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Biometric flash drive keeps data safe

The ThumbMax-Flash FP71 features a built-in swipe fingerprint authentication engine

By Ulrika Hedquist, Auckland | Friday, 13 April, 2007

Carrying around a little USB drive on your key ring has become very common among ICT professionals. I have even seen people comparing the looks of their USB drives.

I've got a few normal USB keys, so I was very excited when a biometric flash drive landed on my desk. The ThumbMax-Flash FP71 features a built-in swipe fingerprint authentication engine.

Once your fingerprint is registered using the sliding chip sensor all you have to do to access the data stored on the device is swipe your finger over the sensor. Ten fingerprints can be registered so you can enrol multiple users if you wish.

There is also a password function for protection of the data stored on the USB drive.

The application Carry it Easy Plus, which is pre-installed on the little storage device, allows you to keep your Internet Explorer favourites and Firefox bookmarks synchronised. You can also copy your Outlook Express data to the device, and keep your Microsoft Office Outlook data, Folders, Desktop and My Documents data synchronised. It also allows users to compress the data to save memory space. Sorry, there's no support for Lotus Notes.

A downside, for me is that the app won't let you save individual documents. So, if I wanted to save a draft for a story I would have to synchronise my whole My Documents folder, or create a new folder.

I usually use Google Docs to save, access and share documents. Similarly, you could just have your Outlook emails forwarded to Gmail to be able to access them from home or somewhere else — provided you have an internet connection, of course.



Carry it Easy Plus has a No Trace Browsing-option which lets you surf the internet with Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox without leaving a trace behind on the computer to which the portable storage device is connected. All the temporary files, history and cookies will be redirected and saved to the USB drive and not to the computer. Deleting internet browsing history from the device, or computer, is an easy select-and-delete-process.

However, you could do this by simply downloading Firefox Portable, which lets users run the browser from any USB drive and which saves all the data to the USB key. Very handy if you are doing something you shouldn't be doing...

To sum up, the fingerprint scanner is awesome, but the rest of the features of the ThumbMax-Flash FP71 are not unique.

If you get stuck using the FP71 there is an online user manual and also online support. The flash drive is available in New Zealand from RF Data Systems.

The recommended retail price for the 512MB device is \$99.90 and for the 1GB \$129.90 including GST. Prices for the 2GB and 4GB units could not be confirmed.

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