

NVPS NEWSLETER

GREAT PEOPLE and GREAT IMAGES SINCE 1998



June 2023 Issue

This month's meeting

Minute-to-Spin-It

Club business meeting and election of officers

Club members may submit five photographs. They will be shown for one minute each, during which the member showing should be prepared to discuss each.



Club business and the election of officers will also take place in the meeting. If you are interested in filling any of the elected positions available, please contact Phil Venable immediately. Many board positions are also available and volunteers are urgently needed.

A PowerPoint presentation, a *Year in Review*, will celebrate accomplishments and show highlights of meetings, events and shows.

NVPS meetings are on the fourth Monday of each month starting at 7:00 pm in the Oak Room at the Napa Senior Center, 1500 Jefferson, Napa.

For this meeting, members may submit five photos (never before shown) for discussion. Submit by the Saturday before the meeting according to the guidelines at the end of this newsletter.

Field trips & workshops

Finding a Workshop

Be sure that when you sign up for a photography workshop that you know what you're getting into. What you want is someone who teaches you useful photography techniques and points of view to enhance your own vision (the vision of your photography). Too many instructors offer workshops feeling it is their role to impose their vision on you; that is, by teaching you how to execute their own vision. This is OK if you know ahead of time and want to learn about their vision. But if you want to learn about enhancing your own photography, this approach may be a waste of time and money for you.

For example, one vision that an instructor taught in a workshop I took was that every photograph by itself must tell a story. Of course, he could look at any photograph and rationalize what story the photograph told; or by indicating how shooting it a little differently the photograph might tell the story better. This kind of instruction appeals to people who don't have any vision; and it can be helpful in learning how to try out a vision (i.e., the instructor's vision).

Nonetheless, it's not very helpful for someone who already has a vision of their own and is looking for

photographic techniques and ideas about how to improve the photographs they take.

Story?

Many great photographs arouse an emotion but tell no story. In other words, a photographer's vision should certainly communicate something to you, but it's not necessarily a story.



The bottom line is you're not going to get much out of a workshop in which the instructor teaches his or her vision unless you know that ahead of time and decide that it's an approach you desire.

Keep in mind that a photographic specialty is not necessarily a vision. For instance, if you take a workshop on how to shoot the Milky Way, you receive instructions regarding night photography. But it's unlikely that shooting the stars is the instructor's vision of *only* what photography should be.

Nonetheless, within the category of night photography, if the instructor insists that there's only one way to shoot night photography, then that's the instructor's vision.



Considering that the technical skills of photography are taught well and inexpensively in many places (e.g., community colleges), a workshop, especially an expensive workshop, must offer *something special*. Make sure that something special is what you want.

Events

B&H educational events

B&H is offering free live and streaming educational classes (*Event Space*) on various photographic topics each month.

Check it out.

<https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/find/EventSpace.jsp>

Member news

Patch wants photographs

Patch is an online local magazine that wants to feature photographs of the Napa Valley as the *Photo of the Day*. The website provides informational for submittal:

https://patch.com/california/napavalley/patch-wants-feature-your-best-photos-napa-valley?utm_source=shared-email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=share

