

Digital Cameras: What's holding you back?

Ward Cottreau, Teacher, Avalon Adventist Jr. Academy, Port Hardy, BC

Digital cameras, it isn't a question of "should I get one?" anymore, but "when am I going to get one?". There hasn't been a more prolific computer peripheral since the printer. Cameras come in all shapes and sizes, but which one is right for you? Well, the question you have to ask is the same as any other consumer product you may buy, what are you going to use it for? Are you posting pictures to your web site? Sending pictures to your relatives via e-mail? Printing off 4X6" pictures? If you have answered yes to these questions then the news is good, basically any camera around \$200.00 will fit your needs.

I remember my parents visiting me in Red Deer. While there, my dad showed an interest in buying a new computer. After three days of shopping, I sat him down (just like he used to do with me) and told him to stop wasting my time, to either "buy a computer or else..." Well being on the dealing end of that phrase was nice for a change and he bought a computer the next day. I didn't realize how powerful that phrase could be! It is the same for a digital camera, soon you will have to bite the bullet and buy one even after months of searching, researching and comparing, don't worry everything becomes as clear as mud. Digital vs digital SLR, megapixels, optical vs digital zoom, and so many name brands.

First let's talk about digital SLR cameras vs. digital. SLR stands for single lens reflex and one lens is used for both focusing and taking the picture, this type of camera also allows you to change lenses on your digital camera, for example: wide angle and telephoto lenses are interchangeable. This camera is usually for the more serious photographer and is usually more flexible than a point-and-shoot camera. The prices range from \$900.00 and up.

The second type of camera is what is called a digital camera, the lens is fixed to the body of the camera and is not interchangeable with lenses of the same manufacturer, it is also called a point and shoot camera. It is less expensive and the prices range from \$100.00 to about \$1000.00. It is by far the more popular among schools and people that like photography but aren't professionals. Point and shoot cameras are always evolving by gaining longer telephoto lenses and using anti-shake technology to get clearer pictures with the longer optical views. On the market as of January 1st 2006, the camera with the longest optical power is the Samsung Digimax Pro 815, it is an 8 megapixel camera, 15X optical zoom and a 3.5" LCD screen on the back of the camera, compared to 1.8-2" on most other cameras.

Megapixels refers to the amount of picture elements (pixels) that the camera can capture for each picture. The higher the megapixels the more detail the camera will capture and the more you can zoom into a picture without pixilation with your photo software. Pixilation is how grainy something looks, the closer you look the worse it is.

The pictures for digital cameras are not captured on a film but a tiny device called an image sensor. The sensor that we usually hear about is called a CCD or (charged coupled device, by Fuji Film). The newer cameras, of course, have better sensors and as time progresses companies come out with their own varieties of sensors to compete.

So there is my two cents worth. Honestly I hope this helps you to understand digital SLRs and digital cameras. As I have said before this may make things as clear as mud.