



## Meal Plan 6

# Print Management

*Restaurants always have to decide what costs to put on the bill and what costs to hide. For instance, most restaurants don't charge for bread and water, and they don't itemize the customer's share of the electricity or the heat. Also, the amount of the tip is left to the customer's discretion. In different ways, libraries face the same decisions. Do we charge for interlibrary loan? Do we charge overdue fines? And more to the point of this section, do we charge patrons for printing? If so, how much will you charge per page? How do you collect the money?*

This section discusses the tricky issue of whether or not you should charge for printing. It also walks through three approaches to print monitoring and collecting printing fees. Also covered are printing from laptops and the criteria to consider if you decide to buy print management software.

### TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

- To Charge or Not to Charge
- Print Management Software
- Do You Want to Let Patrons Print from Their Laptops?



## To Charge or Not to Charge

Deciding whether or not you should charge for printing and other services starts with the age-old library dilemma of cost recovery versus equal access. In these days of tight budgets, every dime matters; however, when it comes to charging for services, are we subtly discriminating against disadvantaged patrons? Furthermore, is it really cost effective to charge for printing? Paper and ink cartridges are expensive, especially if you have a color printer, but the cost of collecting all those dimes and quarters is also significant. You either have to pay for expensive printing stations (see below for more information), or you have to increase the workload on your staff as they collect the money for each print job and deliver the pages to each patron.

### FORMAL VS. INFORMAL PRINT MONITORING

If you have no restrictions at all, a patron could accidentally print *War and Peace* ten times and waste several reams of paper. To discourage this type of mistake, a lot of libraries put the “Print Preview” button on the Web browser toolbar and remove the “Print” button. When patrons see the Print Preview screen, they’ll realize how many pages they’re about to waste. This is easy to do with Public Web Browser (<http://www.teamsoftwaresolutions.com>). However, it may take a lot of research and hacking to accomplish this in other browsers such as Firefox, Internet Explorer 6 (IE6) or IE7.

If you decide you don’t want to monitor and charge, you can still ask patrons to observe an informal, unenforced limit on the number of pages they print each day. Posting this limit prominently might remind patrons that paper and ink cost money. Even more subtle would be a donation box set right next to the printer with a suggested contribution per page.



#### Printing Software Efficiencies

*“We also have a very nice PC Reservation software. And we’ve been using that in most of our locations for a good three years now. And also, we’ve been using print recovery software. For us, that happens to be provided by the same vendor, which is ITeam Access. And I just got this installed about a month ago, maybe two months ago, in the largest library. And they said, ‘Wow, I wish we’d done this before. We’ve recouped our money and actually made some, and we’ve only had this one month.’ So that was really nice to hear them say that.”*

*Rhonda Hawley  
Polk County Cooperative, FL*



### Notes from a Chef

#### Dollars and Sense

*“Our goal is to become a money-less library, so what we did is put donation boxes attached to the wall, and through the system a patron agrees to two things: that they will pay-for-print and that they will follow our Internet access policy at the library. Then they can get into the system, and all of that's done electronically. We charge 10 cents per page and it says what their charge is. When they press Print it will say ‘You are about to print four pages. Your charge will be 40 cents.’ This is all in the DiscoverStation software. They know that they have to put that in the pay-for-print box and that we do not give change. So nine out of ten people usually will go ahead and give us 50 cents or a dollar, and we're actually making more money with donations than we did when we were using staff time or trying to put it on their library account through the DiscoverStation systems.”*

*Phyllis Reed  
Ruidoso Town Public Library, NM*



### Notes from a Chef

#### The Pay-Before-You-Print Approach

*“The patron comes to the reference desk and lets us know what machine they're on. And they pay for their copies and we print them. This program has saved us tons of money because before we would have people print, let's say, 60 to 80 pages and only want two pages and didn't want the rest. And what do we do with that? And the printer was out in the public area. People could open the drawers. They could do whatever they wanted.”*

*Annie Adamson  
Caldwell Public Library, Caldwell, ID*

### HOW MUCH SHOULD YOU CHARGE PER PAGE?

There's no simple answer to this question. You first have to decide what costs you're trying to recover: Paper? Ink and toner cartridges? The printers themselves? The cost of print management software? The time that your staff puts into maintaining the printers and helping patrons? Most libraries aim to recover the cost of paper and toner cartridges and possibly the costs of the printers as well.

- It's not too hard to figure out the cost of one piece of paper. If 500 sheets costs you \$8, then each sheet costs roughly one and a half cents.
- Toner cartridges are usually rated in terms of how many pages they can print. If your black-and-white cartridge costs \$150 and it prints 12,000 pages, then the ink for a single page is costing you roughly one and a half cents.
- At the low end, you might charge \$.03 to \$.04 per page. On the high end, \$.10 per black and white page is probably the most you should charge.



## **SIMPLE PRINT MONITORING**

The simplest method for watching the printer and charging for copies is to simply place the printer behind the circulation desk and hold a patron's print job hostage until they walk up and pay the ransom. However, with this technique, you have no way of knowing which patron sent the document. If reams and reams start shooting out of the printer, you have to turn off the printer and stroll through the library until you figure out who sent it. You then have to cancel the rest of the print job from the printer itself or from the public computer.