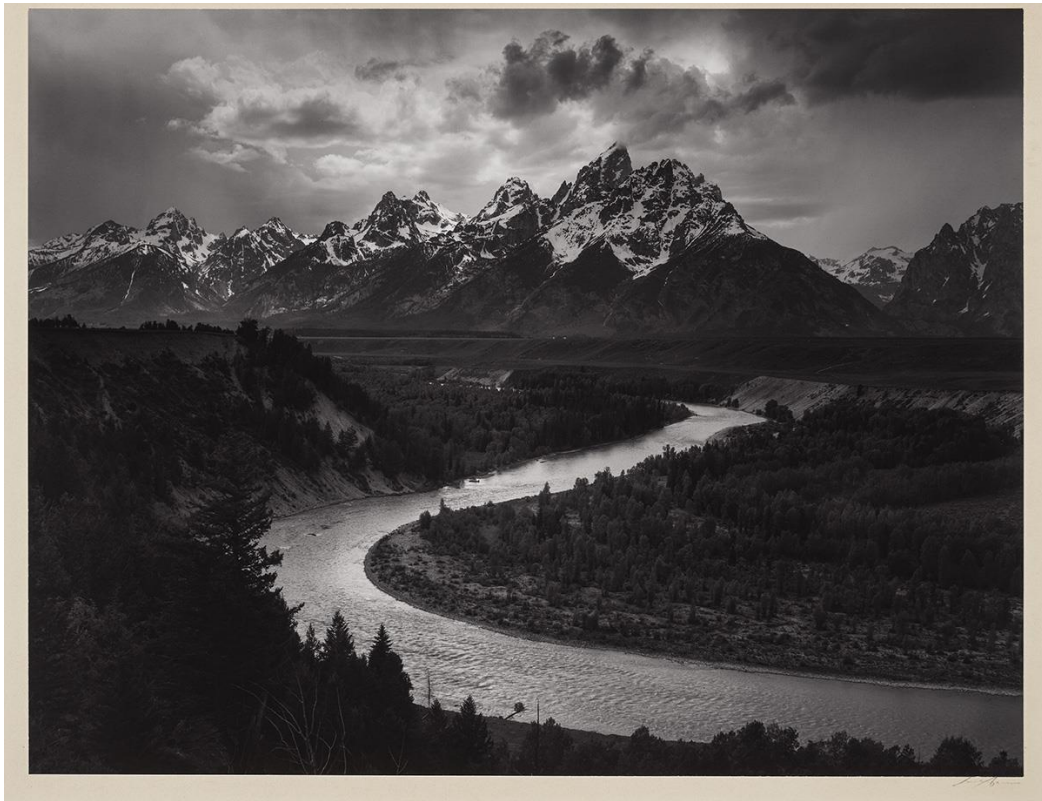
Articles

What Is a Photograph? ©2023 Joseph T. Sinclair

Digital art, regardless of how you make it, comes out flat and two-dimensional. I suppose one exception is a 3D movie and another is a 3D photo stereoscope (antique). But this article concerns only two-dimensional photographs. The significance of two dimensions is that a work can be printed on a printer, shown on a screen (e.g., computer monitor), painted on a canvas, displayed on other flat surfaces, or any and all of the preceding. That's something to keep in mind when trying to decide what is a photograph. You

need words to make distinctions (labels, categorical names). There is no third dimension to help make distinctions.

To begin this analysis, there are some people who argue adamantly that only a photograph untouched by manipulation is a photograph. This is an absurd dogma at a time when every photographer has access to a powerful digital darkroom (e.g., Photoshop). Even in the predigital era, for example, a noted photographer Ansel Adams made his fame by clever manipulation in a chemical darkroom.



Thus, manipulating photographs is nothing new. Digital technology has just made it easier and more

powerful. And almost every photographer uses such technology.

The problem is that when one manipulates a photograph too much, is it still a photograph? *Too much* is a judgmental question. And no one owns the definition of the word *photograph*. Consequently, any dogma that declares that some photographs are not photographs or are bogus photographs is obviously deficient.

So, let's take some examples. Suppose one accentuates the color saturation in a photograph (e.g., in Photoshop). Is it still a photograph? Remember Fiji Velvia film? A very colorful film with accentuated color saturation. It's difficult to claim a Velvia photograph is not a photograph.



This photograph is +100 saturated in Photoshop (looks like Velvia)

For another example, it turns out the moon is tiny in most landscape photographs. If one pastes in a larger moon, is it still a photograph?



Of course, it is. And what if you subtract something from a photograph (a common practice)? Is it still a photograph? Or is it a bogus photograph?

Unfortunately, to some people these techniques are cheating. But since no one owns the word *photograph*, the cheating analysis can't stand.

HDR

If you overuse HDR (high dynamic range) processing in Photoshop too much, your photograph starts to look like an artist's color pencil drawing. And with more even HDR processing, it eventually becomes a color pencil drawing, in effect. Is a heavily HDR-processed image still a photograph?

If you think there is an immutable definition of photograph, where do you draw the line? Obviously, some manipulation may be acceptable to you, but

other manipulation is not. The fact is, where you draw the line is your dogma (perhaps your evangelistic pursuit) and probably doesn't exactly match anyone else's.

The latest leap into this quagmire is a photograph created by AI (artificial intelligence). Is an AI photograph really a photograph? Of course, it is. Who is to say it's not?

Recently Boris Eldagsen won a prestigious Sony world photography award. He then revealed that the photograph was AI-generated. The photograph is very compelling. But some people felt betrayed. The photograph was created by a careful selection of words fed into an AI generator. Does that make it any less a photograph than an Ansel Adams' mountain severely crafted in a chemical darkroom? Certainly not.

