



# CANON DR-1210C

By M. David Stone

**I**t's not often that I sit down with a product to test and keep saying things like, "Wow, they got that right, too." But the Canon DR-1210C (\$400 street) is that kind of product. It earns the "wow" not just because it does an extraordinarily good job of things that almost every other document scanner does badly. For instance, it lets you choose a type of scan from a descriptive name instead of an arbitrary number. It delivers the extra flourishes despite being one of the least expensive flatbed document scanners available—it's truly affordable for a home office, small office, or for use as a personal scanner in a larger office.

Most document scanners at any price are strictly sheet-fed. This is because the vast majority of documents that offices need to scan into electronic format consist of stacks of individual sheets of paper. Having a flatbed can be useful, however, if you need to scan books, magazines, or other originals that can't go through a sheet feeder. And small-office or personal users are more likely to need to scan those kinds of originals, as well as needing to scan to e-mail or to fax.

Setting up the DR-1210C is simple. Install the software using the automated installation routine, plug in a USB cable and power cord, and let Microsoft Windows recognize the scanner. The software includes OmniPage SE version 4 for optical character recognition; Presto BizCard 5 SE for business cards; Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Standard; Canon's CapturePerfect 3.0 scan utility, which can scan and save to an assortment of formats, including searchable PDF for example; and a combined Twain and ISIS driver, which will let you scan using nearly any Windows software with a scan command.

Not so incidentally, at 6.5 by 18.5 by 15.0 inches (HWD), the DR-1210C has nearly as small a footprint as you could hope for in a flatbed scanner. It weighs only 13.5 pounds. It's designed to sit in landscape orientation relative to your position when you're facing it, with the front panel on one of the long sides, and the lid hinged so it opens front to back. The input tray for the 35-page automatic document feeder in the lid folds over—and acts as a dust cover—when you're not using it.

Canon deserves kudos for how easy it has made scanning from the DR-1210C's front panel. The control software that runs on your computer lets you define up to 50 different types of jobs, with each definition specifying a file type (including image PDF, searchable PDF, BMP, TIFF, and JPG) as well as specifying settings in the Twain driver for things like resolution and color mode. Those 50 definitions are roughly five times as many as you can create with most document scanner software. And that's the least of it.

The software also lets you give meaningful names to each of the definitions, with up to 40 characters in each name. When you're ready to scan, you can then scroll through the names on the front-panel LCD menu to find the right job type before pressing the scan button. I've often complained in reviews that scanners should do precisely this,



but I've never seen another that does, not even an Editors' Choice winner such as the Xerox DocuMate 152. The standard approach is to assign a number to each definition and leave it to you either to memorize which numbers go with which definitions, or (more likely) to maintain a cheat sheet.

Canon also goes one step further and lets you assign any of the definitions—presumably the ones you use most often—to any of five front-panel buttons labeled A, B, C, D, and E. Press a button, and the text for that definition shows in the LCD, so you can confirm it before hitting the scan button.

The DR-1210C offers a maximum optical resolution of 600 pixels per inch, which is typical for document scanners.

It's rated at a relatively slow 12 pages per minute. In our tests, scanning our standard 25-page text document using the scanner's default settings of 300 ppi and black-and-white mode, the DR-1210C was just a touch slower than its claimed speed, at 11.4 ppm for scanning to a PDF image file.

Fortunately, raw scan speed isn't the whole story. The DR-1210C is much faster at scanning and recognizing text than you would expect, because scanning to a searchable PDF format with CapturePerfect takes virtually the same time as scanning to an image file—2 minutes 16 seconds compared with 2:12. The Documate 152 took roughly three times as long to scan to a searchable PDF file as it took for an image file.

The DR-1210C also did well on our OCR test. The combination of scanner and OmniPage SE read both our Times New Roman and Arial test pages at sizes as small as 6 points without a mistake. Few scanners do as well with either font, much less both.

The one thing the DR-1210C didn't handle well was our business card test. The ADF won't feed cards, which means you have to lay them out on the flatbed. The scanner partly makes up for that by letting you scan up to ten at a time, but you have to be careful to place them far enough apart for the software to see each one as a separate card. Unfortunately, the software doesn't do a good job of recognizing the information on the cards. I saw one or more mistakes on more than half of the cards in our

test set, which is simply an unacceptable number of errors.

Except for the problem with business cards, Canon has done a remarkable job with the DR-1210C. CapturePerfect 3.0 even lets you encrypt PDF files after scanning. The one serious shortcoming—that it scans only in simplex mode (one side of a page)—is also largely responsible for the low price. Ideally, Canon should make up for that with software that would let you turn the stack of pages over to scan the other side and then automatically integrate the pages from the two scans. Without that option, you can rule out this scanner unless you almost never need to duplex. But if simplex scanning is all you need, the DR-1210C is a terrific choice for the price.