

Corel® Painter™ Brush-ology: Brush Library Organization 3

John Derry



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In the previous two installments, *Brush Library Organization* and *Brush Library Organization 2*, we learned how Painter utilizes two locations on your hard drive for its brush libraries. The Master Brush Library is the initial source of brushes. Painter does not modify this library; it only reads from it. The User Brush Library stores all user-made brush variant modifications, as well as any new variants or brush categories. With the previous Brush-ology installments as a foundation, we will now look at strategies to customize, edit, and share brushes and libraries.

IMPORTANT! This installment describes actions that move, rename, and edit your Painter brushes. Be sure to make backup copies (see next section) of your *Master* and *User* Brush Libraries before performing any of the described actions. Failure to do so could result in the loss of brushes.

Your Safety Net: Backup Your Brush Libraries!

Before you engage in any library editing, it is imperative that you make backup copies of both your *Master* and *User* Brush Libraries. This action provides you with the confidence to remove and relocate variants without the fear of permanently losing anything. To be clear, you will backup the Brushes folder found in both your Painter Application folder and your Painter User folder:

Mac: Applications > Corel Painter IX > **Brushes**
(Make a copy of this file and store it in a separate location.)

Windows: Program Files > Corel > Corel Painter IX > **Brushes**
(Make a copy of this file and store it in a separate location.)

Create a New Library Category

This action enables you to re-organize your current library, as well as adding custom brushes in an organized manner. This action can be accomplished via the Brush Selector Bar's *Capture Brush Category* command. This command expects that the user has created and selected a square image area for use as a new Category icon. *Capture Brush Category* also creates a new Category folder. A Category must contain at least one

variant, so the variant current at the time of Category creation is given the same name as the new Category and placed in the new Category folder. All of these items are then hierarchically placed in the *User* Brushes folder.

To review: A *Brush Category* requires *three* items in order to appear in the Brush Selector Bar: A *Category folder*, a same-named *Category icon*, and a *single brush variant* within the Category folder (once you've created a new Category, you can populate it with as many variants as you'd like). Initially place these items in either the *User* or *Master* Painter Brushes folder (we'll discuss further customization strategies in a moment.)

I prefer to forego the *Capture Brush Category* command and alternatively create new a Brush Category manually. I find that there are advantages to using the manual method. You can create a new Brush Category in 3 steps.

Quit Painter.

1. In either your Master or User Painter Brushes folder, create a new sub-folder named for your new Category.
2. Copy an existing Category icon and rename it to match your new Category name.
3. Copy an existing Variant and place it in the new Category folder.

Relaunch Painter. You now have a new Category that appears in the Brush Selector Bar's *Category pop-up list*.

A second advantage of manual Category creation is that you have greater control over the quality of Category icons if by creating them yourself.

Create Customized Brush Category Icons

Painter's Category Icons are *30X30* pixels in size. That's a very small area to create graphics in, so I recommend that initial icon creation be done at a multiple of 30. For example, *60X60*, *90X90*, *120X120*, etc. Keep in mind: Graphics that look good at *300X300* will lose a lot of detail when scaled down to the required *30X30* size. I prefer to work at *2X* (*60X60*) or *3X* (*90X90*); this keeps me from attempting to impart too much detail into the icon.

A second advantage of manual icon creation is that it enables you to control the *down-sampling* process. The down-sampling used by Painter tends to soften the result. I prefer to down-sample the icon in Photoshop to take advantage of its high-quality down-sampling options (*Bi-cubic Sharper*). A bit of judicious sharpening applied to the reduced *30X30* icon may aid readability, as well. Save the scaled *30X30* icon as a JPEG file with the same name as the Category folder. Place the new Category icon in the Brushes folder containing the same-named Category sub-folder.

Prune Your Master Painter Library

Do you use variants in *every* Brush Category? Most users don't, so why have several hundred variants actively available when you only use a subset of them? As stated earlier, a crucial brush-editing safety net is the action of making a backup copy of your *Master* Painter Brushes library. I recommend that you make a copy of it and store in a handy retrievable location. This ensures that you can always restore any variants that you may inadvertently lose or overwrite.