Perhaps someday there will be accepted labels that distinguish photographs created in different ways. Until then, it's all very fuzzy and controversial.



Eldagsen's AI generated prize-winning photograph

Where's the creativity?

For AI, there's the proper selection of words to run the AI generator. This is a creative act and can be a very complex chore. In addition, when one gets a desirable photograph from AI, one might be likely to do some digital manipulation to make it better. It could be said that this is more work than running out and shooting a normal photograph.

AI unrelated to photography

AI has implications for societal and technological changes unrelated to photography. Many even seek legislation as an attempt to control the evolution (revolution) of AI. That's a matter that will not immediately relate to a definition of *photograph*.



AI: bald eagle selfie (by Dean Busquaert)

There are, however, places for unmanipulated photographs taken with a camera. One is journalism. Manipulated photographs used in journalism are

appropriately unethical. Journalism is expected to tell (show) the absolute truth. Likewise, in the justice system, unmanipulated photographs are required for accurate evidence. Even in the insurance business (and other normal businesses), unmanipulated photographs are important. Think about the photograph of damaged vehicle used for a claim adjustment.

There is also implied accuracy. An example is taking photographs for a travel brochure. It is implied that the photographs are not misleading (or at least not *too* misleading).

Then, of course, if one represents his or her photographs to be unmanipulated—but they are manipulated—that's fraud. And fraud is socially unacceptable and even illegal in some cases.

Nonetheless, when it comes to creativity, anything goes. All artistic tools are at the disposal of creative photographers. David Hockney (leading artist) uses iPhone photographs as sketches to start his paintings. Painters, going back many centuries, used camera devices (e.g., the camera obscura) to create sketches to start their paintings; when this was first revealed a few years back, many curators and collectors thought of it as cheating. What do you do about cheaters from the 1400s? Fine them? How many guilders? And how do you collect the fines?

Photographers have been adding and subtracting images to and from photographs for decades (even in chemical darkrooms). If a photographer wants to call their work a photograph, who is to say it's wrong (or bogus) regardless of how it was made?

Below is my photograph created by super, super saturation in Photoshop. Is it a photograph?



If it's not a photograph, what do you call it? This gets back to the first paragraph. One needs to distinguish between photographic creations by labels, because photographs are all two-dimensional (flat). You can't distinguish between them using a third dimension (e.g., statue, base relief). And with exploding modern technology, we don't have widely-accepted labels to make distinctions, specifically among different kinds

of photographs. This situation is likely to be temporary, perhaps for the next 25 years. But until we have the new labels (widely used), we're stuck with ambiguous words like *photograph*.

For instance

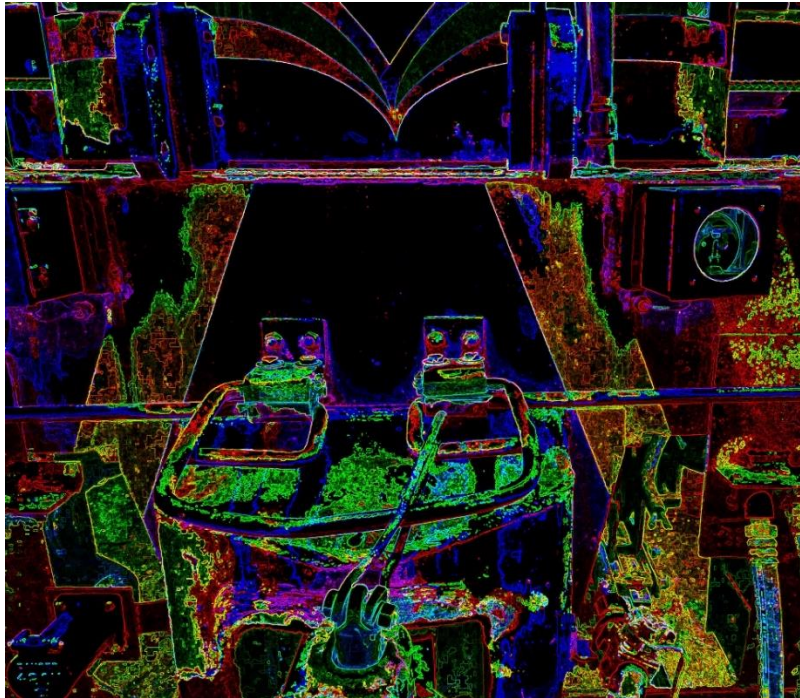
Perhaps *aig* could become the word to label photographs created with AI; that is, AI *generated*. Perhaps *addphoto* and *subphoto* could become the words to label photographs created by adding or subtracting part of the image. Etc.

