



Choosing a digital camera for your newspaper

computer notes from the road

by WILMA MELOT

Do you think any camera will work at your newspaper?

To some extent you're right. Most newer point-and-shoot cameras have high megapixel sensors, which make their photos great for the newspaper medium.

But for action sports a camera with some real power and a good flash to stop the action works best.

Cameras have come down in price while going up in quality, which isn't something you can say about most things these days.

However, a good camera is still going to cost around \$1,700 for the body.

This article explores mid-range, or SLR (single-lens reflex) cameras. DSLR is the digital version of the acronym.

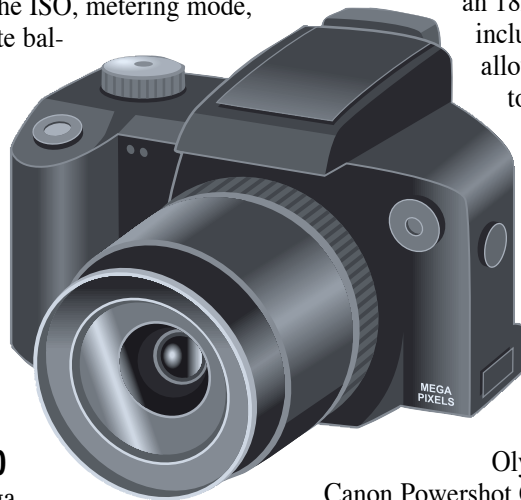
Look for a camera with external flash capabilities, at least 5 megapixels and the ability to use an external lens.

Comparable cameras include:

OLYMPUS E-3: 10.1 megapixels, two pounds and well made. It's not light but is stable in the hand with a self-cleaning sensor and full weatherproofing – in case Oklahoma weather is a concern. The E-3 can shoot at five frames per second and will buffer up to 19 raw frames in a single burst. Priced at around \$1,200.

CANON EOS 40D: 10.1-megapixel, self-cleaning sensor that is well made and sturdy. Like its Canon predecessors, the EOS 40D is easy to hold and maneuver, and comes with a large 3-inch LCD screen and an easy-focus zoom. Similar to the Canon SLR, the 40D buttons provide easy access to the ISO, metering mode, auto focus, white balance, exposures compensation, and focus point selection buttons without losing view of your subject. This camera carries a \$1,300 price tag.

NIKON D300 DSLR: 12.3-megapixel, self-cleaning sensor that is quieter than its older brother and has a stellar 3-inch viewfinder. This camera provides great color and is fairly durable but not entirely weatherproof. It goes fast with a burst rate of around six frames per second and contains a big buffer for continuous shooting. Like the Canon, the controls are easy to reach and work without losing your view. The D300 costs around \$1,700.



Any of the above cameras would work well for newspaper, but if you can't go for the \$1,000 body in addition to several hundred dollars more for the lens and flash, the just-released Nikon P80 is a reasonable option.

This camera has 10.1-megapixels with an 18x optical zoom and includes a sports mode, allowing the photographer to shoot multiple photographs quickly.

Entering the \$500 range some good cameras still come to mind:

The Canon EOS Digital Rebel Xti with 10.1 megapixels or the 8-megapixel Rebel XT; the Olympus EVOLT E-510; Canon Powershot G9; Nikon D40; Olympus EVOLT E-500; and the Panasonic DMC-FZ50.

If camera reviews cause your head to spin, my suggestion is to go to a camera store and see for yourself. Pick one up and try it out.

Online quizzes are also available to help narrow down the search.

The bottom line is this: you still get what you pay for, so look for the best lens, good zoom and the best flash.

plugged IN

Thunderbird e-mail

If you're frustrated with the limitations of Mac e-mail, you may want to try Mozilla's Thunderbird, an e-mail client for Mac or Windows.

Thunderbird version 2.0.0.13 is a free download at <http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/>.

I've installed it at many papers and it works well. You can even create folders for storing all those e-mails in a well-organized manner.

Thunderbird lets you "tag" messages with set descriptions or ones you create to make it easier to organize e-mail.

This third-party software works for anyone. It has SSL (secure sockets layer) and works well with AT&T and Yahoo accounts.

Thunderbird requires Mac OSX 10.2.8 or higher. It works on most Windows machines 2000 and above.

Mozilla is an open-source company that has been around for 10 years – and been very good to work with in all that time. Mozilla, which previously created Netscape, now has the Web browser Firefox.

Firefox is a good alternative to Safari and Internet Explorer. It has great software for online security built into the browser.

DOCX converters

By now you may have received a .docx document and not been able to open it.

These files are the way the new version of Microsoft Word saves its documents. This new file format was introduced in Microsoft Office 2007 for Windows.

It's not compatible with older versions of Word on the Mac or Windows platform, and you can't open the files with OpenOffice or NeoOffice.

So just how can you open these files without buying the new version of Word?

You need docXConverter, which enables you to open any .docx file. The software requires Mac OS 9.2 or later, or Windows XP or Vista to run. After installing the program, just double click the file to convert it to a simple .htm file.

The program costs \$20. I tried it from versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/31504 – but the demo version only converts the first part of the document.

Is it time to upgrade your computer's operating system?

The main reason for upgrading to Leopard, the sixth major release of the Mac OS X operating system, is a program called Time Machine. Now that several of you are using it, it's time to look at some of the hazards of installation.

The program is great for backing up files on your hard drive every hour, but it's hard on the drives to do that much work every day.

My suggestion is to only turn it on once a day, or week, to perform a backup. When it's done, turn it off until it's time for the next backup. Yes, it requires some extra work on your part but it's better for your drives.

Trust me on this one.

If you're upgrading to Leopard, update carefully. Allot enough time for updates to go through without interruption by other events on the computer.

Apple is releasing hardware updates for many machines, which work a little differently than the standard upgrades.

As soon as you try one you will notice that the updater in Leopard does not install the new programs until you reboot your

computer. An installer bar then runs across your screen. In some cases it has to read all the files on your drive so it may take some time.

If you get the "blue screen of death," don't panic. Your machine isn't really dead, it's just thinking hard. Let it do the work and don't interrupt it. It should reboot itself.

If you start messing with it while it's in this state, you may have to reinstall the OSX software.

These updates are necessary to make the software run better and to keep hackers out, but it looks and feels a lot different than our old updates.

The Leopard Server software has fixed many bugs, but make sure your software will run on it – especially if you run third-party software on the server itself.

This software looks like a great upgrade for file-sharing servers, which most of you use. With Time Machine as an added benefit many of you may want to look at upgrading.

It retails for \$1,000 for the unlimited

version and \$500 for the 10-user version. The upgrade cost is about \$130.

Windows' Vista software is improving and more and more programs are now running on it.

Be forewarned that PageMaker will not run on Vista. The same is true for Leopard. Stick with older OS software such as XP or Tiger until you upgrade to InDesign or a newer Quark.

Look carefully at your computer specs before going out and buying a new operating system.

Microsoft has a program that will check your computer and tell you if it will run the new operating systems.

Leopard and Vista upgrades are big, and require a lot of disk space and RAM, as well installation time.

Check compatibility with all the programs you use to protect against their loss. And you can almost bet on buying a new scanner since older ones generally won't work with the new systems.

Check the manufacturer's Web site to see if there are new drivers that would make it compatible with the new OS.

