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NewerTech Voyager Q
Hard drive docking station
★★★★
Easy, connects to nearly everything
Only works with SATA drives
US\$89.99 (about \$110) + shipping
NewerTech
Other World Computing
Dave Bullard
www.macsales.com/voyager



Toast of the nation

This has to be the easiest way we've ever seen to read or write data to a bare hard disk. There's no fiddling with installation or cases – you just plug your drive into this 'toaster's top-loading slot, hit the power button and do your thing. When you've finished, a lever pops up your 2.5in or 3.5in Serial ATA drive.

We're always advocating regular backups, and this is a great tool for that. Slip in a drive, back up to it, then store that one offsite while you regularly back up to another disk. Then swap them around and do it again.

Or use it if you regularly have to swap drives for any other reason, such as systems management, data recovery and the like. It also means you can use those old hard drives you have lying around, instead of buying new external drives or mounting them in new cases.

As NewerTech says, "Now you can think of bare SATA drives with the same convenience and instant access benefits as flash memory cards ... but with huge gains in storage capacity."

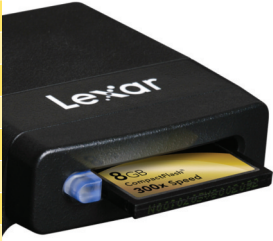
OWC sent us a Hitachi Deskstar 7K1000.B 1-terabyte hard drive to test with the Voyager Q, and it worked like a dream. Fast, easy, reliable, quiet (there's no fan), cool ... it ticks all the boxes.

The powered dock connects to your Mac via a USB 2.0/1.1 port, two FireWire 800 ports or a FireWire 400 port. There's also an eSATA port if your Mac Pro has connectivity through something like RocketRAID's eSATA for Mac controller. All cables are included.

The Deskstar drive is available as a bundle with the Voyager Q for US\$169.99 (about \$210) plus shipping, and other bundles of up to 2TB are available. If you don't need all the connectivity options, the Voyager is also available in a cheaper USB 2.0 + eSATA model.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. The NewerTech Voyager Q is one of those incredibly simple yet effective products that are a pleasure to use. There's no messing about, it has no extra, unneeded features and it's proved very reliable. And the 'toaster' design is witty. 🍞

Lexar RW034
UDMA FireWire 800 CF card reader
★★★★½
Fast transfers
None of concern
\$117.65
Lexar
Lexar
Chris Oaten
www.lexar.com/au



Speed reader

Memory card capacities keep getting larger and the data they carry is, like a gas, entirely capable of expanding to fill the available space. As a user of Canon's 5D Mk II, which generates RAW images of 26MB each, I'm acutely aware of the need for larger cards.

Just as important, however, is the need to read data from any of my CompactFlash cards at a faster rate. This is important because the need to turn a card around for a fresh take is vital.

The solution for location shooters is a simple one. The fastest portable data transfer device on offer is a FireWire 800 card reader.

Lexar's reader allowed the transfer of 1.32GB of image data from a 300x UDMA (Ultra Direct Memory Access) card in 36 seconds. From an 80x non-UDMA card, the same transfer took a little more than a minute longer. For a point of comparison, the same transfer from a USB 2.0 card reader took two minutes, 34 seconds.

Usability-wise, the Lexar reader has no objectionable qualities. It's such a purely utilitarian device that styling and handling is largely irrelevant. A clear benefit for photographers (or their assistants) with time-critical shoots on their hands – such as would be the case at a major sporting event – is the ability to daisy-chain the Lexar reader, providing the ability to import from up to four readers at once.

The only issue I can register with this device is that, occasionally, transfers would pause for up to 15 seconds. Why? Given the randomness and low frequency of the event (thrice over the course of two weeks) it's hard to say, but in the final telling an inconsequential one.

Australian Macworld's buying advice. If you have a need for speedy transfers from a CompactFlash card, this reader will get the job done, but for best results you should match it with a UDMA card. Even if you don't yet have UDMA cards, you will still enjoy faster data transfers if you are currently using a USB 2.0 reader. 📷