In the meanwhile, curators, art show judges, collectors, and the like are overrun by the new technology and are prone to dogma that they can't easily define. This causes a great deal of friction in the photographic community.

The lesson to be learned is that one must evaluate each image (work of art) for its aesthetic value: how it tells a story, or other subjective criteria. How it was made is of no concern. It's either evocative or informative, or it's not. And if the artist calls it a photograph, it is. Only when photographs are used for special purposes (e.g., travel brochures, justice, journalism) is reality *de rigueur*.

This article just scratches the surface of complications for the word *photograph*. For instance, *expectation* is a factor. If one submits a photograph to a New York City gallery, the definition of a photograph is likely to be wide. If one submits the same photograph to a rural-

county-fair-photography contest, the definition of a photograph is likely to be narrow.



This post processing is a little over baked (coupling on a train), but it's still a photograph.

So, don't let anyone tell you your photograph is bogus or not a photograph.

“When you show me a moving, heartfelt image that causes me to laugh, cry, think, or otherwise react, I couldn't care less how you did it. I don't care if you used a pinhole camera or film or an iPhone. What I care about is the image.”

Scott Bourne, *72 Essays on Photography*

Current state of AI photography ©2023 Joseph T. Sinclair

I have seen plenty of photographs that have been so overbaked in post processing that that they have an

otherworldly or fantasy quality to them. Personally, I don't like such photographs, but they seem to have some popularity with the general public.

Recently, I've been playing around with AI photograph generators. It's my impression that many AI photographs have such qualities.

Another common AI photograph quality is lack of definition. There seem to be too many pieces of the photograph out of focus. Then too, many AI photographs are just botched up (literally). Finally, many AI photographs just don't look right.

Nevertheless, in some cases the AI generated photographs look real. It's difficult, if not impossible, to tell that they are not traditional photographs.

The bottom line is that you need to play around with words and make endless experimental runs using different words with the generator to craft the photograph you want. But maybe it's just easier and more productive to go out and take the picture.

That said, my experience is just a one-off. You need to experiment yourself with AI to see what it can do for you. It's not going to go away. And in 5 years it will work much better than it does now.

First, you need to distinguish between *AI assisted* post processing and *AI generated* photographs. AI assistance is present in many photograph editors now, and it makes the normal thing you do easier and faster.

An AI photograph (image) generator, in contrast, creates a photograph from words you enter into the generator. You process the resulting photograph by changing the words and re-running the AI generator to see what you've got until you've got what you want. There are numerous AI photograph generators. Try one.

DALL-E 2 (<https://openai.com/product/dall-e-2>)

Microsoft (<https://www.bing.com/images/create?>)

Adobe (<https://www.adobe.com/sensei/generative-ai/firefly.html>)



AI: white horse green pasture snow mountains [Microsoft photography]



AI: white horse green pasture snow mountains [DALL-E 2 photography]



AI: white horse green pasture snow mountains [Adobe photography]

See what you think. AI generated photographs may be adequate for many situations. But in my opinion, AI generation is currently not useable for aesthetic, realistic, color photographs; that is, the type of photographs that most of us strive for.

Nonetheless, AI generation can be useful for turning photographs into impressionist art or abstract art and for comparable processes.



Picasso style AI image of the white horse above (Micrpsoft)



**AI: a image of fermenting wine grapes
Painted by salvador dali acrylic paint
[by Dean Busquaert]**

AI is the new parlor game

I found myself with three other *retired* people after dinner. They all had their noses in their phones. They were making AI images, AI poetry, AI songs, and AI videos and then presenting the results to each other. The results were not particularly appealing, in fact booring. Rudely, I dozed off until my spouse kicked me awake, and I had to pay polite attention. Of course, you know if AI is already a parlor game that it's also well entrenched in internet platforms. YouTube, *I'm guessing*, has more AI video than the rest of the digital world combined.

Finally, you need to understand the *combination* of AI assisted post processing and AI generated images. Software such as Adobe's Firefly incorporated into Photoshop (*beta* – moderate learning curve) enables you to easily apply complex processes to your photographs but to add AI imaging as well. In any case, this is a path to endless fiddling around.