To perform the following actions, first *Quit* Painter.

With a backup library safely stowed away, you can *delete* individual (or groups of) variants from each Category folder. Going further, you can do away with entire Categories if you never access them. If you set up your Finder (*Mac*) or Windows Explorer (*Win*) to view folders alphabetically, you can navigate to the various Category folders, then quickly select all of the same-named files associated with a particular variant and delete them.

Another organization strategy is to create new Category folders (and their same-named JPEG Category Icon files) and name them according to a particular workflow (*Painting, Drawing, Photo-enhancement, etc.*). Then re-locate variants from their original categories into your new folders. You can then delete the old Categories. By performing this action, your Brush Selector Bar's *Category pop-up list* can be made substantially shorter—and therefore easier to locate your pruned variants.

An alternate variant organization system is to re-distribute your Painter Brushes library into multiple workflow-oriented sub-libraries.

To review: the Master Painter Brushes library folder is a sub-folder within the Brushes folder.

You can create new library sub-folders (at the same level as the Painter Brushes folder) in the Brushes folder to re-organize various Categories to your liking. Relocate the Painter Brushes Category folders (and their JPEG Category icons) in your newly created Library folders (*Library folders don't require a JPEG icon because they are at the Library level*). You access Brush Libraries via the Brush Selector Bar's *Load Brush Library* command. This strategy has the advantage of keeping all of Painter's brushes available—you're just not keeping them all in one massive library—but rather, in several smaller workflow organized sub-libraries.

Exchange Painter Brush Variants with Other Users

You should now have a fairly good overview of Painter's Brush organization. In doing so, it will be a simple task to both package up and properly place Painter variants, as well as Brush Libraries. My recommendation is to place all received brush Variants/Categories/Libraries into your Painter *Master* brush libraries rather than your *User* libraries. The exception would be environments in which there are *multiple user accounts* on a system. In this case, place new variant/category/library content in the *User* brush libraries.

Below I'll list the common variant exchange scenarios and the files/folders required:

Sending/Receiving a single/multiple variant(s):

Required for each variant:

1. VariantName.XML file
2. VariantName.JPG file (if it is a Captured Dab brush)
3. Place the received variant file(s) in the desired Master Brushes Category sub-folder(s)

Sending/Receiving a single/multiple Category folder(s):

Required for each Category:

1. CategoryName folder
2. CategoryName.JPG - Category Icon file
3. At least one .XML variant file inside the Category folder
4. Place the received Category Folder(s) and CategoryName. JPG Icon file(s) in the Master Painter Brushes folder

Sending/Receiving a single/multiple Brush Library folder(s):

Required for each Library:

1. BrushLibraryName folder
2. CategoryName folder(s) - Inside the BrushLibraryName folder
3. CategoryName.JPG(s) - One CategoryName.JPG Icon file per Category inside the BrushLibraryName folder
4. At least one XML variant file inside each Category folder
5. Place the received BrushLibraryName folder(s) in the Master Brushes folder

For the sake of easy exchange, I recommend placing Painter brush content in a folder along with a plain text file describing both the contents, as well as the correct path for placing the files in Painter's Brushes folder hierarchy. Create a compressed ZIP archive of the folder and its contents. This reduces the size of the content and leaves only a single file to send. Both Mac and Windows support the ZIP archive format.

You're a Brush-ology Graduate!

If you install new brush content and the resulting variants/categories/libraries don't appear after you've re-launched Painter, don't panic. Follow the proscribed file/folder/directory structures in your *Finder* or *Windows Explorer* and double-check them. There is a simple mis-placement of content that needs to be addressed. Assuming that you've read and studied the Brush-ology series of installments, then you possess the knowledge necessary to edit, organize, and trade Painter brush content, as well as diagnose troublesome content placement. Congratulations, *Brushmeister!*

Viva la Painter!

John Derry is a pioneer of digital painting and one of the original authors of Corel® Painter™. Since 1985, he has leveraged his background in drawing and painting to advance the look and experience of traditional art-making tools on the computer. John has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Fine Art and is a practicing artist and photographer. He is currently serving as Corel's Painter Ambassador-at-Large. John's Web site is at www.pixlart.com.