TOP 10 DIGITAL PROJECTORS & FLATBED SCANNERS

Digital projectors		Brightness (Ansi lumens)	Lamp life (hours)	Lamp power (Watts)	Replacement bulb	Weight	Maximum resolution	Dimensions (wxdxh)
1 NEC LT260 0845 404 020 www.nec.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £2,999 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Dec 02	2,100	1,500	220W	£298	2.9kg	1,024x768	260x275x92mm
		The LT260 is the new benchmark for image quality. Thanks to DLP (digital light processing) technology, a high brightness rating of 2,100 Ansi lumens and the fantastic 1,300:1 contrast ratio the picture is sharp and focused. NEC has also built in 802.11b wireless networking support to this 2.9kg unit.						
2 Toshiba TLP-561 08704 423 433 www.projectors.toshiba.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	• £2,550 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Dec 02	1,300	2,000	150W	£300	3.9kg	1,024x768	260x352x96mm
		Toshiba's TLP-561, which is based on old-fashioned LCD technology, is user friendly and the onboard help system guides you through the entire process of optimising the image. The contrast ratio may be a meagre 400:1, but the 1,300 Ansi lumens brightness rating is enough for most environments.						
3 Sharp PG-M25X 0800 262 958 www.sharp.co.uk LAST MONTH 3	• £3,675 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Nov 02	1,900	2,000	210W	£275	2.6kg	1,024x768	223x318x83mm
		The Sharp PG-M25X offers cutting-edge features, but at a price. Its brightness rating of 1,900 Ansi lumens ensures that images can be seen in virtually all light conditions. The DLP technology boasts the most up-to-date refinements and the 1,000:1 contrast ratio promises fantastic depth of colour.						
4 Optoma EP753 01923 691 800 www.optoma.co.uk LAST MONTH 4	• £2,295 ex VAT • 3-year warranty • First review Sep 02	1,600	2,000	200W	£289	2.9kg	1,024x768	277x225x85mm
		The EP753 will perform well thanks to its 1,600 Ansi lumens rating, while the 600:1 contrast ratio and smooth DLP (digital light processing) technology results in fantastic image quality. It might not have the big screen capabilities of the Toshiba, but if you want fine performance this device is an excellent choice.						
5 Dell 3100MP 0870 907 3304 www.dell.co.uk LAST MONTH 5	• £1,999 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Nov 02	1,000	1,000	130W	£289	1.6kg	1,024x768	176x225x56mm
		The 3100MP is attractive and light at just 1.6kg. Surprisingly for a DLP (digital light processing) model its contrast ratio is 280:1, although 1,000 Ansi lumens is adequate for all but broad daylight. The colour scheme isn't the richest in the chart, but there's enough subtlety for most applications and DVD movies.						

Flatbed scanners		Maximum scanning area	Interface connection	Supported operating systems	True colour depth	Graphics and optical character recognition software
1 Canon CanoScan D1250U2 08705 143 723 www.canon.co.uk LAST MONTH 1	• £75 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Aug 02	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1 and USB 2.0	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	ArcSoft PhotoStudio, ScanSoft OmniPage Pro
		The D1250U2 keeps the top slot due to its excellent image quality and speedy USB 2.0 interface. Benefitting from the faster data transfer rates offered by USB 2.0 it cut scanning times by over a third. The software package is generous and setup is simple. A worthy Best Buy.				
2 Umax Astra 4500 0870 906 4400 www.umax.co.uk LAST MONTH 2	• £68 ex VAT • 2-year warranty • First review Aug 02	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	MGI PhotoSuite SE, TextBridge 2.0 SE
		The Astra makes the most of its older USB 1.1 technology and while it can't match the Canon's speed it proved competent elsewhere. Its good software bundle, relatively fast scanning and low price allow it to hold on to its Recommended award.				
3 Visioneer OneTouch 8700 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com LAST MONTH 3	• £83 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Jan 02	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	MGI PhotoSuite, Paperport Deluxe, TextBridge Pro
		Visioneer's OneTouch 8700 remains our number-three flatbed scanner. Couple the optical resolution of 1,200x4,800dpi (dots per inch) with 48bit colour depth and you get crystal-clear quality and speedy delivery. It isn't the daintiest of scanners, but its landscape shape makes it easy to house.				
4 HP Scanjet 4400 08705 474 747 www.scanjet.hp.com LAST MONTH 4	• £78 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Aug 02	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1 or parallel	95/98/Me/NT/ 2000/XP	48bit	ArcSoft PhotoImpression, HP PrecisionScan Pro
		The Scanjet may not be the fastest scanner around, but if you're prepared to wait the results won't disappoint. Scanning a colour photo at 300dpi (dots per inch) took 27 seconds, but upping the resolution to 600dpi added an extra minute. Setup was simple thanks to the quick-start sheet.				
5 Visioneer OneTouch 8920 01483 445 480 www.visioneer-europe.com LAST MONTH 5	• £127 ex VAT • 1-year warranty • First review Aug 02	A4 (216x297mm)	USB 1.1	98/Me/2000/XP	48bit	Adobe Photoshop Elements, TextBridge Pro
		If you're interested in scanning transparencies and negatives then the Visioneer's built-in transparency adapter makes it the ideal model for you. The 8920 held its ground admirably in terms of scanning speed and comes with good software support.				

Buying advice: scanners

Professional scanners can cost thousands, but for home and small business needs you won't need to spend more than £200. Optical resolution is a measure of what a scanner's hardware can achieve; 600x1,200dpi (dots per inch) is widely available but some high-end scanners boast resolutions in excess of 1,200x2,400dpi. Higher resolutions use more pixels to give a greater level of detail, but remember that the higher the resolution the more disk space you'll use. Colour depth indicates the amount of distinct colours that can be recognised – it's best to opt for 48bit colour.

Scanners generally come with all the necessary software, although you're likely to get Lite versions. OCR (optical character recognition) software scans printed text and translates it into documents you can edit. In terms of photo-editing software, Adobe's Photoshop Elements is one of the best packages.

USB 1.1 is the standard interface for scanners. FireWire units are available and USB 2.0 is the quickest option, but unless your PC has these ports you'll need to buy specialist cards.