

# **Case Study: Print and Session Management Middlebury Public Library**

July 2005

## **Background**

Middlebury Public Library, located in Middlebury, CT, serves a community of 6,400 residents and introduced public Internet access at the library in 1997. The library has a staff of eight, including Brendan Gallagher, Technology Coordinator, who has responsibility for management of the library's eight public computers.

Library patrons are able to access the Internet from these computers, and also have access to Microsoft Word and Excel. Patrons print to a central printer which is directly attached to a library staff PC and then shared with all PCs on the network using Windows Print & File Sharing. The library charges patrons \$0.10 per page for printing.

## **Challenges**

Internet access at Middlebury quickly became one of the library's most heavily used services and by 2004 the PCs were used by at least 40 patrons per day. The growing popularity of the service had begun to stretch the resources of the staff and the costs associated with paper and printer ink waste were escalating.

During this period, Middlebury did not restrict patron access to the PCs in the library; while most patrons used the PCs infrequently, the library also developed a small number of extremely 'heavy users'. There were certain periods during the day when all of the library's PCs would be in use. During such times, library staff would ask patrons who had used the PCs for extended periods to 'finish what they were doing' so that others could use the PCs. Patrons complied but the requests were time consuming and sometimes awkward.

Although Middlebury charged patrons for printing, they did not restrict their printing capabilities from the PCs. Patrons had full access to printing and could print an unlimited number of pages before paying. The shared printer was located behind the reference desk, and patrons would first print and then come up to the reference desk to claim and pay for their print jobs. The system was straightforward, but patrons often appeared to print without realizing it or to forget that they had printed. Print-outs would appear on the printer without an apparent owner. Patrons were also reluctant to pay for blank pages in a document or for duplicate print-outs sent when hitting the print button twice by accident. The combination left Middlebury buried under an increasing volume of unclaimed and errant print-outs. Middlebury estimates that its printers generated roughly 50 pages of unclaimed activity per day.

The unclaimed and errant print-outs were a nuisance to library staff. It was never completely clear until the end of the day which print-outs would go unclaimed, so print jobs were often set aside, cluttering up valuable desk space. If library staff neglected to take time to separate the jobs, then finding legitimate print-outs from within piles of paper ultimately headed for the recycle bin became a time intensive task.

The cost of the wasted paper and printer ink alone was also considerable. By its own estimates, the cost of its unclaimed and errant print-outs totaled over \$50 in wasted paper and roughly \$20 in wasted ink each month.

Middlebury Public Library had investigated both time management and print control solutions available from traditional software vendors but those solutions were not a good fit for the library. All of the solutions they evaluated would have required several thousand dollars in up front software licenses and several thousands dollars in additional computer hardware, and it would have further strained their valuable IT resources in terms of both implementation and ongoing maintenance and support. Middlebury had resolved to continue with their current processes when they discovered Library Metricks.

## **Solution**

Unlike traditional solutions that Middlebury had evaluated, the Library Metricks service did not require the purchase of any additional computer hardware and it was available at an extremely affordable per PC annual subscription cost. In fact, the annual subscription was well below the library's threshold for discretionary spending and so did not require Board of Directors approval. In addition, the service was installed in a matter of minutes and did not require ongoing onsite technical resources.

Functionally, Library Metricks gave the library everything it needed. Library Metricks is compatible with their Dynix/Horizon automation system, so patrons simply used their existing patron codes to logon to the PCs. The library staff was able to easily configure session limits, grace periods and extend individual user sessions through the secure Library Metricks administrative site.

**“Library Metricks has been very easy to manage. There is no server to host or support and all the configuration and setup for our library rules was easily done through their website. I wish all of our software was that simple.”**

Brendan Gallagher, Technology Coordinator

In order to print, patrons now purchased prepaid print cards from the front desk and entered a unique print code from their PC to release print jobs to the shared library printer. This requirement literally eliminated the unclaimed and errant print-out problem as patrons were now forced to confirm the number of pages they wanted to print and to have paid for them in advance. Print buttons hit twice were no longer a problem as only one print job could be approved at a time. Erroneous print jobs were either explicitly cancelled by the user or simply ignored and in either case deleted from the print queue without having consumed either library resources or paper and ink.

**“Solving the wasted paper and ink problem was huge. Not only are we saving money because of it, but it has a positive impact on the environment. That feels good.”**

Brendan Gallagher, Technology Coordinator

## **Return on Investment Analysis**

Based on the cost of wasted paper and ink **alone**, the Library Metricks solution at Middlebury paid for itself in **less than 6 months**. The library also estimates that it **saves about 450 staff hours per year** as a result of the solution, time that will be used to better service patrons and to develop and explore new products and services for the library.