

PaperCut MF 13



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| ★★★★☆ | Feature Set |
| ★★★★★ | Value |
| ★★★★☆ | Ease of Administration |
| ★★★★★ | Ease of Use |
| ★★★★☆ | Compatibility |
| ★★★★★ | Software Integration |
| ★★★★★ | Security |
| ★★★★★ | Reseller Support and Training |
| ★★★★★ | Customer Support and Training |
| ★★★★★ | Documentation |
| ★★★★☆ | Global Business Readiness |
| ★★★★☆ | Upgrade Path |

PaperCut™

OVERVIEW

With an increasing desire to provide improved job access and security, reduce waste and recoup costs, schools and businesses are in need of a cost accounting, control and recovery system that's simple to use, efficient and affordable—and can work in a heterogeneous computing environment. PaperCut MF facilitates tracking and charging for print, copy, scan and fax jobs through authentication cards or user login at the device. The solution also includes print management features such as secure print release, rerouting of files to lower-cost devices, and the ability to enforce duplex printing or restrict output by application type. The developer reports that PaperCut MF is deployed in professional services firms that bill for document output, too.

BLI RECOMMENDATION



After putting PaperCut MF through its paces, BLI technicians found that the platform offers most of the functionality small- and mid-sized organizations could want in an accounting/print management solution. Not only does the solution have all the necessities for cost accounting, control and recovery, it also includes outstanding print management tools that can help organizations of any size better understand their document output and reduce TCO—for a price that's lower than many other competitive offerings. Compatible with most network operating systems, PaperCut MF offers an embedded application that can run on devices from Ricoh-family OEMs, Xerox, Konica Minolta, Sharp, Toshiba, KYOCERA-family OEMs, HP, Lexmark, Samsung, Brother, Dell and OKI (with other brands supported via an external terminal), making it a seamless fit with virtually all environments.

Administrators have a lot of features at their disposal, and the approachable user interface makes administering a PaperCut MF system much easier than working in the leading print management offering. One important feature is the ability to configure quotas by user or department. They can also establish rules—enforced

Strengths

- Well-priced given its a strong feature set
- Tracks document output and scan jobs from various types of imaging equipment, by device and user; users can input other costs such as shipping
- Cross-platform architecture allows it to work with most network operating systems
- Embedded applications available for MFPs and printers from leading manufacturers
- The intuitive interface makes it easy for administrators to manage the system and run reports
- Open API allows the solution to integrate with a range of backend systems; integrates with 19 online payment services
- Secure print release provides heightened document confidentiality and can reduce wasteful printing
- Free mobile application for print control and accounting

Weaknesses

- No embedded support for Canon MFPs
- Job pricing features aren't as granular as leading accounting/print management platforms
- Enacting job rerouting and user behavior modification features may require writing or tweaking scripts
- Company lacks the global infrastructure of larger print management product vendors, which could be an issue for enterprise customers

duplexing, restrict output by application type, for instance—to create organization-wide print policies and provide notifications to employees to keep them informed. Sophisticated print policy enforcement is supported by a scripting engine. The complexity of such a feature can be daunting to some organizations, so with this in mind, many “recipes” are included; prewritten best practices scripts can be imported with just a few clicks. Each of these can also be used as a starting point for customized solutions, involving behavior such as jobs being automatically redirected to lower-cost devices, which is critical when trying to reduce TCO.

Secure print release is available to cut down on paper and consumables waste, and to tighten security. The interface is simple to use for managing and monitoring the system. Flexible and comprehensive reporting is yet another strength, as is an open API that enables PaperCut MF to integrate with many types of backend systems.

PaperCut has been developing software since 1999 and clearly knows the market and customers’ wants and needs. BLI has no hesitation in saying that schools, businesses and professional services firms will be very satisfied after deploying the solution for any or all of its impressive attributes.

Product Profile

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Product: | PaperCut MF |
| Version: | 13.0 |
| Software Developer: | PaperCut Software International Pty. Ltd. |
| Suggested Retail Price: | Pricing is based on the number of users and embedded licenses; site printers are included at no cost. Additional MFP licenses are priced between \$190 and \$335 per device based on functionality, with volume discounts for over 10 MFPs. Base price includes unlimited servers. |
| Server Requirements: | 1-GHz CPU, 768-MB RAM (1-GB or higher recommended), 300-MB hard disk space (plus additional storage for logs and print history). Microsoft Windows Server 2000, XP, Server 2003, Vista, Server 2008, Windows 7, Windows 8, Server 2012; Mac OS X 10.6 or later; most modern Linux distributions, including Red Hat, Novell SUSE, Debian; UNIX; Novell Open Enterprise Server 2 (SP1 or later). |
| Client Requirements: | 500-MHz CPU, 256-MB RAM, no hard drive space required for zero install (recommended; 100-MB hard drive space for local install). Microsoft Windows XP or later; Mac OS X 10.5 or later; most modern Linux distributions; and other systems supporting Java 6.0. |
| Supported Devices: | Embedded/Onboard solutions for copy/scan/fax tracking and print release: Ricoh-family OEMs, Xerox, Konica Minolta, Sharp, Toshiba, KYOCERA-family OEMs, HP, Lexmark, Samsung, Brother, Dell and OKI; an embedded application for Canon (MEAP) is under consideration & currently terminals are the preferred option. Where embedded architecture isn’t available or doesn’t meet requirements, external terminals compatible with most devices are available in a range of designs, from simple LCD copier control terminals to advanced color touch-screen models like the cPad, which is priced at approximately \$600 per unit. |
| Availability: | The solution is sold by partner resellers. |