Not only is this powerful digital technology but apparently Adobe is doubling the price of Photoshop (or maybe there will be two versions of Photoshop, one without AI generation).

AI is a technique for which you need to know the capabilities and limitations to determine how you might use it. Maybe a parlor game after dinner is the avenue to knowledge after all?

Featured photographer

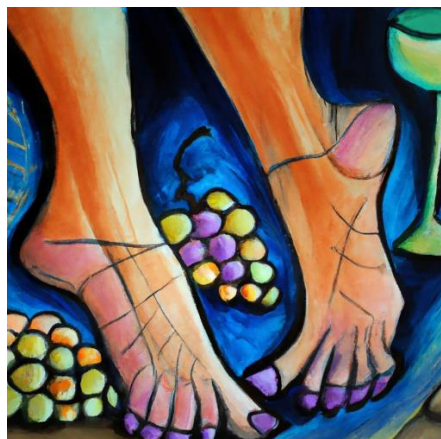
Dean Busquaert

Experiments with AI



AI: make a photograph of yellowstone national park
with buffalo in the winter [DALL-E 2023]

Experiments with AI in the style of an artist



AI: image of beautiful womans feet stomping wine grapes
painted by pablo picasso using pastels [DALL-E 2023]



**AI: vincent van gogh painting of napa valley
vineyard at harvest time [DALL-E 2023]**



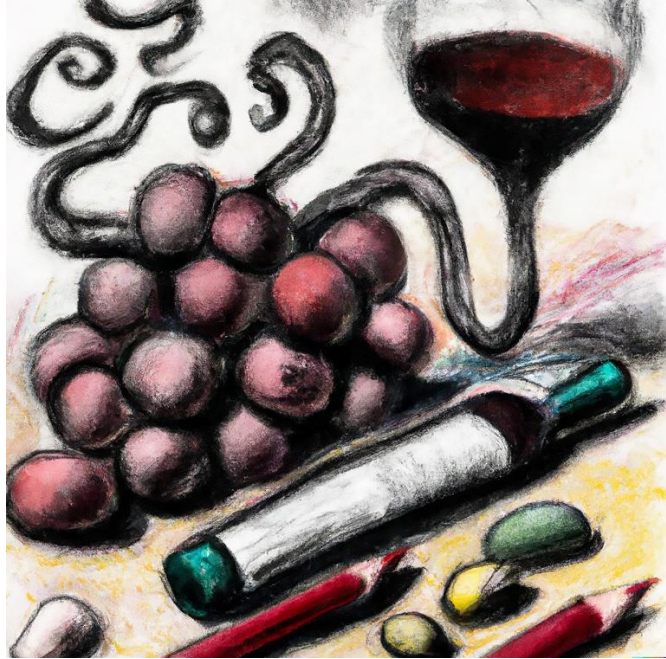
**AI: wine grape vineyard on a hillside
oil painting by renior [DALL-E 2023]**



AI: image of weeping red wine grapes turning into wine by pablo picasso [DALL-E 2023]



AI: wine grapes painted by dali [DALL-E 2023]



AI: red wine grapes and wine painted painted by salvador dali using crayons [DALL-E 2023]



AI: infrared photograph of yellowstone national park that ansel adams would have taken [DALL-E 2023]

Officers & staff

Elected board members

President - Phil Venable

Vice president - Terry Smith

Secretary - George Bartolome

Membership Secretary – Nancy Hernandez

Treasurer - Irena Miles

Past president - Gary Sampson

Appointed board members & chairs

Member-at-large - Lanny Johnson

Program chair - Betty Malmgren

Website manager - Carolyn Younger

Newsletter - Joe Sinclair

Exhibit chair - open

Ongoing-exhibits chair - George Bartolome

Hospitality coordinator - open

Field trips - Irena Miles (Karen Noyes, Ann

Seronello, Geoff Hansen)

Workshops - Phil Venable

Publicity - Zach Berkowitz

Zoom coordinators - Roland Dumas, Phil Venable

Digital projectionist - Angie Johnson (Roland
Dumas, Peter Guenther, Phil Venable)

Facebook posting - Karen Noyes

Fundraiser chair – open



Head photo: Three on the Water ©2023 Joseph T. Sinclair. All rights reserved.

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Newsletter Submittal Guidelines

Submittal deadline

The submittal deadline for newsletter text + photos (content) is the third Monday of the month.

