Akron-Summit County Public Library improves patron services, decreases costs with Equitrac.

Challenge
– Accurately track and charge patrons for printer use
– Alleviate staff time spent handling print jobs
– Offer secure printing to patrons
– Reduce waste from unwanted print jobs

Solution
– Equitrac Express Print Management with PrinterOn

Results
– Cost savings for taxpayers: usage has been more accurate, patrons aren't printing as many pages, less wear on machines
– Cut down on staff intervention with printing; no need to hire more staff
– Easy to manage
– More secure printing for patrons

Summary

The Akron-Summit County Public Library provides resources for learning and leisure, information services, meeting spaces, and programs for all ages that support, improve, and enrich individual, family, and community life. The library has 17 branches in addition to its main location in Akron, OH, and it works to stay on top of its patrons needs while still being cost-effective for taxpayers.

One of its challenges was ensuring that print costs didn't spiral out of control. As more patrons used library computers to conduct research, search for jobs, or complete personal paperwork, they would also need to print their work.

"We know that overall costs have gone down. Using Equitrac has lowered costs for paper and maintenance of our library printers."

Shawn Whetsel
Information Technology Manager
Akron-Summit County Public Library

The library attempted to have staff collect money from patrons to recoup the costs for paper and ink on desktop inkjet printers, but this not only took time away from staff to hand over print jobs but also resulted in patrons not claiming their print jobs to avoid the costs.

Additionally patrons were anxious about printing things like tax returns or job applications to shared printers. The library needed a system that could accurately track and charge for print usage, as well as reduce staff time spent on handling print jobs and offer peace of mind to patrons.

Solving cost and staffing issues
With the desktop inkjet printers, patrons would print large documents, then only claim one or two pages. But because the Akron-Summit County Public Library system is only charging enough to recoup costs, they were losing money by allowing patrons to print. Through its new MFP provider, the library heard about Equitrac® with PrinterOn and was immediately intrigued.

Equitrac was selected not only for its ease of use for patrons, but also for ease of management on the IT side as well as the overall price. "As a library, we're on a fixed budget," said Shawn Whetsel, Information Technology Manager for Akron-Summit County Public Library. "For a lot of decisions, it ultimately comes down to how much it costs, and Equitrac was competitive in price."

The setup would make sense from an IT standpoint: one centralized printer in each location for patrons to use, hooked up to a coin box for patrons to pay for their print jobs before receiving them. On the patron end, users would be presented with an Equitrac popup when they clicked Print. The user would then enter a pin code, select the pages to be printed, and have to click Accept. The patron would then have three hours to collect the print job by logging in with the same pin code to the

centralized printer and inserting payment before the printer would release the job.

"This solved an issue of cost, in that we were losing a lot of money," said Whetsel. Additionally, the staff could devote more time to helping patrons with other questions instead of policing the printer.

Patrons take charge of their own printing
Equitrac enables patrons to send print jobs to the shared library printer and only release the jobs when they're ready to pick them up. For users printing tax documents, pay stubs, and other confidential items, this means their sensitive information won't fall into the wrong hands and expose them to identity theft.

The onus is now on patrons to take responsibility for their print jobs as well. The popup window they're presented with at the start of their print experience is different from the typical gray Windows popup, which alerts them to the fact that this is something different than a standard function. It's user-friendly and easy for patrons to understand. At the printer, users can select and de-select print jobs they've already sent, thereby reducing the number of unwanted jobs printed. And if they have questions about how to only print one or two pages of a large document, the staff is more than happy to teach them how.

Allowing patrons to print from mobile devices
For the past two years, the Akron-Summit County Public Library has also been able to allow its patrons to print from their mobile devices, like tablets or even laptops. Equitrac with PrinterOn lets the library track and charge appropriately for patrons using library printers.

The library offers free Wi-Fi for patrons, and often patrons will purchase an inexpensive device so that they can take advantage of that benefit. To extend services to these patrons, Akron-Summit County Public Library installed PrinterOn, which sets up a printer port for patrons to use. Additionally, the library has enabled PrinterOn for remote patrons so that they can print to a library in their neighborhood and pick up their jobs. "This way, a small business with its printers down won't have to worry about a presentation, or a student with a malfunctioning printer can still pick up their documents," Whetsel said.

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