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# SEPATON<sup>®</sup> S2100<sup>®</sup>

## OVERALL RATINGS

<b>Installation</b>		Installation couldn't be simpler
<b>Manageability/Configuration</b>		Management is as simple as the installation
<b>Operation/Functionality</b>		We had no problem with any of the product's functions, but the unit lacks some functionality of other VTLs
<b>Recoverability</b>		Recovery is simple for anyone familiar with tape operating procedures
<b>Problem Resolution and Support</b>		SEPATON checked in on our installation, but it wasn't really necessary.
<b>Interoperability</b>		No backend tape library means data must be moved twice but simplifies operation. SEPATON has the added plus of an inquiry string recognized by Symantec NetBackup.
<b>User Level</b>		Suitable for entry-level storage administrators
<b>List Price as Tested</b>	\$44,800	

Scale: 1 flame = poor; 2 flames = fair; 3 flames = satisfactory; 4 flames = very good; 5 flames = excellent

User level: ● = novice; ■ = intermediate; ◆ = advanced; ◆◆ = experts only

## PRODUCT SUMMARY

It's hard to imagine a virtual tape library (VTL) that is easier to use than the S2100. The SEPATON S2100 Series 400 unit can be installed and configured in less than an hour, excluding time needed to rack the unit. Entry level IT personnel are unlikely to have difficulty implementing and managing this unit, and it may be a good solution for remote locations and branch offices where IT professionals are not always available. SEPATON can sell the unit directly and with partners, integrators and other resellers.

The S2100 hardware configuration that we tested included a Dell server with Red Hat Linux, Engenio SATA-based storage arrays and a 24-port Dell Ethernet switch. The system uses a keyboard-video-mouse (K-V-M) installation sequence for local systems but also can be installed using an integrated lights out (iLO) feature or a S-series discovery tool for remote systems.

SEPATON conducted a pre-installation questionnaire and conference call with us to discuss our configuration. The system arrived fully installed and preconfigured, down to the IP addresses of our lab. Unfortunately, between the time of the conference call and system arrival, we had reconfigured our lab network environment and changed the IP addresses. Nevertheless, reconfiguring the S2100 took only a few minutes. Although the reconfiguration was via command line interface, the documentation stepped us through the process.

Configuring the virtual library, tape drives and media is intuitive and simple. In fact, the temptation is to make assumptions and cut corners. SEPATON's documentation is generally thorough, and users will actually save time by following the directions. SEPATON has a single integrated manual, and we found it easier to use than separate installation and user guides found with other systems.

Simple use usually means simpler functionality. This is true of the S-series. Some of the advanced functionality, such as hardware disk compression and backup integration found in other units, is not available in the S-series. But, we think SEPATON has correctly identified the key functionality that organizations will use most. This, though, is not to say that S-series does not have unique functionality.

### **About the Review**

*Diogenes Analytical Laboratories and SearchStorage.com teamed together to create disk-to-disk buyer's guidelines that help IT buyers differentiate between products and select the best candidates for their own situation. For this report, we took 13 different products into the lab and ran them through their paces. We compared products based on ease-of-use, manageability, features/functions and technical support systems. Our opinions are based on the experience of more than a decade of implementing and managing data protection systems.*

One of the more interesting features of the S-series is "Firesafe" tape 'vaulting.' This is not true vaulting in the sense that tapes (or even data) are migrated from the library. Instead, the virtual media is marked as vaulted and becomes unavailable to the backup software. This approach assures that the virtual media element cannot be overwritten. To retrieve the information, the Firesafe media simply is "imported" back into the library. As of press time, SEPATON had just introduced its DeltaStor de-duplication technology, so we were not able to test it with our system.

The S-series systems do not support directly

connected physical tape systems. "SEPATON" spelled backward, after all, is "no tapes". However, we believe that IT organizations will still back up to tape for a variety of reasons. To do so, they will direct one backup job to the S-series and then run a separate job to copy the data to physical tape for long-term retention and/or offsite vaulting. This architecture simplifies operation and assures that all backup/recovery (B/R) control is retained by the B/R application software. It will not be possible to get the backup catalog and the VTL unsynchronized as it is when the B/R software and VTL maintain their own catalogs. Of course, this means that data must be moved twice, but this will be a problem only in organizations whose backup servers near capacity. The issue can be resolved with a larger or additional backup server.

Day-to-day administration of the S-series virtual tape library is significantly less than a physical tape library. Obviously, physical media does not need to be moved. Furthermore, there is no need to coordinate barcodes between virtual and physical, because the B/R software will track and map the barcodes. Administrators mainly will need to assure that virtual media is expired at a rate sufficient to maintain disk-space equilibrium, and to generally assure that the unit does not run out of space. Administrators will also want to balance virtual tape drives across Fibre Channel ports to assure optimum throughput. SEPATON claims that in addition to simplicity the product can scale up to 1,000 TB, although the largest current installed configuration is 250 TB.

## DIFFERENTIATING FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

FEATURE/FUNCTION	DESCRIPTION
Simple Use	<p><i>This is the simplest VTL we have tested. Time from uncrating the unit to the first byte of backedup data was less than an hour. Because the unit is a VTL, users will have minimal (if any) modification of their existing operating environment. The product is designed to be fail-safe, and its architecture achieved that objective. System configuration is both easy and flexible.</i></p>
Comprehensive GUI	<p><i>Much of the unit's simplicity can be credited to the quality of the GUI. We found it to be intuitive with a help system that was not only useful but inclusive. The GUI has four major functional categories: identity, system, notification and help. The documentation is a single integrated manual (which we liked), but, we didn't use it much because of the quality and search ability of the help function. system.</i></p>
"Firesafe" media	<p><i>Media elements can be protected from overwriting by a virtual vaulting feature called Firesafe. Although this is not an additional layer of data protection (the data never leaves the virtual library,) it is a safeguard against operational errors.</i></p>
Scalability	<p><i>The same system can scale from entry level to hundreds of TB.</i></p>

## BUYER GUIDANCE

### ***Kudos:***

SEPATON has designed a system that will meet the preponderance of user needs wrapped in a simple-to-use package. After installation and media expiration policies are established, the unit will be largely “set and forget” with only occasional administrative effort. Documentation and the help assure that when users do have problems, they will be able to recover quickly. SEPATON’s support personnel seem competent, but we didn’t exactly stress them – the system was too easy.

### ***Caveat:***

Because the system is so easy to use, IT buyers should not expect the same level of functionality that more complex systems deliver. Specifically, the unit does not have non-redundant storage or hardware compression.

### ***Who should consider this product:***

IT organizations looking for VTL functionality usable even by entry level personnel will want to consider the S-series system. Because of its remote management capabilities, S-series is also a solid candidate for remote locations and branch offices.

## ABOUT DIOGENES ANALYTICAL LABORATORIES, INC

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