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Techworld Review

Overland Data NEO 2000

For UK Pricing, Sales and Support please contact:

Targetfour Limited. Imperial House, 8 Oaklands Park, Wokingham, Berks. RG41 2FD

Tel. 0118 936 4300 Fax. 0118 936 4329

Email. sales@targetfour.com Website: www.targetfour.com

Overland Data NEO 2000 High levels of performance and expansion

by Dave Mitchell

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Overland Data specialises in modular tape libraries and the NEO 2000 offers a range of unique features with some of the best expansion and fault tolerant features currently available. This solid 5U chassis has room for two tape drives and thirty media slots. Up to eight modules can be placed in a standard rack and configured to act as a single, virtual library. The NEO 2000 supports all the latest mid-range tape drives so you can choose between DLT, SDLT, LTO-1 and LTO-2. In fact, the review unit came with a single HP Ultrium 460 installed. Not only is this currently the fastest tape drive in its field but also it allows the library to offer an impressive total compressed capacity of 12TB.

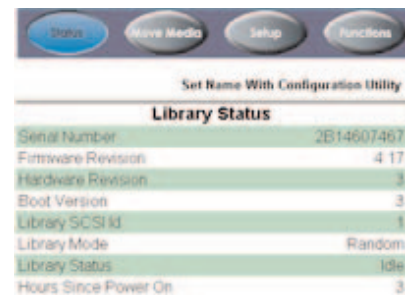
The chassis is extremely well built and divided internally into three sections. With the pair of fifteen slot magazines on each side the robotics arm is free to move up the centre. A mail slot is also provided on the left hand magazine to allow tapes to be loaded or extracted from the library without removing the entire magazine.

Hot swappable

Note that due to the size of the SDLT cartridges, only twenty-six slots are available in this configuration. Up to two tape drives can be fitted and these are located at the rear of the library. Fault tolerance is high on the agenda as the library uses Overland's DRA (Distributed Robotic Architecture). This delivers high levels of reliability and fault tolerance as the drives, power supplies and robotics are all hot swappable.

The master controller features a fail-over mode which allows another unit in a multi-module library to take over these functions should the primary unit fail. A slick touch screen LCD panel sits in between the metal magazine doors and provides full access for manual control. From it, you can select SCSI IDs for the loader arm and the drives, choose a tape slot and load it into a drive, run diagnostics and monitor the library status.

List Price:
Single LTO-2 drive, £9,985 ex VAT. Two LTO-2 drives, £14,975 ex. VAT.
Made by:
Overland Storage www.overlandstorage.com 0118 989 8000
Distributor:
Overland Storage
Pros:
What more can you ask for? Huge storage capacity, high levels of expansion, excellent fault tolerance, good remote management - the NEO 2000 has it all.
Cons:
It's a well publicised fact that storage demands on medium-to-enterprise level networks are increasing exponentially so you don't need a crystal ball when purchasing an automated backup solution. The NEO 2000 is one of the more costly options but its expansion capabilities will pay dividends in later years.



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Management facilities abound as Overland provides a simple NeoCentre utility which accesses the library via a local serial port connection. This allows you to view and modify the same system parameters as provided by the front panel.

Staggering speed

Remote management is also available as the library comes with a simple 10BaseT network port and embedded HTTP server so it can be accessed via a web browser. The main status screen allows you to view both drives and magazines with graphics showing which slots are occupied. Plenty of status information is on offer and you can view basic details about the drives and library, see cleaning and tape cartridge information and physical drive status. Media can be moved simply by selecting a source and destination slot, or drive, and full access to all configuration parameters is provided. From here you can set up reserved slots or features such as the mail slot and auto clean modes, configure the bar code reader or set SCSI ID's and activate support for HP's TapeAlert. Error notification is also good as the library can send out SNMP traps and e-mail messages to four different addresses.

Installation should be simple but Overland supplied the unit with the SCSI IDs for the tape drives and medium changer in the incorrect order. As a result all the backup products failed to see the library and slots. With this rectified we had no problems with Veritas Backup Exec for Windows Servers 9, Computer Associates ARCserve for Windows 9, Dantz Retrospect 6.5 and BakBone NetVault 7 all recognising the library and all thirty slots correctly. With the LTO-2 drive in the background performance was particularly impressive. On our Windows Server 2003 test system, the drive delivered a staggering best backup speed of 1,860Mbytes per minute under ARCserve.

The NEO 2000 looks an ideal choice for enterprise networks or large workgroups looking for high levels of backup storage, plenty of room to expand with demand and support for the latest high performance drives. The price may be high but build quality is exemplary. Virtually all key components are hot-swappable and expansion options also extend to a fibre channel module allowing the library to integrate neatly into storage area networks.

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