Feature Set

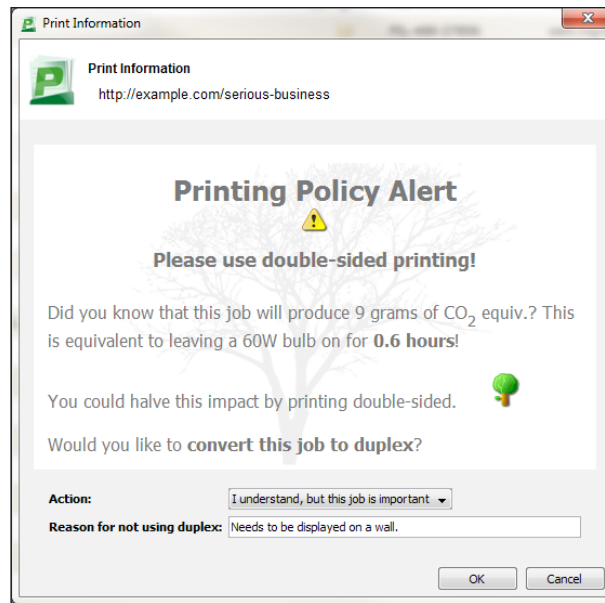


PaperCut MF has a robust feature set that delivers most of the functionality that the vast majority of customers will need. The solution delivers the features one would expect, such as the ability to track print, copy, scan and fax pages, and to track color versus black and set different prices for output. PaperCut MF also offers staff billing for both single-user and shared departmental accounts, student quotas and chargeback, various methods for users to load funds into their accounts, and gateways for integration with third-party campus billing and accounting systems.

For accounting/cost recovery, the program allows an administrator to set different prices for color and monochrome jobs and, notably, supports “page-level” color detection, where color and monochrome pages mixed into a single job are accounted for accurately. Users can “upcharge” for additional costs such as binding, special paper, or postage; and the administrator can apply a blanket discount (or surcharge) for certain accounts or sub-accounts, such as a 10 percent discount or a 5-cent per-page surcharge. On MFPs with an embedded applet, PaperCut MF does allow an administrator to set one price for the initial page of a fax or scan job and a different price for subsequent pages. PaperCut MF also offers a Charge Rates feature that can be used to apply a percentage discount for a job (for example, a 50 percent discount for the second printout of a document) or a percentage upcharge (50 percent increase for special material, for example). Large-format output can be charged by the square foot/meter. While PaperCut MF’s cost-recovery features cover what a typical organization might need and then some, BLI technicians found that pricing options are not as granular as found in some competing platforms. For example, some allow an administrator to apply several per-page price tiers as the size of a document hits various thresholds, and to charge for things like rush or weekend jobs.

Just as important as recouping costs for many organizations is not incurring the output costs in the first place by limiting or controlling output on the fly. On this front, PaperCut MF’s Filters & Restrictions feature lets an administrator force actions such as converting color jobs to monochrome, switching simplex jobs to duplex, denying a job based on a set cost threshold, denying because it is a duplicate of a document recently printed, and more possibilities with custom scripting. However, unlike as with some platforms, this functionality is tied to a particular device (the Filters & Restriction filter is accessible after selecting a device from the Printers tab), not globally for any print job. And notably, the rules apply only to print jobs, not copy jobs as with some output management solutions.

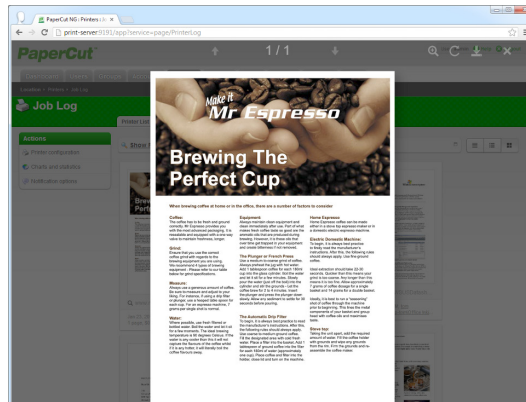
In addition to such standard accounting and cost-control features, PaperCut MF also offers advanced features that some competitors charge extra for. For instance, PaperCut MF offers secure print release standard, which holds print jobs until the user authenticates at the device, keeps sensitive jobs secure and cuts down on the waste inherent with jobs that are never retrieved. PaperCut MF also includes the “FindMe” printing feature; this allows users to send a job and then release it from any available printer, instead of targeting a specific printer that may have a full queue or is down. The package also includes mobile print support for modern smartphone devices; mobile print is an add-on or simply unavailable with most other platforms.



Scripts can be used to enforce policies, in this case offering users an option to automatically convert a print job to duplex with a click of a button, or to provide justification for printing simplex.

