

Public Printing Policy Change at UB

Printing is a problem

Students, Faculty and Staff at UB have enjoyed free and unrestricted printing at public computing locations, libraries and instructional class labs since 1986. During the past 19 years, printing volume and costs have risen steadily, topping out at nearly 52,000,000 pages during the 2003-2004 Academic year and costing nearly \$570,000 in paper and toner alone. Many factors have led to the huge volume of printing. Arguably the largest contributing factor is the availability of digital documents from sources such as UBlearns course curricula, Library full text journals, and the entirety of the web. Unlike the forecasts of the “paperless” office promulgated in the early 90’s, UB’s public printing costs have continued to rise at an alarming rate.

Exacerbating this problem has been an overall decline in user satisfaction with central printing services. In an annual student survey of campus information technology services, dissatisfaction with printing has been the number one service improvement issue for several years running (ranked first by 27.7%, 2003-2004). Students complain of intolerable waits, jammed equipment and queues, and paper waste. In our most recent survey, students asked that a system be instituted to control printing abuse and improve service.

UB’s experience is not unique. Many colleges and universities have experienced similar printing overload and cost increases. We studied public printing models at the University of Rochester, the University of Florida, Colorado University-Boulder, SUNY Albany, SUNY Binghamton, and several other schools. The solution at some places was to implement a printing control system to prevent abuse and, thereby, meet expectations for most reasonable printing. This past year, we took steps to implement a system to minimize large print job abuse and address small job through-put. This resulted in a nearly 20% savings in consumable costs, reduction of waste, and improved turnaround. However, more must be done to truly fix the system.

Introducing **iprint@ub**

A new print control system will be introduced during the 2005-2006 Academic year. This new system, **iprint@ub**, is intended to allocate printing resources to students to ensure fair access to printing, address print job turnaround, and control waste and abuse. Similar systems introduced in other universities experienced an immediate drop in printing volume, elimination of abuse and waste, and, most importantly, significant improvement in satisfaction with printing services.

The **iprint@ub** system will allocate a generous number of pages to every student at UB on a per semester basis. When a print job is sent to a public printer at any of UB’s public printing facilities, the computer user will be given an opportunity to accept the cost of the print job which will then be subtracted from his/her allocation. If the user’s allocation is exhausted, it will be easy to purchase additional pages at a nominal cost. When printing involves release of a print job from a private workstation to a public print queue – say from an office workstation – the user will be asked to authenticate to a print release station near the printer to accept charges. University guests and the public will print using the same vendor swipe cards used for photocopiers located in the libraries.

Much work has been done to determine an appropriate initial allocation for students. Careful studies have determined that the printing needs of nearly 90% of all students will be met with an allocation of 1500 pages yearly. With this in mind, we plan to allocate the dollar equivalent of 650 single-sided pages for both the Fall and Spring semesters, and 200 single-sided pages for students enrolled during Summer Sessions. Allocation balances will roll over from semester to semester during a given academic year, beginning with the Summer Sessions, but will not carry forward to the next year.

iprint@ub will be introduced during the Summer 2005 for a trial run in parts of the public computing sites in Lockwood library and Diefendorf Hall. Based upon the outcome of the trial, the system will be generally enabled throughout campus public computing locations in the Fall 2005 semester. User allocation balances will be carefully monitored; changes will be made based on the data collected to make the system work better and to promote user satisfaction.

Page costs for **iprint@ub** have been generally set at \$.05 for single sided pages, and \$.08 for double sided printing (the default in public computing sites). For University guests and the public, page costs have been set at \$.10 for single sided pages, and \$.20 for double sided printing. These costs fairly represent the actual cost per page for printing services at UB, and are considerably under typical page rates at commercial printing services.

The status of **iprint@ub** will be carefully monitored during the initial stages and reported to the University community. Questions and concerns may be directed to the Office of the CIO.