

Digital Senders

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For all the rapid technological advances and changes librarians have seen over the last several years it's the digital sender that has had the biggest impact on me. We all work in an environment where speedy delivery is necessitated by short length of stays. Many of our clients are not physically located at the same site as the library. It is a world where when you want it, you want it NOW. Digital senders get documents to the desktop now – quickly, far more quickly than U.S. Post, better quality than fax, less expensive than either, in color if needed. It is in a format that your client can easily print, store or forward to a colleague. The sender itself does not take up much counter space, is not going to need paper, toner, drums and a telephone line like the fax. It will be ever so much faster than scanning documents with something like Adobe Writer. Obviously, this is going to result in reduced costs that you can evaluate; lower postage fees, fewer envelopes, no phone bills, service contract etc.

The key to success with digital senders is to involve your IS staff first, even before you look for funding sources. Give them the specifications for the

sender and go over them together. Discuss the reasons you feel it would be a worthy addition to the arsenal of computer devices they have to support. The IS people will be far more likely to accept the challenge if they feel like they have some say in the decision making and are not defensively guarding their territory. We have the library sender configured as a single user on our Groupwise system. Our Groupwise parameters govern the size of files (incoming and outgoing) as well as providing the firewall protection. An alias has been created so that any email to the digital sender address defaults to mine – I get the undeliverable mail messages and the replies. The sender account does not receive email or keep a ‘sent items’ log. Tracking sent items happens in the HP address book manager portion of the sender software. That software is/was the only ‘learning curve’ part of the digital sender installation and the only place that problems have occurred for me. As much as librarians love digital senders wait until you see how happy your clients are when you offer to email their request to them. They LOVE it ! And they will tell everyone about it. In a small hospital everyone from administration on down will be visiting you, asking, please email this... grant proposals, public affairs news pieces, photographs, maps, I think I’ve pdf/emailed about everything that you can place on a scanner. This has been so successful in my organization that we now have three of them. Some

university libraries now have senders available to faculty and student use – an indication of how well liked and accepted the technology is.

Are there problems ? Of course, and some systems have larger problems than others. The worst problem I have had to date is an address book crash. HP was very helpful on the phone and walked me through the restore process. The new models are more pc based and the address book can be built and maintained as an excel file. Two columns, name and email address, saved as a CSV file, imported and mapped to the email address. (This works on the older model senders too.) Once, in three years, a file has come back as undeliverable because the receivers end was not configured to accept a file as large as the 36 pages I tried to send it. The lesson is don't bother getting a 50 page capacity sender – it's more reliable to send those big files in two parts. Other little problems come with addresses; clients who do not know the address of your sender may (and will) delete the file believing it to be spam or junk mail. I've made a habit of telling first time pdf recipients to watch for bhlibr, not my email address. The other address problem is clients changing their email; they don't always let you know the new one. And then there's the occasional client whose email is not configured to receive attachments or pdf files – I ask them to take it up with their email

provider as I don't stay on top of every providers' quirks. Our hospital has recently moved all the physicians email from Meditech to Groupwise for meetings, agendas, that sort of thing. I have noticed a huge spike in email requests now that they've all been trained in using email and see how a paperless environment can work for them.

Currently there are over 1000 docline libraries using EDD, 139 of which are in our region. These are libraries of every size from the 56 or so bed small hospital to large resource/university libraries. My outgoing interlibrary loan volume is approximately 1000 per year. EDD saves me approximately \$800 per year. Then there's the harder to measure value of satisfied clients. If you are not already employing EDD please consider it, and encourage your colleagues to use it too.