

Re: eSATA support

assuming the device itself has no problem with this capability. Again, AFAIK, SATA II hard drives meeting the 3 Gb/sec specification will support hot-swapping as long as the motherboard provides this capability.

Still another advantage of the eSATA port is that it supports the latest SATA 3 Gb/sec specification.

So you could connect a normal SATA HD to the eSATA port without the absolute necessity of containing that drive in any special enclosure. Theoretically you could plop it in a cigar box or even run the SATA data/signal cable directly to a bare drive. Not the most desirable thing to do for the average user, but it can be done. We generally set up our desktop computers with mobile racks (2) to contain our removable hard drives. It's a hardware arrangement that we strongly recommend for many desktop computer users. So we usually contain the "external" SATA drive in one of the removable trays that are also used in the mobile racks.

Now, what about the power to that SATA "external" drive? You simply use the power from your computer's power supply. There's absolutely no need for an external power supply. So that's another advantage of this eSATA device, yes? Unfortunately the rub here is that ASUS did not provide an external power connector alongside the eSATA port. Why they didn't do so is a complete mystery to us. Actually it's simple enough for a user to run a power cable from your PS to the external SATA drive, but it does mean that you have to snake it out probably through one of the slots on the backplane of the computer's case.

BTW, there's another device we came across that users may be interested in to connect an external SATA HD. It's called the SATAPOWPLAT1, manufactured or distributed by StarTech. It's available from <http://www.cwol.com> for about \$19 (incl shipping) – at least the last time I looked. buy.com shows it for much cheaper, but it's never in stock. I assume the device is also available from other online vendors.

This device is simply attached to the I/O bracket on the computer case's backplane. It comes with two external connectors – the SATA data connector and the 15-pin SATA power connector. Internally (the other side of its slot plate) is, of course, the SATA data connector and the normal 4-pin Molex power plug. So it's a simple matter to connect the device to one of the power leads of your PS. Why ASUS didn't use the same simple configuration with its eSATA connector is beyond me. Note that the SATA data connector on this SATAPOWPLAT1 device is a standard SATA data connector; it is not an eSATA connector.

As I previously mentioned, the eSATA port connects to a eSATA data connector cable. One of the sources for this type of cable (comes in 1 meter and 2 meter lengths) is <http://www.macgurus.com/productpages/sata/SATACables.php> Item MC39EX-AB

I guess it's also available from other sources. Unfortunately it's quite expensive for a SATA data cable (although it is shielded) – about \$25 for the 1 meter cable.

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I'm not aware of any motherboard manufacturer aside from ASUS that has equipped their latest motherboards with the eSATA port. If anyone has information about this I would like to hear about it. And I'm similarly not aware of any laptop/notebook computers that are equipped with this feature. And it would seem a most desirable feature to be incorporated in those latter machines, would it not?

It seems to me the eSATA port is the "wave of the future" that's here right now since it has the tremendous advantages of treating an "external" device as a normal internal device together with providing superior performance when compared with USB/Firewire external hard drives. I would think that more & more motherboards will come equipped with the eSATA port (as well as an external power connector port which the present ASUS motherboard lacks as noted above).

I trust this information will be useful to you and others who might be contemplating this type of device.

Anna

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