## Print Management Software

If you have more than a handful of computers, you might look into print management and print server software. If you want the simplest of print servers, you can use some of the functionality built into Windows. However, there are also several more advanced software packages designed specifically for print monitoring. Some things to consider when you start shopping:

- Will the print release station be managed by staff, or will it be managed by the patrons themselves?
- **If patrons release the print jobs themselves, will you buy some sort of a vending machine to collect the money?** This approach is obviously easier on your staff, but vending stations are a significant investment. They can cost anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars.
- **What sorts of payment will the vending machine accept? Coins? Bills? Credit cards?** If you have lots of printers and copiers spread throughout the library, you might look into a vend-a-card solution (also known as a debit card solution). Patrons put money on a debit card, and they can then use this card at any printer or copier in the library.
- **Does it integrate with your ILS?** It may be possible to allow patrons to use their library card as a debit card if the print management system can talk with your ILS patron database. That way, they have one less card to keep track of.
- Can you configure your system so that patrons can add money to their account using a credit card and a Web form, and is this a feature you want?
- **Does the print management software come as part of a bundle?** Vendors such as EnvisionWare, Pharos and CybraryN often sell print management software as part of a package along with PC Reservation software, remote management software and other modules. This type of integration can sometimes offer added features, convenience and cost savings.
- Can you use an existing computer as the print release station, or do you need to buy a special piece of equipment from your vendor?
- Do you need to install software on every machine?
- **Can you set different prices for different printers?** You might charge \$.04 per black and white page and \$.20 per color page.
- Can you give patrons a certain number of free pages per day or per print job?
- Will it be easy for patrons to identify their print job when they get to the print release station?



## Do You Want to Let Patrons Print from Their Laptops?

Some libraries have decided that patrons just won't be able to print directly from their laptops. They can save to a floppy or a USB drive, wait in line for a wired computer and print from there. However, if you have enough money for an extra printer, below are three options for making it available to laptop users. In most cases, though, your patrons will have to download and install a driver or other printer software. Be sure to make instructions available.

**Buy a network printer** — If you have a network printer (i.e., one that hooks directly into your network via an Ethernet cable), you can plug it into one of the local area network (LAN) ports on your access point. Or, if the printer is too far away from the access point, you may be able to find a wireless adapter for that printer.

**Use an existing computer as a print server** — To do this, attach your printer to an old computer via the USB port (or the parallel port, if your printer is old). Then attach the computer to your access point with an Ethernet cable.

**Wireless print servers** — Instead of using an existing computer as your print server, you can buy a dedicated print server for \$60 to \$100. For more information on these devices, see the articles in the "Other Tasty Recipes" section.



### OTHER TASTY RECIPES

#### Vendors of Print Management Software:

- LPT:One  
EnvisionWare  
[http://www.envisionware.com/en/lpt\\_one](http://www.envisionware.com/en/lpt_one)
- Uniprint  
Pharos  
[http://pharos.com/Higher\\_Education/Uniprint.html](http://pharos.com/Higher_Education/Uniprint.html)
- Ninja Printing System (Open-Source)  
Columbia University  
<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/dev/projects/ninja/>
- Patron Computer Software Comparison Chart  
MaintainIT Project  
"Joy of Computing: A Cookbook for Small and Rural Libraries"  
<http://maintainitproject.org/cookbooks>. Pgs 41-43

#### Articles on Print Management

- Fee or Free? Printing from Public Workstations in the Library  
Computers in Libraries  
An in-depth discussion of the costs of printing and the overhead of charging patrons fees for printing.  
<http://home.sou.edu/~vidmar/articles/cilprint.htm>



- PC Reservation/Time Management and Print Management Software  
ALA Technotes  
This article provides a general overview of computer reservation and print management systems.  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/pla/plapubs/technotes/pcreservation.cfm>

### **Wireless Print Servers:**

- *Setting Up a Print Server for Your Wireless Home Network*  
*Dummies.com*  
A step-by-step guide to configuring a computer and printer so that others can share the printer too. Adapted from the book *Wireless Home Networking for Dummies*  
<http://www.dummies.com/WileyCDA/DummiesArticle/id-1910.html>
- Wireless Laptop Printer Connection  
WebJunction  
From the WebJunction discussion forums, a short exchange of messages on wireless printing.  
<http://www.webjunction.org/forums/thread.jspa?threadID=3828&tstart=0>



## Fast Food — Meal Plan 6 Summary

- The decision as to whether or not to charge for printing and other services starts with the age-old library dilemma of cost recovery versus equal access.
- At the low end, you might charge \$.03 to \$.04 per page. On the high end, \$.10 per black and white page is probably the most you should charge.
- If you have more than a handful of computers, you might look into print management and print server software.
- For the simplest of print servers, you can use functionality built into Windows. There are also more advanced software packages designed for print monitoring.

### MENU 4 CHECKLIST

- To control excessive printing and wasting pages, put the “Print Preview” button on the Web browser toolbar and remove the “Print” button.
- If you are asking patrons to observe an informal, unenforced limit on page printing:
  - Post the limit in a prominent spot.
  - Set a donation box next to the printer with a suggested contribution per page.
- Before you shop for print management and print server software, consider these questions:
  - Will the print release station be managed by staff or by the patrons?
  - If patrons release the print jobs, do you need vending machines to collect the money?
  - What sorts of payment will the vending machine accept?
  - Does the system integrate with your ILS?
  - Can your system be configured so that patrons can add money to their account using a credit card and a Web form?
  - Does the print management software come as part of a bundle?
  - Can you use an existing computer as the print release station, or do you need to buy a special piece of equipment from your vendor?
  - Do you need to install software on every machine?
  - Can you set different prices for different printers (color versus black and white)?
  - Can you give patrons a certain number of free pages per day or per print job?
  - Will patrons be able to easily identify their print job at the print release station?
- If you can afford an extra printer for a laptop, consider buying a network printer, using an existing computer as a print server or buying a dedicated wireless print server.