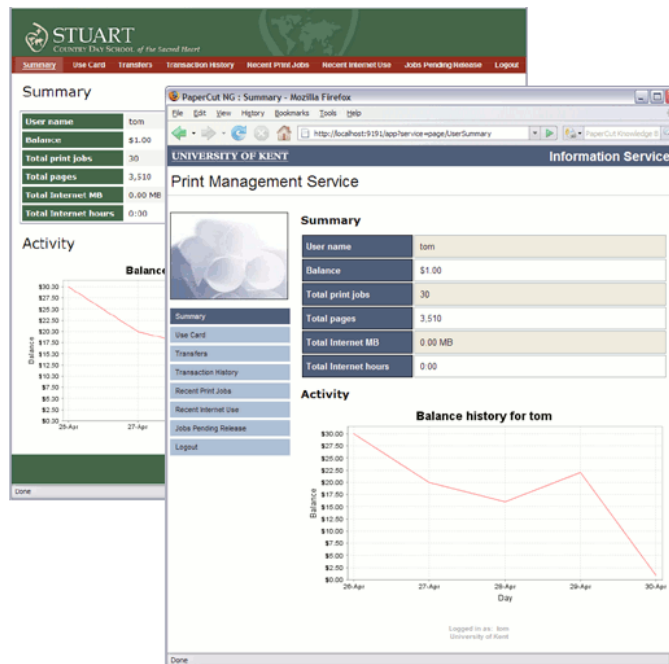
Other features usually found only in more expensive solutions include the ability to restrict printing by application type and to route jobs to lower-cost devices, while conversion filters provide the functionality to convert color jobs to grayscale and simplex jobs to duplex. Administrators can also enact “behavior modification” features, whereby an end user will receive a message prompting them to consider more cost-efficient or eco-friendly print settings. However, these features do require scripting on the part of the administrator or seller. The leading competitor allows administrators to enable advanced rerouting and similar actions via simple drop-down lists. On the plus side, PaperCut MF does include “recipes” (prebuilt code templates) for common tasks. Recipes for these scripts can be previewed, letting administrators copy and paste code from an existing rule to a new one, while common functions that touch multiple scripts are stored as the master. A new and potentially powerful script is that which discourages users from printing multi-page emails.

Web Print allows users to output files by uploading them from a browser with no client software or driver installation required. This is important, especially at colleges where many students and staff use laptops, and the overhead of managing drivers and authentication is too high. (Note that the interface can be customized, including the use of logos.)



PaperCut offers a free mobile app that supports tracking and cost recovery of printing from supported iOS devices such as iPhones and iPads; workers can, however, release secure jobs via any web-enabled smart device.

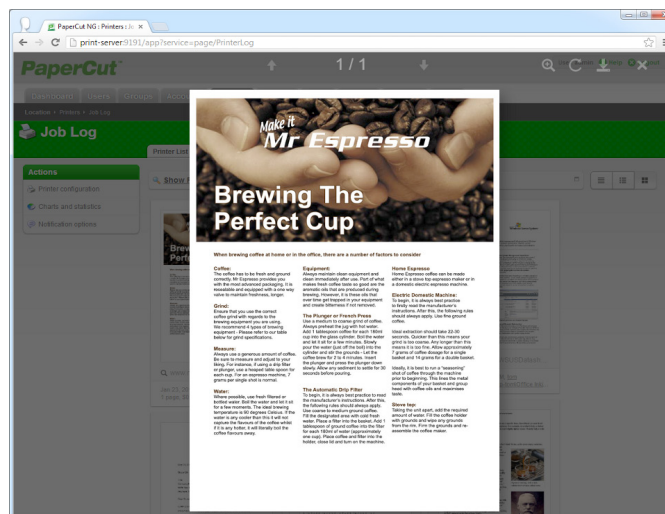
PaperCut provides walkup users at the MFP with the same set of application features provided in the print control area. These include user authentication (integration with single sign-on); monitoring and control of copying (quotas, charging, allocation and logging); and allocation of copying to accounts/departments/cost-centers/projects. But while PaperCut MF allows administrators to set charges for scan and fax functions, there is no provision to restrict these functions except to deny the scan/fax if the user is out of credit or to globally restrict access to the device based on user Groups. Also, while copying access can be restricted by user/group, the ability to restrict color copying in particular (as opposed to any copying) is supported only on some devices. And note that the Conversion feature to force color jobs to print in grayscale or simplex jobs to print in duplex does not extend to copy jobs in PaperCut MF.



Two examples of organization-specific user interface customizations

Recently added features include the Web Cashier, which has a simple web interface for non-technical staff to charge items to, or deposit funds into, PaperCut accounts; improved printer-error detection in Mac, Linux and Novell environments; new printer scripts such as “implement color print quotas”; and the ability to release secure print jobs from a mobile device.

The biggest addition to version 13 is Print Archiving, which allows administrators to view printed jobs via the interface, thus tightening security and audit policies, as well as providing an added way to eliminate rogue document output behavior. PaperCut reports that the feature is most often utilized in the education vertical, that administrators can view thumbnails of the first page of jobs and entire jobs, and for security reasons, that Print Archiving is disabled by default but can be easily activated.



