automatically show the existing filenames as captions in the 'slideshow' mode, making it easy for the Judge and the Competition Secretary to keep track of which Image they are on when viewing (press Ctrl + H for all the option in the 'slideshow' mode).

- **Slideshow/Audio Visual type programs** can often be saved to be viewed on your TV or on a PC. When saving you must take the PC option as the technology used for display on your TV is very different. If you do not, the colour rendition when viewed on your PC/Projector may well look awful, although look great on your TV.
- For the same reason, irrespective of the program, do not check that discs are working in the DVD player under your TV, get someone else to check it out on their PC.
- Pictures to Exe and Pro Show Gold are excellent for circulating presentations, as the finalised 'exe' file gives some protection against author's images being copied. *However; This does restrict the Judge being able to compare similar images in style or standard and makes his or her job more difficult.*

SOME USEFUL WEBSITES FOR SOFTWARE – for viewing and/or organising and running

Club Competitions (or larger) **- Visit** – www.photocompsoftware.com - www.acdsee.co.uk - www.irfanview.com - 'Dicentra' at www.wilburimaging.com - 'Film Free Projection' at www.rgmm.co.uk - 'Breeze Browser' at www.breezesys.com - 'Greg Duncan's K system' at www.kenebec.com - 'Pictures to Exe' at www.wnsoft.com - 'Pro Show Gold' at www.photodex.com
For colour management info - www.computer-darkroom.com - gb.colorconfidence.com - luminous-landscape.com

PLEASE SEE THE NEW GUIDANCE NOTES RE 1600X1200 SIZE. PLEASE ALSO SEE –
Guidance Notes 4 for help with b) – Filenames & Keeping Images in the Right Order
Guidance Notes 3 for help with c) - How & What to give to the Judge
Guidance Notes 6 for help with a) - Image Size & format from your Club members?
All Notes can be found - www.scottish-photographic-federation.org/guidance

Please Note – The comments about equipment and software in this Guidance Note are only to give you things to consider. Versions of software change daily, so some of the features may now be different. We suggest you visit the manufacturer's own sites to get up to date accurate information. We take no responsibility for any inaccuracies in the above and do not endorse any product.