

William Paterson University Case Story

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What William Paterson University says about Scannx' Book ScanCenter:

“Having something work this well and this easily in a world where things tend to get complicated was refreshing. It’s a nice change when something works better than advertised.”

Kurt W. Wagner, Asst. Director-Library Information Systems

David and Lorraine Cheng Library, William Paterson University, Wayne NJ

Book ScanCenter adds valuable service to students, thanks to Parents' Association

When the William Paterson University of New Jersey's Parents' Association wanted to sponsor a service that would have a big impact for students, Kurt Wagner had an answer ready. “I meet with a lot of librarians on a whole host of issues, and one of the topics that has come up over the years was having a self-serve scanning kiosk,” said Wagner, Assistant Director of Library Information Systems at Paterson's Cheng Library. Wagner had visited Rutgers University, which has 29 Scannx Book ScanCenter kiosks, and he was impressed by how easy they were to use. The funding from the Parents' Association almost perfectly lined up with the affordable price of the Book ScanCenter, and Scannx offered a free trial, so there was nothing to lose.

Scannx: Easy to set up, and easy to use.

The system – a Scannx Book ScanCenter touch-screen kiosk paired with both a book-edge flatbed scanner and an upright sheet-fed Xerox DocuMate scanner – arrived in early January 2014, while students were on break. Wagner tested it out in a back office. “First, just from a tech perspective, I was greatly impressed with the out-of-the-box usability of it,” he said. “We had it running in about 15 minutes. Everyone promises ‘plug it in and it works,’ and I’ve been on the losing side of that proposition before. So I really appreciate the fact that the Scannx lived up as advertised.”

A week later, as students began returning for the short Winter Session, Wagner moved the Book ScanCenter to an area near the circulation desk and library reserves. Using Scannalytics – a customized usage analytics service provided by Scannx – he tracked how students were using it.

“At first, usage was slow and steady,” he said. “January is a slow time for us. Then, when (spring) semester started, I guess around January 13, usage really began to ramp up. It started at around 10-20 scans per day, and now seems to average 60-70, but some days are double that. Last week we had a day with 190 scans – that was 176 users for one or two pages apiece.”

While he was pleased at how much the system was being used, he was even more pleased by how few questions students had. “The best and most important part of it has been ease of use,” he said. “The people who designed the user interface did it right. The users don’t have to get coached. They don’t have to have a staff member intervene or help them. The vast majority are able to just walk up and start using it with no problem. I didn’t expect that it would really be that easy. I’ve been using scanners for 20 years or longer, and by far this has the best user interface and ease of use I’ve seen. Boom, and you’re done.”

With so few problems, Wagner had to make a point of asking users for their feedback. “We could see they were using it,” he said. “But we needed was to understand how they liked it. So we would approach and ask.” Responses were overwhelmingly positive, with students saying they preferred the Book ScanCenter to the library’s copy machines. “We have two public access Xerox machines where one of modes of operation is to scan to USB, but students found it clunky and not the easiest to understand,” said Wagner. “By contrast, using the Scannx system was night and day.”

Most praised the Book ScanCenter’s easy-to-use touch screen. It guides users step-by-step, helping them choose either the flatbed scanner or the sheet-fed scanner; crop or straighten the image; and save their scan as a PDF, searchable PDF, Word, JPEG, TIFF or PNG. “They said, ‘Finally, something is easier instead of harder,’” said Wagner. “As engulfed as we are with new technologies and new things to learn, it’s nice to find something that has made life easier for our students. It solved a problem without them having to learn something new.”

Book ScanCenter: More scanning choices, greater flexibility

At first, Wagner offered scan-to-USB only, in order to avoid issues with the university network. But once he plugged it into the web so he could access Scannalytics, he discovered that he was able to offer students a wide range of options without technical issues, including scanning to Google Drive and Microsoft’s OneDrive. And, since today’s students increasingly use their smart phones, and Scannx is the first book scanning solution that enables scans to be sent directly to a smart phone or tablet using a free QR reader app, he enabled that feature as well. “As people move toward the cloud, it’s nice to know that Scannx is there waiting for them,” he said.

For now, options for scanning to email, fax, and print are disabled because Wagner wants the scanners to be an independent service, separate from the University’s print management service. Instead, the focus is to present the Book ScanCenter as a free and convenient tool for students, made possible by the WPUNJ Parents’ Association. “It shows that our parents’ association cared enough to provide something of value for our students,” said Wagner.

And, with Scannalytics, Wagner is able to quantify exactly what that value has been. “It gives me the ability to show the impact of it to my boss,” he said. “I can export a spreadsheet or pull the numbers out just effortlessly, and she can pass the numbers on to the parents’ association. We can show them where that money is being used, and we can put a dollar figure and a usage figure together.”

The result? The students are happy to have an easy, cost-free, paper-free alternative to photocopiers; the staff is thrilled to spend less time demonstrating and trouble-shooting equipment; and the parents’ association is proud to see the impact their gift is having on Paterson students’ education. “It’s one of those projects that there is no downside to,” said Wagner.