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Reprint

First Look: Fujitsu ScanSnap S300

By Joel P. Bruckenstein

It was only a few months ago (November 2007 *VON*) that I reviewed the Fujitsu ScanSnap S510 scanner, so you may be wondering what I'm doing back here writing about another Fujitsu ScanSnap scanner just three months later. Well, the short answer is that I consider the Fujitsu ScanSnap S300, the subject of today's review, to be a very different scanner than the previously reviewed S510; so different, in fact, that they are likely to appeal to totally different audiences.

The recently-introduced Fujitsu ScanSnap S300 mobile scanning solution is the world's smallest color, duplex automatic-document-feeder (ADF) scanner. With an ultra-compact footprint measuring 11.2" x 3.7" x 3.0" and weighing in at less than 3.1 pounds, the ScanSnap S300 scanner is small enough to fit in a briefcase or laptop bag, making it a compelling solution for the mobile planner or professional. Although it is small, Fujitsu manages to pack a lot of power and functionality into this mini scanner.



According to Conrad Foster, President of [CEO Image Systems](#), the nation's leading full-service provider of scanners to the financial service industry: "The new ScanSnap S300 mobile scanning solution offers the fastest "one-touch" conversion of paper documents into searchable Adobe portable document format (PDF) files available in the mobile scanning industry today."

The Fujitsu ScanSnap S300, like previous ScanSnap models we've tested, is a breeze to use. Simply load a stack of up to 10 documents into the ADF and press the "SCAN" button to produce searchable PDF files at speeds of up to eight pages per minute (ppm) for single-sided documents and 16 images per minute (ipm) for double-sided documents.

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While the scanner ships with an A/C adapter, it can also be powered solely from a USB connection (USB 2.0/USB 1.1), although in order to work this magic, two open USB ports are required. This ability to run the scanner even when no A/C power source is available means that the S310 is truly a mobile solution. Using an S300, advisors working virtually, as well as other road warriors, can scan paper documents, receipts, invoices and business cards anywhere they go.

With its 10-page automatic document feeder (ADF), the ScanSnap S300 scanner provides excellent color batch-scanning performance, faithfully reproducing both sides of a document in a single pass. Although this unit cannot match the speed or the highest resolutions of workgroup scanners, the speed and available scanning resolutions are more than adequate for typical business needs. The S300 provides dual 600dpi optical resolution ensuring the highest image quality possible in a compact, mobile device.

Users have their choice of scanning modes: Normal (150dpi color), Better (200dpi color), and Best (300dpi color). With automatic color detection, multi-page documents containing color, black and white, text and graphic information on both sides are processed with the touch of a button. Automatic blank-page detection and deletion capabilities allow the S300 to sense whether a page is blank and eliminate it from the scan if the user so desires.

Automatic image deskewing capabilities automatically sense when images are not aligned properly (i.e., skewed) and corrects the alignment automatically before presenting the final image to the user. Automatic paper-size detection sensors automatically analyze the document's page size and adjust the scanning interface accordingly. The ScanSnap S300 can identify up to nine different paper sizes from business cards to legal length. It can also be configured to support user-defined "custom" paper sizes.

The S300 includes an impressive software bundle. Fujitsu's ScanSnap Manager software provides a simple user interface that allows users to change settings, create searchable PDF files, choose paper sizes, modify image compression output, and control intelligent settings. It also offers some degree of document security: users can password-protect PDF files housed in the ScanSnap Manager.

In addition, there's the Fujitsu ScanSnap Organizer. This application provides for the viewing and control of scanned content, including thumbnails consisting of all the pages scanned within the batch. The package also includes CardMinder™, an application that transforms business cards into editable information. CardMinder™ can import contacts from external databases and export contacts to other contact managers such as Microsoft Outlook.

Finally, the bundle includes Scan for Microsoft SharePoint. If your firm uses Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, Microsoft SharePoint Portal 2003, or Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services 2.0 or 3.0, this application will allow you to automatically upload scans to your corporate SharePoint Server, so the information can immediately be shared and/or routed to others within your organization.

What's Hot?

I've long envisioned the day when technology would allow advisors to scan anywhere with ease. We've looked at handheld scanners, but they've entailed too many compromises for frequent users. In the past, I've had some favorable

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things to say about the Canon DR-2080C, because it did offer a combination of portability and functionality unavailable elsewhere at the time; but it, too, entailed compromises.

The Fujitsu ScanSnap S300 is the first portable scanner that I feel comfortable recommending without reservation. It is small enough and light enough that you really can carry it around with you. While not blazing fast, it should be more than sufficient to handle light to moderate jobs while on the road.

