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APPLICATION STUDY

Villanova University Teaches Students, Faculty, and Even Other Schools How to Automate Production Print

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Located in a suburb of Philadelphia, Villanova University is a Roman Catholic institution that welcomes students of all faiths.

Founded in 1842 by the friars of the Order of St. Augustine, Villanova offers a wide variety of degree programs through its College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Villanova School of Business, the College of Engineering, and the College of Nursing.

Many colleges and universities today are replete with campus-wide wireless Internet access, "smart classrooms" and other examples of technology.

But when it comes to the day-to-day printing needs of faculty, staff and students, most are still using the tools of the last century. Villanova University decided that was not enough.

Diverse needs

Mike George, Director of Central Services, wanted a seamless way for Villanova's 6,000 students, 535 faculty, and substantial support staff to submit and print an extensive array of documents.

The existing processes for job submission as well as production were unwieldy, costly and time-consuming. George knew web-based print submission was the answer.

But after several attempts using web submission software intended for commercial print shops or small corporate in-plants, he realized Villanova's requirements were far more demanding.

Because the needs of faculty, staff and students differed dramatically, George knew he needed a solution that could be customized—and even continually adapted—to meet Villanova's evolving needs.

"Students wanted to be able to submit their papers and reports—often a mix of color and black-and-white pages—anytime of the day or night and not have to think about the printing process," relates George. "Professors wanted to finish writing exams at home and then submit the exams to be ready for an early morning class."

At the same time, university staff needed to print a wide variety of documents throughout the year. For everyone, the system had to make job submission easy and eliminate the inevitable problems with fonts and graphics.

The solution

Working with Rochester Software Associates, Inc. (RSA), he began implementing WebCRD, a web submission tool that can be customized to meet the needs of even the most demanding environments.

"We had a lot of new ideas that we brought in and RSA worked very closely with us to try to make that happen," recounts George. "We talked with students and professors to find out what they needed and gave that input to RSA as we developed the system we needed."

One key issue was security. Professors needed to be sure that exams being printed via the same system used by students would be secure.

WebCRD offers LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) compliance, which ensures that anyone logging onto the system can access only their own documents, using their enterprise-wide login and password.

Students, faculty and staff simply log into their own account on the system and submit their documents in a completely secure process. Upon production, Villanova faculty and staff orders are hand delivered, while students pick up their jobs at the Bartley print center where most production work takes place. LDAP support aligned perfectly with Villanova IT directives to manage user access centrally.

Another key requirement was ensuring every job will print correctly regardless of the native application or fonts being used. SurePDF, RSA's PDF Print Driver for WebCRD, based on Adobe PDF JobReady®, delivers an efficient and predictable workflow for online submission.

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Jobs submitted are automatically converted to PDFs using fonts and software on the customer's PC or Mac, and a proof is provided on-screen immediately for review. Once approved, job is ticketed and the order moves to production, ready for automated output with no rekeying.

Streamlined processes

Submission and production are streamlined from the antiquated and difficult processes they replaced. Faculty and staff used to print a single copy of their documents on desktop printers and take the hardcopy to the copy center where they would manually complete a job order ticket and leave the job for production—a process that could take up to a day.

Students completing a paper in their dorm room would email it to themselves as an attachment and go to one of the campus print labs where they would retrieve the email, print it locally on a shared printer. With the previous system implementations, jobs would sometimes get lost or have font and document re-flow issues; all job ticketing was manual with these other systems.

Now, jobs are submitted to WebCRD at any hour of the day, from any location, automatically added to the print queue and ready within a few hours of submission. "We've seen a big shift to students submitting over the web and picking up their jobs," says George. "We're seeing 80 to 100 orders a day coming through iPrint (Villanova's name for its WebCRD system)."

Technology is the Wildcard

Villanova had already embraced campus card technology from CBORD to provide secure, reliable access to a range of university services such as dining, laundry and even tickets to the school's highly popular basketball games. RSA worked with Villanova and CBORD to give students the ability to utilize their University supplied print quota (CS Print) and also pay for premium print services such as digital color, bound reports not to mention a host of other products and services all with the Wildcard. Students can print assignments on the school's production equipment and even print résumés for the school's popular Career Fairs! "Students tell us they appreciate having one payment mechanism for all aspects of daily life at Villanova," notes George. "It was only natural to card-enable printing services. Plus, it reinforces our commitment to using technology wisely while streamlining production."

Lessons learned

Using WebCRD has streamlined the production process as well as management and accounting for all print jobs. Each job submission generates a job ticket and a job costing record in the database. The job ticket information is automatically passed to the print engine. "For example, for a 10 page document that is supposed to be printed duplex, WebCRD talks to our production printer, tells it what the job specs are and it rolls right through," explains George. "And on top of that, we use less labor. The manual process had four or five people 'touching' a job. Now we have no more than two or three, which makes us a lot more efficient." The job costing information is compiled into a single report at the end of each month and departments are billed automatically.

Web-submissions have doubled in two years. WebCRD is saving both money and labor while generating new business and revenue. "Overall revenue is increasing by up to 18 percent annually, and we've been able to lower our cost per copy.," notes George. "The ease of web submission and the convenience of not having to go off campus for printing is helping keep business on campus. And in addition, we're able to offer things like wide format printing and various finishing options, that also help drive up our revenue. We want to stay on leading edge instead of playing catch up." In fact, the WebCRD system is part of the reason Villanova was rated "the most wired college campus in America" by PC Magazine and why other colleges are the ones playing catch up. George and his team have hosted some of the most well-known schools in America, all wanting to see its state-of-the-art web submission system. A university is supposed to educate its students. When it starts educating other schools, there is a lesson to be learned!

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Other schools take field trips to Villanova to see how they can emulate Villanova's success with WebCRD!