

First -The Price:

Full Photoshop	\$999
Regular Photoshop	\$699
Lightroom	\$149
PS Elements	\$99

Organizing:

Full Photoshop	None
Regular Photoshop	None
Lightroom	yes, does auto geo tagging
PS Elements	yes, does face recognition

Lightroom doesn't care where your pictures are. Elements does not support offline photo management. That is a non-starter for me.

Getting started with either cataloging system is a pain. Converting from one or the other is even worse. Worse still is to have more than one system. So, Carol – since you have both programs – play around before you commit. Some people don't need any cataloging – they are just naturally organized.

And, it is perfectly OK to use one program for organization and one for editing.

RAW Conversion:

- All these programs use the same conversion engine. Adobe is real good about updating Photoshop and LR when new cameras come out. Not so good with Elements.
- If you don't shoot RAW, then it doesn't matter. Once in a very great while I shoot RAW. I "carried lights" for a National Geographic photographer on occasion. For his own use he always shoots JPGs. I figure if JPG is good enough for him it is good enough for me. You just have to meter carefully.
- By the way: RAW is essential for shooting wedding dresses, IMHO.

Image Editing:

- 3D Image Editing – Only the \$999 Photoshop. This is the only difference between the 2 Photoshops.
- HDR imaging and toning – Either Photoshop. (Merging identical photos taken at different exposures into one.)

- Masking – cannot be done in Lightroom. The most powerful mask tools are in the Photoshops. But, the extra \$600 I'd have to shell out – I can do a bunch of brut force masking.
- Elements cannot apply the same edits to a series of photos.
- Elements provides more “handholding” for such things as red eye reduction and teeth whitening.
- LR does NOT support layers. This means it does not have a “Text” feature. So, if you want to put “Happy Birthday” on a photo – you have to fire up another program.
- Element 11 pretends to do “non-destructive” edits. But it doesn't. It just saves a copy of your photo that it doesn't tell you about or something like that. LR is completely non-destructive. There is only one copy of your photo – the original just out of the camera version. LR also lets me make “virtual copies” of an image. So, I can have a color version and B/W version. Without taking up a boatload of disk space. (Remember – my catalog has over 20,000 images. I am working on reducing that. Space matters to me) I honestly don't know if Photoshop editing is completely non-destructive.

Miscellaneous Stuff:

- You cannot scan into Lightroom. This might matter if you are going to be scanning a heap of old photos or slides.
- LR 4 looks like it sets up really neat books to print on Blurb. But, I am a devout user of Shutterfly and am unlikely to change even if I get LR 4.
- There is a \$149 version of Elements that edits video. (I think – I don't do video)
- LR makes it really easy to set up slideshows on your own web site. Think about it: LR started out as a quick organizer/importer/front end for Photoshop. The Wedding Photographer comes in from a wedding. Dumps 3,000 pictures into LR. Quickly selects 500. Does a few quick and dirty adjustments. Up loads a slideshow to his webserver. And, before the dust has settled from the reception – he has a nice looking product for review.
- On the other hand, Elements makes really cute DVDs. At least it used to.
- Neither LR nor Elements produce CMYK printer files. This is of absolutely no concern unless you get involved in high-end offset printing.

- LR supports tethered shooting. None of the rest does. This is when your camera is directly attached to the computer. If you never thought about doing this – then this doesn't matter either. I do it like on July 4th when I have my camera set for fireworks. And, I have run the computer part of this operation for several wedding photographers.
- Facebook – LR and Elements let you post directly to Facebook.

In conclusion: Unless you are a working professional, there is no need for either of the Photoshops. Just like there is no need to have a Ferrari to go to the grocery. Since I want offline photo management – neither PS Elements nor Picasa work for me. From time to time, I need to use layers and masking. For that I use PS Elements and/or The Gimp.

Carol, since you have both programs – First – decide if you want or need “Image Management”. Are you happy with what you and DH are doing with your digital images now? Can you find what you want? Some people are naturally organized and they can find the picture they want. I am not one of those people. If you decide you want to “Get Organized” – then I recommend trying out both. Decide which one you like best. (Remembering that Elements needs to have the pictures online)

And, for the editing part – LR does 99% of what I need done. But, if you like removing former son-in-laws from photos, getting rid of the lamp that is growing out of grandma's head etc – then Elements is your editor. Also if you frequently use TEXT on your images.

Hope this helps.