Members' photos for the meeting

Members may submit images for the meeting and should be prepared to make a brief verbal explanation. To submit your photos for a meeting, send your images to the regular critique site in the usual format (no more than 1920 pixels on the longest side) no later than the Saturday prior to the monthly meeting. The file name for an image should be:

members first&last name_title or theme_order
number

Examples: John Everest_Harvest Time_01 and John Everest_After the Harvest_02

Send the files to: NVPS.Photo.Critique@gmail.com. Only photos taken by members accepted.

Newsletter head photo

If you desire to provide a head photo for one issue, submit a JPG 1920 pixels horizontal. The vertical can be between 450 and 1100 pixels. Anything outside these parameters cannot be used. The file name should be your name plus the title of your photo, the word *head*, and the date:

name_title_head_date

Send the file to jt@sinclair3.com with the subject-line: HEAD PHOTO (in all caps). Only photos taken by members accepted. And photos that have been published before on the NVPS website or in the NVPS newsletter are not eligible.

This month's meeting

Follow the guide for *Articles*.

Field trips & workshops

Announce of field trips and workshops should include all information including leader + contact info, date, time, meeting place, miles to location, cost, and nature of the photography as well as a general description. These are *participation* events. Announcements can run in successive issues *before* the event.

Events

This is an announcement of a photo exhibit, contest, or photo op of interest to members or one that includes a member or multiple members. It can run in successive issues *before* the exhibit.

This category also includes a call for member participants in future photo exhibits or contests with complete information on applying and participating.

If an event is a duplicate of full information elsewhere, it should be a brief announcement with a hyperlink.

Member news

This is a one-time *brief* announcement of a member's *past* achievement, such as an exhibit, a photo experience, a travel-photo experience, a photo learning experience, and the like. Use a hyperlink to indicate where full information is available.

If this is the sole information on a substantial achievement, it can be written like an article with full information; but it shouldn't be a duplicate of full information published elsewhere (use a hyperlink instead).

NVPS administrative news or other news is also appropriate for this category.

Articles

Articles (e.g., magazine-like articles) written by members can be posted in the newsletter for one issue. They will be assumed to be published by permission. They must be relevant to photography, of course.

Articles published by non-members are likely to be copyrighted. See *Copyrights* for the treatment of non-member articles.

Generally, only one article per issued will be published with membership-written articles given preference.

Equipment

Equipment for sale or giveaway can be listed here for one newsletter issue. Provide full information.

Photos for newsletter

Photos submitted for the newsletter should be: no more than 1920 pixels on the longest side. File names should be:

author_title of photo_date

Photos taken by members will be assumed to be published by permission. Photos taken by non-members are likely to be copyright protected. See *Copyrights* for the treatment non-member photos.

Send the photo file *attached* (not *embedded*) to jt@sinclair3.com with the subject-line: PHOTO (in all caps). Due to incompatibilities between Apple and Windows, photos that don't conform to the specs in this paragraph may be unusable and thus required to be sent by ZIP file.

Photo captions

If you want captions for you photos, include them in the photo file name.

Submissions

For all information (text) submitted, use a file name that identifies the subject matter and author. Send the file to jt@sinclair3.com with the subject-line: NEWSLETTER (in all caps).

Subject-line email

Unless you use the subject-line words requested for text or photos, your submission might be lost in the 300 junk emails received each day.

In the email, explain your submission. Example: *This photo goes with my article on shooting wildlife.*

Copyrights

For articles and photos by non-members, NVPS must have written permission for publication. The exception is articles or photos in the public domain; for such articles or photos, the author and source of the public domain archive should be stated.

One exception to copyright protection is the use of copyrighted text or images in teaching, such as an article on photography.

One way to circumvent copyright problems is to use a hyperlink to the article or photo published elsewhere.

Typography

Use italics for emphasis. Use emphasis sparingly. Don't use bold or all-caps. Bold and all-caps are difficult to read. Nonetheless, all-caps are acceptable for acronyms and designations.

Suggestions

Suggestions for the newsletter format or otherwise should be sent to jt@sinclair3.com with the subject-line SUGGESTION in all caps.

Your editor

Your current newsletter editor is half-deaf with a short-term memory (25 seconds on a good day and getting shorter each month), lives in Vallejo (doesn't know Napa very well), and receives about 400 emails every day. Although the newsletter editor reserves the right to edit submissions, the newsletter editor's job is to *receive* content (information + photos) for the newsletter, not create it. So, please submit publish-ready content according to these guidelines.