Print Archiving

New features and enhancements in Version 13.0 (as of January 2013)

- Print Archiving lets administrators view printed jobs right in the console to bolster security and audit policies, as well as providing an added way to eliminate rogue document output behavior
- Recipes can be previewed, which allows administrators to copy and paste existing code into new printer scripts
- Restrict access to the dashboard
- Scheduled reports can be run quarterly and annually
- SSL can be enforced when users access the system from mobile devices
- Print refund management and payment gateways updates
- Mac OS X 10.5 no longer supported



Value



Pricing is based on the number of users and embedded licenses; site printers are included at no cost. Embedded licenses vary slightly according to device functionality and availability, and are discounted via a sliding scale when ordering in bulk. Base price includes unlimited servers. PaperCut offers two ROI calculators on its website, one for educating customers and another for businesses (www.papercut.com/tools/roi/). Potential clients can plug in a few data points to quickly call up an estimate (more extensive calculators are available for resellers). According to the developer, many of its customers have reported that the software has paid for itself in less than 6 months.



Ease of Administration



One of PaperCut's greatest advantages is how easy it is for IT staff to administer. The logically arranged menu items and handy Dashboard make it approachable even for those who have never used a print management system.

PaperCut MF is typically installed and configured by a trained reseller (often via a remote session), who then trains the administrator on the system's use. To assist with the common, yet all-important, task of project management and print policy changes associated with deployment, the developer offers a detailed step-by-step implementation guide that helps administrators properly lay the groundwork. An organization with a savvy IT administrator familiar with installing and configuring server software, working with Active Directory, setting up print queues, and installing MFP-resident software may be able to handle the server installation without a reseller's help, although BLI does not recommend it.

The solution is typically installed on a server and tracks local print queues and the network domain/directory environment for user authentication. At no additional cost, secondary servers can be installed on local PCs and/or additional print servers to track local print queues and any direct IP/USB printing. In most environments, PaperCut MF would be deployed on an existing server running any one of the supported operating systems. There's a 64-bit optimized option in the installer, as the developer reports that most new installations are now done with 64-bit hardware.

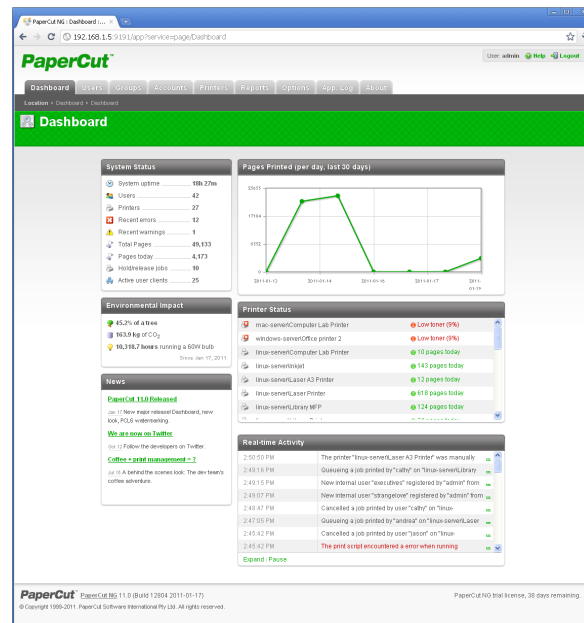
After server installation, and depending on the features intended to be leveraged, optional client software and MFP embedded/onboard software may also be deployed. The client software, used for real-time account balance view and/or selecting Shared Accounts via a popup, can be quickly deployed via a zero-install strategy. Normally, this takes the form of running the client directly off a preconfigured network share via a login script. Meanwhile, the installation routines for the embedded/onboard applications vary depending on model and make of device.

The PaperCut MF embedded application is prepackaged into the same installer. Installation can be as simple as uploading a file and tweaking settings via the MFP's web administration page.

PaperCut MF is designed with ease of use in mind. Client setup is a snap, taking us less than five minutes to download and install. The web tools used by the administrators are easy to use. On any page, you'll find a series of checkboxes, easy-to-read tables, and simple dropdown menus that walk administrators swiftly through every step. During installation administrators can set the default cost per page assigned to the devices, as well as user quotas; these can be adjusted as needed. This is useful, for instance, if all students on campus are allotted \$10 a month for printing.

Navigating through the solution's features is intuitive and familiar thanks to its use of 11 well-labeled tabs on the home page: Dashboard, Users, Groups, Accounts, Printers, Devices, Reports, Cards, Options, App Log, and About.

Via several gadgets, the Dashboard provides an overview of all system activity and the current status of all network devices and users: System Status, which provides statistics such as uptime, active users, jobs today and system warnings; Pages Printed, which helps track printing volume over the last 30 days; Printer Status, which displays pages printed today and device information such as toner levels and paper jams; Real-time Activity, which displays what's happening to help monitor activity and diagnose problems; What's Next?, which is for first-time users; Environmental Impact, which displays overall environmental impact statistics; and News, which keeps administrators up to date on relevant releases and developments.



