EDITOR RATING

VERY GOOD

Canon DR-2050C

BY M. DAVID STONE

The Canon DR-2050C ($675 street) is an affordable document scanner designed for small offices and workgroups. It offers reasonably fast scans and impressively fast recognition for scanning and saving in searchable PDF format, but a few small shortcomings—unclear setup instructions and a lack of document-management software—keep it from being an Editors' Choice. The DR-2050C's software bundle also lacks an indexing program.

The driver supports both ISIS and Twain standards, which means the device will work with almost any scanning software. The scanner also supports VRS (Virtual ReScan), a widely used program for digitally enhancing the image quality of scans.

The unit is both small and lightweight, at 7.7 by 11.9 by 3.9 inches (HWD) and 5.0 pounds. To set it up, you simply install the feed roller, find a free spot on your desk, and plug in the USB cable and power cord. Strangely, although the scanner needs the feed roller to work, the setup instructions make it sound optional. If you don't install it, however, you'll quickly find that the scanner won't feed paper.

Surprisingly, the package lacks the usual automated installation routine for its software. You must run separate installers for the ISIS and Twain driver, Canon's CapturePerfect 3.0 scan program, Adobe Acrobat Standard 7.0, and OmniPage SE (a light version of our current Editors' Choice for optical character recognition). Also, the manual doesn't mention OmniPage SE and gives only passing mention to Acrobat. While Acrobat comes on a separate disc, so it's hard to overlook, if you don't notice the OmniPage folder on the CD, you might never realize the program is included.
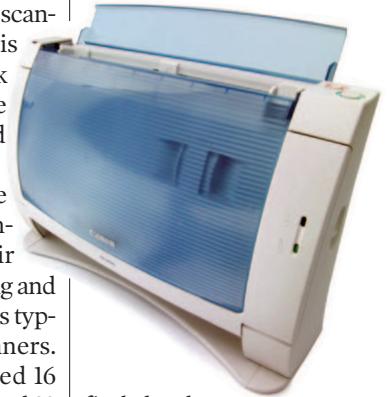
Looking at raw scan speed in default mode, the DR-2050C is far from the fastest document scanner in its price class. The less expensive Fujitsu ScanSnap fi-5110EOX2, for example, has a claimed scan rate of 15 pages per minute (ppm) when doing simplex scanning (one side of each page) in black and white at the default 300 pixels per inch (ppi). For duplex scanning it's rated at 30 images per minute (ipm). The DR-2050C is rated at only 11 ppm and 20 ipm at the same settings. The only other scanners we've seen in this price range—the Kodak i30 and Visioneer Strobe XP 450—are both limited to simplex scanning.

On our tests, both the Canon and Fujitsu scanners came close to their rated speeds for scanning and saving to image files, as is typical for document scanners. The ScanSnap managed 16 ppm for simplex scans and 32 ipm for duplex scans. The DR-2050C hit 11 ppm for simplex and 22 ipm for duplex.

But the DR-2050C shines when recognizing text and saving is in a searchable PDF format—a more common need in the real world—leaving the competition in the dust. On our 25-sheet duplex test document, the ScanSnap adds a substantial 6 minutes 2 seconds for OCR, for a total of 7:37 including the scan time. Amazingly, the DR-2050C takes no longer with recognition than without it—scanning, recognizing, and saving the searchable PDF file in just 2:13.

To turn the DR-2050C into a full-fledged document-management solution, you'll want to be able to index and find the documents after you've scanned and recognized them. To do so, you'll have to buy a separate document-management program, like ScanSoft's PaperPort, or an indexing program, like X1 Technologies' X1 Desktop Search. Even with that extra cost, though, the DR-2050C is an impressive value and well worth the price.

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BOTTOM LINE: The Canon DR-2050C is the fastest scanner in its price class for scanning, recognizing text, and saving files in a searchable PDF format.

PROS: Extraordinary speed in its price class for scanning and recognizing text. Driver supports both ISIS and Twain to work with virtually any scan software.

CONS: No document-management program or indexing program included. Unclear installation instructions.

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