The ScanSnap software interface offers a number of sophisticated features like automatic color detection, blank page detection and deletion, automatic page orientation, automatic page size detection and automatic deskewing. In addition, you get the ScanSnap Organizer. This software is not a full-fledged professional document management system, but it is sufficient for storing scans while traveling. The package includes the CardMinder software package too. This allows you to scan and edit business cards, then export the results to MS Outlook. For users within larger or more tech-savvy organizations, the ability to interface with SharePoint servers is a nice plus. At a retail price of \$295, the Fujitsu ScanSnap S300 is priced to sell.

What's Not

While there is a great deal to like about this scanner, I can almost guarantee you that some people are going to purchase this scanner for the wrong purpose or for the wrong reasons, and they will be disappointed. We recommend the Fujitsu ScanSnap S300 as a *mobile scanning device only*. It is not a suitable alternative to the Fujitsu ScanSnap S510, and it is certainly not in the same class as the Fujitsu fi-5120C.

The S300 is rated at speeds of 8ppm simplex, 16ipm duplex. By comparison, the ScanSnap S510 is rated at 18ppm/36ipm, while the fi-5120C is rated at 25ppm/50ipm. The ADF on the ScanSnap S300 is limited by its 10 page capacity. Both the ScanSnap S510 and the Fujitsu fi-5120C have 50 sheet capacity ADFs. Like the ScanSnap S510, the S300, unless specially configured, works exclusively with the ScanSnap scanning interface. It does not support ISIS or TWAIN drivers as the fi-5120C does.

The inability to interface with industry standard drivers should not be a problem if you use this scanner strictly as a mobile device in conjunction with the provided software, but it will be a problem if you want to use it in the office with just about any full-fledged document management system (with the possible exception of some CEO Image software products). But that's not all.

The primary reason we love Fujitsu scanners is their reliability and durability, but those attributes have their limits. In order to get the reliability we've come to expect, you have to purchase a scanner with an appropriate duty cycle to match your needs. The fi-5120C, which we use as a benchmark, is rated at 2,000 pages per day. Fujitsu does not publish recommended duty cycles for the ScanSnap line, but unofficially I've been told that a reasonable expectation for the S510 is 250 pages per day, and for the S300, the number is 100 pages per day. So, based upon duty cycles, the 5120C can comfortably process eight times the workload the S510 can, and 20 times the workload the S300 can. Unless you have extremely limited scanning needs, the ScanSnap is not going to serve you well as a primary office scanner.

The CardMinder software is good, but not great. It seems to work best with tradi-

tionally laid out business cards that are not too “busy.” Those that have non-traditional layouts, or that try to jam too much information onto the card, sometimes confuse the software.

While not a major point, we are somewhat disappointed with Fujitsu’s lack of imagination when naming this product. The “Mini,” the “Munchkin” or even the “Portable” sure would have trumped the “S300” as a moniker, but as long as it performs as expected, I can live with the dull name.

Bottom Line

I’ve just started using this portable device in conjunction with my laptop, and so far I’m loving it. This is the first scanner I’ve ever been tempted to take with me just about everywhere my laptop goes! Only time will tell if this machine can hold up to the rigors of every-day use and abuse, but given Fujitsu’s track record, they deserve the benefit of the doubt.

Apple fans will be happy to hear that Fujitsu plans the release a Mac version of this scanner, the ScanSnap S300M, on March 15. The Mac version will include a different software bundle and will offer some different functions, but the core functionality should be the same, as should the list price. If you’re thinking about purchasing a new MacBook Air, just keep in mind that it only has a single USB port (you can add ports with the purchase of a port replicator, which may or may not power the S300M without A/C power).

Judged strictly as a portable scanner, this is the best of its class I’ve ever seen. It is small and it is light, but it is capable of excellent scans and it has a number of advanced processing features. At less than \$300, we think that every reader who strays from the office should have one. If your firm has a sales force, employees who attend trade shows, advisors who offer seminars, etc., this device is a “must!”

That does not mean, however, that we recommend this device as a primary office scanner; we do not. Most small offices will find the Fujitsu fi-5120C offers the best price/performance ratio. For mobile scanning, and mobile scanning only, we are awarding the Fujitsu ScanSnap S300 our coveted “Best Buy” rating. If you use it as we recommend, we think it will love it as much as we do!

If You Buy a Fujitsu ScanSnap S300...

If you are thinking about purchasing a Fujitsu ScanSnap S300, we have two important tips to offer you. First, be sure to install the ScanSnap software on your computer **before** you connect the scanner to your computer. If you attach the scanner to your computer before the software is installed, your scanner will not operate properly. Second, as is the case when buying any Fujitsu scanner, we recommend you contact [Conrad Foster](#) at CEO Image Systems. We recommend CEO because they offer special pricing for VON readers, they understand the needs of advisors, and because our readers continue to praise the service that CEO provides.

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