PaperCut Dashboard

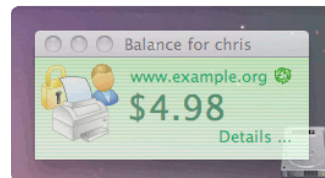
All print queues on the network are automatically detected during installation; to verify this, administrators can click on the Printers tab. They can then click on a printer name to set cost-per-page figures, or an advanced cost model such as a percentage discount applied for duplex printing. Administrators can also apply restriction rules, including prohibiting jobs of a selected size or automatically removing duplicate documents. Because the solution can be accessed through a browser, administrators can manage and configure devices, monitor and compare use and load, define costs and implement alerts, toner-level detection and secure print release from one location.

Thanks to integration with Active Directory, LDAP and the directory services of a range of network operating systems, adding users to the system is practically automatic. PaperCut MF extracts user information out of the System or Domain, with the options presented varying depending on the operating system. While most sites import all users from the system/domain into the solution during installation; alternatively, a subset of users from a given group can be imported.

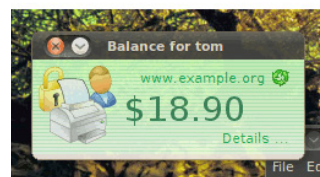
Optional client software doesn't need to be run locally so there's no need to push out packages or manage future updates. Because PaperCut MF tracks printing on the server by interfacing with network queues, client software isn't required for silent tracking and accounting in an authenticated network. Client software is required to leverage advanced features such as allowing users to allocate printing to departments, expense accounts, cost centers or clients via a popup window. In an education environment, the client is usually deployed in a visible mode displaying a student's balance, which is updated in real-time and can be seen ticking down as the user performs printing.



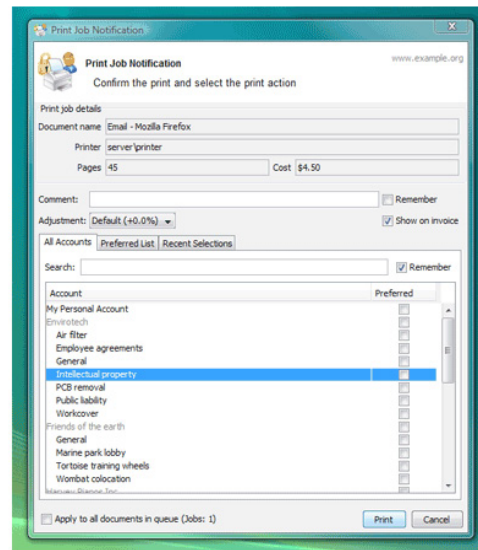
On Windows



On Mac



On Linux



Account Selection Popup

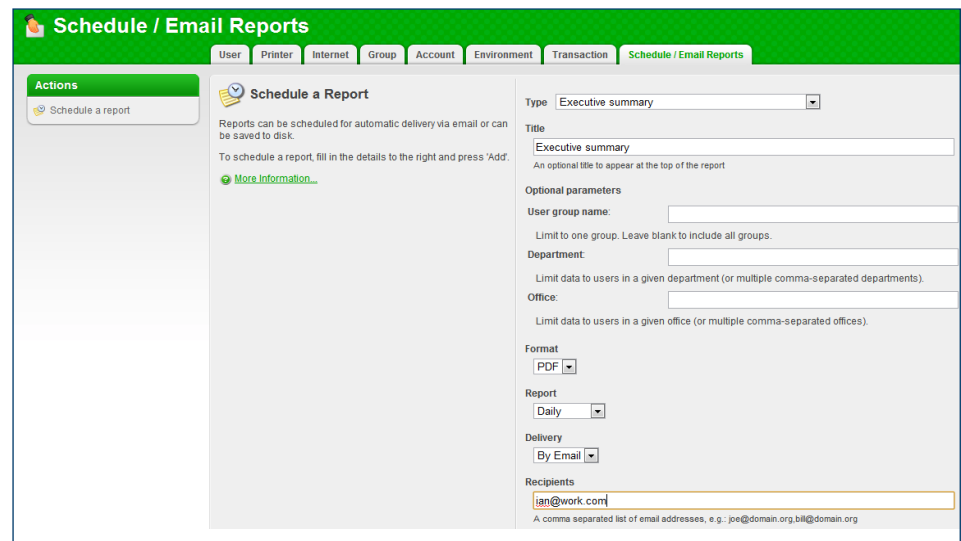
Various types of pop-up messages in PaperCut MF

For professional organizations that may have thousands of project accounts or clients, an advanced version of the client is available. This streamlines account selection with keyword search and a preferred list of accounts for common selections.

Setting up reports is a snap, too. There are many different kinds that can be generated in different ways: User, which runs reports on document output activity by user; Printer, which generates information on documented output activity by printer; Print Log, which allows administrators to list all jobs over a given date range; Group, which allows administrators to gauge output by group; Shared Accounts, which shows shared account usage and prints account invoices; Transaction, which shows a summary of transactions and balance adjustments; Environmental Impact, which summarizes the environmental impact of print jobs; and Ratio, which summarizes relative printing costs between users, groups or devices.

Within each of these categories, there are canned reports that can be generated in a single click, for example, User, Last 30 days or Environmental, Art department. Administrators need only to check/uncheck boxes in many cases to get the data they need. They can also choose the format in which to export the report just by clicking on one of three icons next to the check box: PDF, HTML or CSV (Excel). There are 80+ standard one-click reports available, and more advanced reports can be generated through ad-hoc customization of filters and other report settings. Again, this is primarily done by checking boxes and choosing options from dropdown menus. Custom logos and text can also be added to the header of all standard reports.

