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NewSoft WMS 200

J.V. Bolkan

Almost exactly a year ago, I reviewed the NewSoft WMS 100 Image (*L&L*, August 2007, p. 43), an adapter for providing wireless connectivity to standard projectors. I wasn't terribly impressed and my review made that clear. Therefore, I was a bit surprised when the company sent me the WMS 200 Video model for review.

I was also a bit surprised at how well the WMS 200 performed, especially when dealing with moderate-bandwidth video. I also liked the updated software, especially the ability to run the software directly from NewSoft's optional 512 MB USB flash drive (\$44.95).

Although I did appreciate the improvements and the higher bandwidth of the WMS 200, it is still essentially the same concept as its limited sibling. Rather than connecting your desktop or laptop to a projector physically, the WMS enables you to keep your computer anywhere in a classroom and send the display over standard Wi-Fi (IEEE b/g wireless). Basically, the WMS 200 is an upgrade to your projector.

The main drawback to sending your display data through your wireless network adapter rather than your VGA port is the necessity of dedicating your network card to the task. In other words, don't expect to browse the Web wirelessly and have it projected at the same time. Of course, presentations, locally stored video,



Installation is as simple as choosing your network card.

The WMS 200 control software lets you choose between presentation or video modes.

and virtually anything you normally show on your screen can easily be shown. To be fair, this isn't unique to the WMS 200; projectors with built-in wireless networking have the same limitation.

As with the WMS 100, physical setup of the WMS 200 couldn't have been much simpler. Connect a video cable (not included) between the device and the projector, plug it into a power outlet, and you're done. As mentioned, there is no real software installation with the flash drive—simply plug it into a USB port. I sent my first wireless video file from my desktop to the WMS 200/projector combo in less than 10 minutes, and the majority of that time was spent opening the box and glancing at the manual.

NewSoft's WMS3 FE runs on Windows 2000/XP systems. I didn't have the opportunity to try it on a Vista platform. Although the flash drive specifications mention Vista, the

WMS 200 specifications do not. The software is minimalist. On launch, it scans your computer for network adapters and lets you choose (the WMS 200 does support Ethernet wired connection as well as wireless). Next, it scans the wireless environment until it locates the device. Once a connection is established between computer and adapter, you get a six-button control panel. One button is the "presentation" mode, where your display is echoed on the projector. A second, almost identical button enables you to send video files directly to the projector. The third and fourth buttons are pause and stop. The final two are for setting configurations and updating the software online.

Video in MPEG 1/2/4 played seamlessly in realtime. I did send a huge HD high-bandwidth video at the WMS 200. Surprisingly, the video was watchable, even though it did stutter noticeably from numerous dropped frames. The presentation mode performed flawlessly.

At \$349, the WMS 200, coupled with a relatively inexpensive non-networked projector, can actually save you money compared to the price of a wireless-capable projector alone. The software is good, easy, and pretty bulletproof, and the device does everything it promises, performing on a par with dedicated wireless projectors.

NewSoft WMS 200 Video
\$349/\$44.95
<http://www.newsoftinc.com>

Panasonic PT-F200NTU

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Although Panasonic's PT-F200NTU is labeled as a "fixed installation" model, the \$4,499 LCD projector straddles the line and is well suited for moving around the classroom, or even between rooms. That could be important, especially if your school can't afford to put an F200NTU in every room—it's an awesome projector. Fortunately, Panasonic includes some built-in security, including a cable lock.

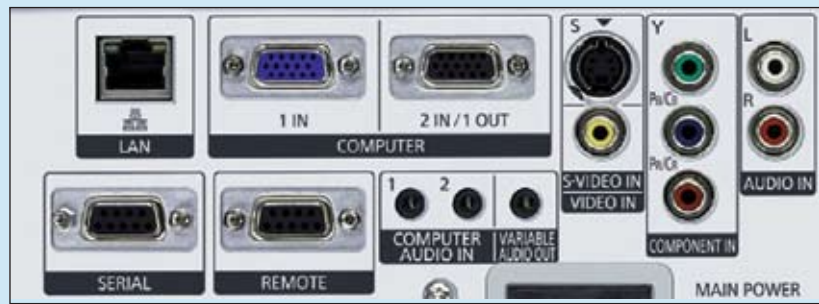
The F200NTU is a feature-laden projector with robust networking capabilities (Ethernet 10/100 and Wireless IEEE n802.11b/g), a powerfully bright lamp producing 3,500 lumens, and my favorite—a remote with an integrated laser pointer (perfect for presentations!). Of course, the projector has all the connection options and settings you'd expect from a mid-priced unit.

Although admittedly large for a "portable" projector, the F200NTU, at less than 14 lbs., can be moved around the classroom by almost any teacher. The flexible image controls (2X digital zoom, manual zoom, "blackboard" mode, and built-in ambient light sensor) make it very easy to get a great image even in ad hoc applications. Adding to the flexibility, the wireless capabilities are accessed through a Web browser, enabling up to 16 computer screens to be shown at once.

Less noticeable to the classroom, but certainly to be noticed by admin-



Panasonic's F200NTU delivers high-end features and performance at a mid-range price.



The flexible F200NTU can accept wireless, Web, and a plethora of hard input connections.

istrators and tech staff, the F200NTU has advanced filtering features and an extended-life bulb (5,000 hours). The filter material is actually a scroll, which advances a new section of filter automatically when needed. Bulb replacement can be done while the projector is installed. Replacement bulbs are less than \$500 from Panasonic.

I loved the performance of this projector. Beginning with a moderately bright room, the Oregon sun made a surprise visit midway through an evaluation. For most projectors I've reviewed, the image would have virtually disappeared, but the F200NTU

adjusted automatically and even in wash-out conditions, contrast was good. I also loved that the fan is relatively quiet and that I could turn off power and the unit's cooling fans continued until the bulb had cooled.

Panasonic PT-F200NTU

\$4,499

<http://www.panasonic.com>



J.V. Bolkan is the acquiring editor for ISTE's book publishing department. He has been reviewing and writing about multimedia and technology for more than 20 years.



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