

Apple Color OneScanner

It's 6:30 on Friday night. I'd just gotten off the phone with the sales person at the computer catalog. Because the Color OneScanner 600/27 had just been released, it took several minutes to convince them that Apple did have a new scanner, and that they probably did have it in stock.

I was already running late for a client meeting, which left no time to brow-beat or cajole about not having a fax machine or copier—these being two of the reasons I was purchasing the scanner—to send them a copy of the inside cover of the original manual for the software upgrade I wanted to order at the same time.

My consolation in all this was that by late morning Saturday, when my new Apple Color OneScanner should arrive, my problems with making a copy and faxing a document not already on my hard drive would be solved. And, the client who I was meeting with had a fax machine and copier at home that I could use before our meeting to satisfy the voracious appetite of the phantom monster in the “upgrade department.”

Awaiting the delivery of my new scanner brought back memories. The last time I had a flatbed scanner hooked into my computer system, the Quadra 700 was a hot new machine. Adobe, with the release of Photoshop 2.0, was fast becoming known for more than PostScript and hundreds of esoteric fonts, and the word “interpolation” was being added to our computer-related vocabularies.

As the managing partner of a small graphic design firm, it was also a time in which many of us learned about SCSI-chain problems. Diagnosing a SCSI-chain problem back then was like fighting the proverbial octopus one tentacle at a time. You'd grab hold of one, while looking around and worrying where the other seven might be.

The thought of finding and fixing a SCSI-chain problem was on par with the thought of your neighbor asking you to help repaint their bathroom ceiling using a Q-tip; either task would be excruciatingly painful, keep you up all night, and cause you to not know the true result until daybreak (or your 123rd restart). But at least with the painting job you'd have company.

Having learned from that experience, and now with a solo consulting business, I was quite happy to keep my computer hardware at a healthy minimum. I also used a fax modem because I didn't want a fax machine in my home office, and because I used the same phone line both for faxing, and for accessing the internet.

However, the need to make an occasional copy, to fax something not already on my hard drive, or to have quality OCR was becoming much more than a rare occurrence. I was also in the process of putting together a few web pages, and I wanted the convenience of scanning my own graphics and photos. With this in mind, I ordered the Apple Color OneScanner 600/27.

My first surprise was the size. Although the dimensions were mentioned in the product description (16in. x 11 1/8in.) my mind was fixed on the days of old, when scanners were larger and more awkward to handle. The Apple Color OneScanner 600/27 fit nicely on the few available square inches I had remaining on my office desk.

Secondly, the SCSI hook-up to my external hard drive (cable not included) was as simple as plug and play. The SCSI ID selector is an easy-to-read dial; flood lights and a pin-head sized screwdriver are not required. In addition, the scanner comes equipped with switchable internal termination and a large and small SCSI connector allowing it to be placed anywhere in a SCSI-chain.

Installation of the Color OneScanner Dispatcher software and the Text Bridge 3.0A OCR software took very little time. From the moment I opened the box, set the cables, installed the software (all at a leisurely pace while fielding phone calls), to the moment I was ready to scan, was less than a half hour.

If I were looking for a high-end flatbed scanner for a small graphic design firm the Apple Color OneScanner 600/27 would not be my choice, but this scanner is not intended for that market nor does it have a high-end price. The street price of \$599.00, with an optional document feeder for \$399.00, is attractively competitive with other scanners offering the same 300 x 600 optical resolution (and up to 2400 dpi with "interpolation" or computer added density on color and gray scale images).

The Apple Color OneScanner 600/27 does not come bundled with Photoshop or Photoshop LE. However, it does come with Apple's basic photo manipulation tools as part of the Color OneScanner Dispatcher software. The software does include a Photoshop plug-in which allows you to scan images directly into applications that are compatible with Photoshop plug-ins.

Although not having a full version of Photoshop or at least Photoshop LE bundled with the scanner may be a disappointment to some potential buyers, the Dispatcher tools seem to be quite adequate for many photo-related tasks. As you will see in the illustration below, the Color OneScanner Dispatcher software also nicely organizes all of your scanner-related software in one easy-to-use panel. This menu also leaves room for adding other applications, such as fax modem software, for your convenience and ease of use.

Dispatcher's Interface

The Text Bridge 3.0A software, made by Xerox, is bundled with the scanner. I first tested it by scanning a document printed in medium blue ink, containing several different fonts and type sizes. To my pleasant surprise it recognized close to 100% of the characters on a very difficult page. I then opened the document in Microsoft Word 6.0.1, changed the fonts, and copied and pasted the data into PageMill. There was virtually no extraneous character residue, and the text conversions were seamless.

I then tested the scanner using a high quality color photo. The scanned image was very good, and the tools allowed for easy cropping and re-sizing. The software also allows you to save the images in the most common graphic file formats. For images and photos scanned from a printed source, the scans are accurate and good. However, due to the low resolution of most printed material, the ability to use Photoshop filters would be helpful.

I've now used the Apple Color OneScanner 600/27 for a variety of tasks, including scanning photos, color images, text for my web projects, client projects, and some things just for fun. I'm happy to say that the scanner meets or exceeds all of my original expectations. Plus, I'm now ready to feed the documentation hungry beasts in the "upgrade department."

In short, there is no SCSI Octopus to battle here, and setup won't take all night. If you still want to stay up, you can always help your neighbor paint. My advice there: be kind to yourself; forget the Q-tip and use a brush.

My advice here: be kind to yourself, too. If you're looking for a good color scanner, very good OCR, the functionality of an occasional personal copier, and also full use from your fax modem, all at an attractive price, this product is for you.

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More info: <http://product.info.apple.com/productinfo/datasheets/im/onescanner600.html>

Robert Paul Leitao is a regular columnist for ATPM, and reviews what he owns on the side. Follow his stories in "Apple, Kids & Attitude" every month!