Scheduling reports is equally as easy: administrators choose the desired report options, a reporting period—daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly, annually—and press Add. This makes it simple to email a regularly scheduled report billing for invoice purposes, for instance. Reports may also be scheduled to write to a file at given times, allowing third-party accounting systems to load cost data automatically.



PaperCut provides the ability to schedule each of its 80+ reports to be automatically generated and sent via email.

For all its strengths, we do have one wish: It would be much better if setting up print rerouting, behavior modification messages and the like were wizard-driven rather than requiring scripting. Even with the included recipes as a starting point, enabling these advanced features will be beyond the abilities of many IT admins.

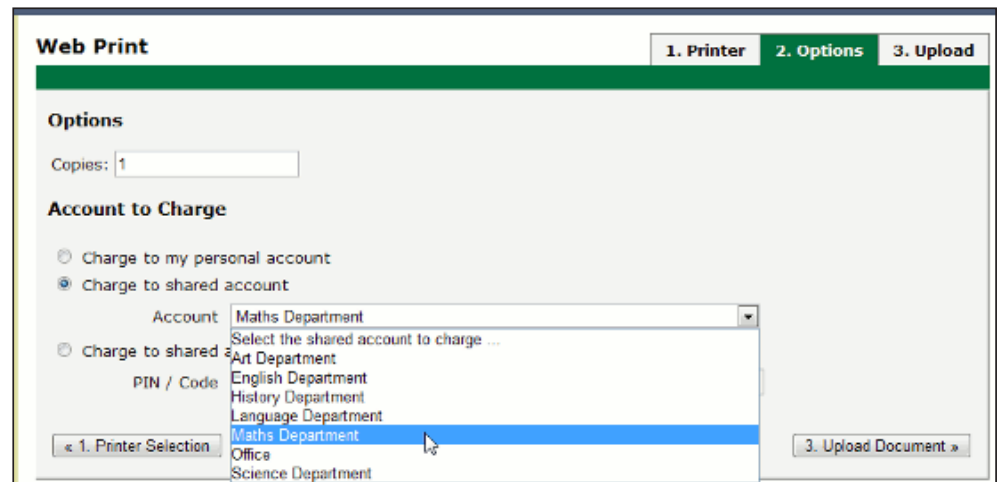


Ease of Use



End users, like administrators, interact with PaperCut MF through a browser. This means they can access their account from any computer, anytime. The interface is clean and intuitive, and with its simple tab organization is a breeze to navigate. Users have a set of web tools that are well organized and immediately familiar, similar in feel to an online banking site; therefore, no training is necessary. These tools enable users to track their own activity in real-time, check account balances, add credit, and even view their environmental impact. When an account balance is low, users receive a pop-up when they send a print job, with the amount left in their account. To replenish, users need only to transfer funds, again, similar to online banking.

Once set up, printing is a breeze. In addition to secure print release from networked computers in libraries and computer labs, students can print from their laptops anywhere on campus using Web Print. The student first selects a printer, which they can choose from a dropdown list or the list may be overlaid with a floor plan. Next, the student selects the print options tab, and chooses how many copies and which account to charge to. The student then uploads the document, and the job is added to the print queue. The student can monitor the progress of their jobs from their laptop.



Web Print lets users quickly and easily print from their laptops.

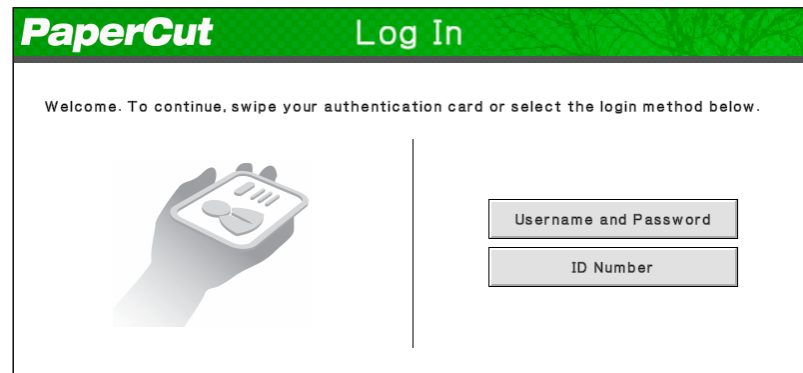


Compatibility

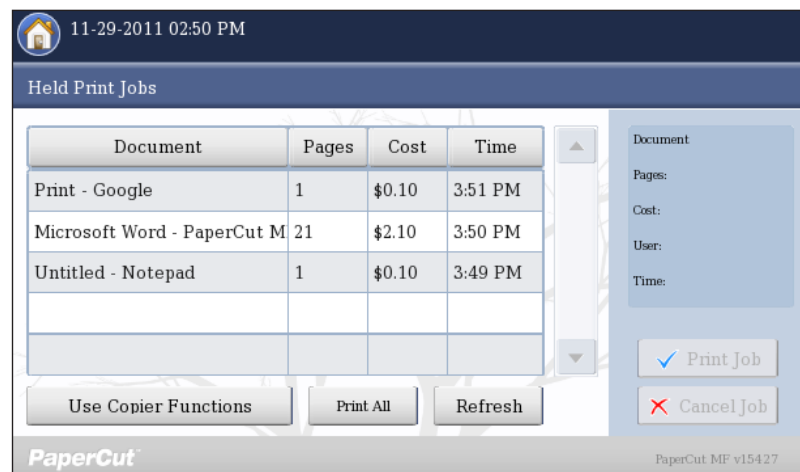


PaperCut MF stands out from the crowd as one of the few solutions in this class with complete cross-platform compatibility with servers and clients, supporting Windows, Mac, Linux, UNIX and even Novell operating systems. This is especially important for education institutions, which usually have a mix of platforms (note that more businesses are moving away from the all-Windows environment, too).

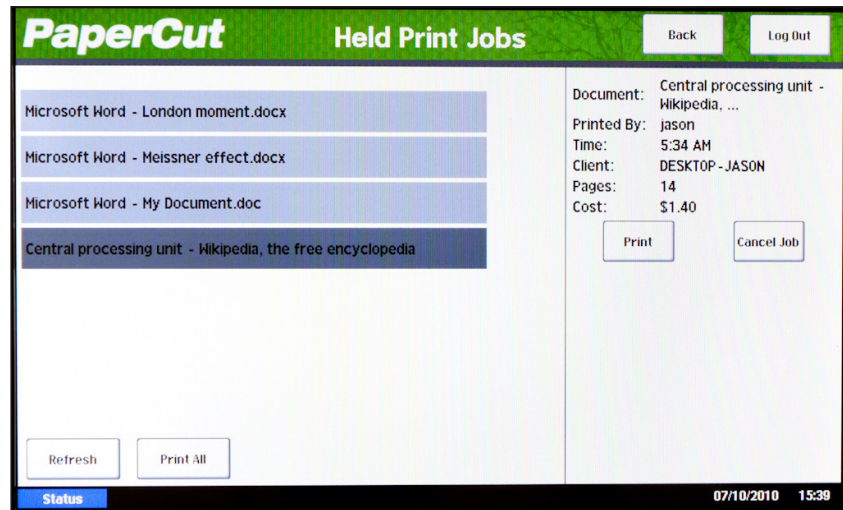
Equally as critical, the solution is also compatible with a range of MFP embedded platforms from many leading manufacturers, and an external terminal can track volumes from devices where onboard integration isn't supported. The developer points out that embedded solutions, whenever technically possible, will have the same functionality and user experience across different platforms, so users don't have to learn different procedures for logging in whether they are at a Ricoh device or a Konica Minolta, for instance. PaperCut MF is currently compatible with open architecture-enabled Ricoh-family OEMs, Xerox, Konica Minolta, Sharp, Toshiba, KYOCERA-family OEMs, HP, Lexmark, Samsung, Brother, Dell and OKI. Missing from this list is Canon, which does account for a large percentage of installed MFPs.



Embedded application login screen for Sharp



Embedded application menu screen for Samsung



Embedded application menu for KYOCERA

Smartphones and tablets have taken up an increasing portion of print volumes in some organizations, and PaperCut has implemented expanded printing support for Apple iOS-powered iPad and iPhone devices, including the PaperCut-standard management and cost control options. (The platform's mobile print abilities do not yet extend to Android or Blackberry devices.)



Software Integration



PaperCut MF has a fully documented and open XML web services-based API, which can be leveraged to integrate the solution with existing infrastructure such as student management and other types of backend systems, as well as domain user-provisioning processes. Additionally, PaperCut MF integrates with 19 different online payment services, including PayPal, Cybersource, Blackboard, CBORD and Heartland Onecard. The solution provides export and import options (CSV format, for instance) for dataflow to third-party accounting applications.



Security



PaperCut MF is developed openly with the source code made available to customers, which has allowed major organizations to review the code for security practices. For example, an independent security expert working for a college found an XSRF (Cross-site request forgery) security issue during a review in 2008. This was fully disclosed and quickly addressed in a subsequent release.

At a software-level PaperCut MF leverages Active Directory security groups for access control. Administrators can be set up with different levels of permission, for instance, system administrators may have access to all features, while office staff is limited to reports and a sub-set of features such as account management; access to the dashboard can also be restricted. The solution uses SSL for communication (administrators can require SSL when accessing the system from mobile devices) and remote web-based administration, ensuring sensitive data like passwords and account information is locked down over the network.

In addition to integrating with leading directory services for user authentication (Active Directory, LDAP, Open Directory, eDirectory, NIS, PAM, Samba), the solution supports card authentication (Magnetic Strip, HID, Mifare and others) and has “FindMe” printing with secure release, which can dramatically reduce paper and consumables waste, and ensure that documents are only seen at the device by those who are authorized to do so (secure jobs can be released from a mobile device). And for an added level of security, watermarking and digital signatures are included. Dynamically constructed text (student’s name, student ID number, date) can be added to the page as a watermark. Digital signatures can be used to verify the origin and author or any print job.

Company Profile

Software Developer/Vendor: PaperCut Software International Pty. Ltd.

Status: Privately held

Founded: 1999

Employees: 29



Reseller Support and Training



PaperCut offers MFP manufacturers and dealers the opportunity to apply to become a PaperCut MF Value Added Reseller (VAR), who have direct access to PaperCut MF resources, online quotation and ordering system, as well as PaperCut direct support. Alternately, resellers can contact a local PaperCut Authorized Solution Centre (ASC), where fully trained sales and technical support staff offer sales and support of PaperCut MF.

Dealers or clients can choose to completely outsource all installation and support to an ASC. Resellers can apply to become a VAR backed by PaperCut technical engineers and sales staff. A global network of trained ASCs and resellers has been established, ensuring local support can be offered in many countries and regions. Appointment of a reseller to the status of ASC is based on technical competence, product and industry knowledge, proven product installation and support. ASCs don't sell hardware and are vendor neutral. There's no cost to become an ASC or a VAR. PaperCut provides a welcome link for new dealers wishing to find out more or apply in becoming a VAR. The linked site includes all resource materials and 40-day free download of the production software for complete proof of concept testing.

In every instance, the developer and its VARs and ASCs acknowledge and respect that dealers will wish to maintain a direct single point of contact for hardware and software, with the reseller remaining the key contact. The dealer may choose to provide all first-level support (phone, email) directly, utilizing PaperCut or its ASCs as second-level support as required. The option to outsource client installation, configuration, training and ongoing support to an ASC is offered under agreement.

For very large sites, PaperCut or a PaperCut Authorized Solution Centre can assist (remotely) with the pre-installation and configuration to ensure that the software can be deployed properly. The developer reserves the right to apply a daily or fixed system fee for additional remote technical services. PaperCut suggests that the key to successful implementations is to identify and give access and control of the software to a passionate onsite IT administrator.



Customer Support and Training



Ongoing support is provided from PaperCut's offices in Australia, the UK and North America. With every new license purchased, the developer includes all minor point-version upgrades and email and phone support. Premium Upgrade Assurance is priced at 20 percent of total cost per year, with discounts available when multiple years are purchased. All upgrades, fixes, and 24/7 remote phone, live chat and email support are covered under the maintenance agreement. BLI called technical support at various times of the day over a week and received a representative in less than a minute in each instance. When there's a hardware terminal with the software, a total support and training solution is provided by an authorized dealer or PaperCut Solution Centre Agreement.



Documentation



A wealth of information and documentation includes an in-depth, yet easily-digestible, 500+ page hyperlinked user guide that can be accessed online or downloaded along with embedded application videos on the PaperCut YouTube channel. The developer offers a searchable knowledge base with hundreds of articles, too. All manuals have numerous screenshots and easy to follow instructions and explanations. In addition, users can post questions and receive answers from a blog along with a discussion list that's linked to each page of the User's Guide and Knowledge Base, and the developer has several informational videos posted on its site, as well as on YouTube.



Global Business Readiness



PaperCut MF is currently sold by partner resellers in over 100 countries in 22 languages. An established worldwide network of over 500 certified resellers and 20 highly trained vendor neutral Authorized Solution Centres add to the support and helpdesk facilities for dealers and clients that require support. Resellers are appointed as software-only providers and are typically hardware dealers looking to add value to portfolio, while ASCs offer sales and support of the solution and all value adds—card readers, payment gateways, value loaders, consulting services—and are vendor neutral.

In order to meet the needs of global enterprises, a solutions platform must be architected in such a way to support the demands of thousands of users. Additionally, a worldwide support infrastructure is a vital consideration for multi-national enterprises looking to standardize on a print management platform, as is wide language support for the product itself.

To those ends, PaperCut MF offers support for multi-server installations with failover, where separate server deployments can help avoid bottlenecks and delays while relaying data to a “master” server to keep user and output data in sync. On the downside, while PaperCut maintains offices in Australia, the U.S., and the U.K., it is a smaller company that does not have the pre- and post-sales worldwide support infrastructure of its billion-dollar-plus competitors. The software and documentation are translated into English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Brazilian, Portuguese, Catalan, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Croatian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Swedish and Turkish—a huge range unmatched by other platforms BLI has evaluated. However, it should be noted that PaperCut has followed an open-source model for many of those. That means the translations may have been executed by partner resellers and customers—not the company's own developers—although PaperCut reports that it does review those translations.



Upgrade Path



The developer offers two versions of its platform: PaperCut NG, for print management only; and PaperCut MF, which adds support for copy, scan and fax activities at an organization's MFPs. However, unlike some major competitors, the company does not have various flavors of the solution to suit organizations of different sizes and types.

The company maintains an aggressive development schedule; on average, PaperCut MF sees "point" releases every 6 to 8 weeks. Upgrading is always optional, and many organizations may only do so a few times a year; however, the regular releases do ensure customers have access to new developments as soon as they're available. Applying upgrades can be completed via an install-over-the-top procedure. The software notifies the administrators when new versions are available. All new versions are available at no extra charge under PaperCut's Premium Upgrade Assurance program.

PaperCut uses an ongoing customer and reseller survey to carve out part of the upgrade path. Businesses vote on what features they'd like to see in the next major version launch. The developer tallies the results in real-time, publishing them in its blog and then implementing the features with the most votes; for example, in 2011, the popularity of iPads led to the development of iPad printing support, with built-in functionality to replicate the desktop PaperCut experience.

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