THE 3000 NEWS / Wire

Independent Information to Maximize Your HP 3000

byREQUEST delivers 3000 reports by e-mail

*byRequest ships application reports
around Seattle college district*

Seattle Community College has learned something about moving reports from its HP 3000 applications: you don't need paper when you've got an e-mail system.

The school has been a user of HP 3000s since 1983, but in the last year its reports from school administration software have arrived in e-mail boxes instead of through interoffice couriers, translated and delivered through Hillary Software's byREQUEST.

John Bailey, the manager of district computer services at the college, used Hillary's (732.974.8484, www.hillary.com) Sheetmate software for document translation and exchange before installing byREQUEST. Bailey said at that time the district had just completed implementing Microsoft Exchange as a district-wide e-mail system, serving the 1,700 employees with mail access.

Three colleges, a vocational institute, and three education centers do their administrative processing on a Series 987 HP 3000 in Seattle. Student management, payroll, accounting, human resources and financial aid are handled by the MPE/iX software. Some reports from those applications took up to four weeks to arrive in offices before byREQUEST went to work. The software breaks a report down into pertinent sections on the basis of data in the reports' heading, then routes it to the correct recipients.

"We can take things like budget reports, then set up a distribution list so all the managers and staff associated with the project will receive the reports the day they are produced," Bailey said. "We were able to get information to them the first day it was available as live data, as opposed to when it was almost too late to affect the next month's expenditures."

Exchange runs on NT servers for the college, but byREQUEST is client software running on a PC that accesses the HP 3000 to retrieve output spoolfiles from the system generated by the administrative applications. byREQUEST's workstation is simply an e-mail client in Exchange at the college. The software converts the spoolfiles into Microsoft Office formats — primarily Word documents — then drops them into mailboxes across the district.

The Class Openings reports generated a quarter-million pages of paper each year, Bailey said. Administrators "tore out the two pages of the 50 each day they cared about and threw the rest away. I was looking to be a little more environmentally conscious, and to reduce my users' cost for output."

The college departments were charged printing costs for most reports at 1.5 cents per page to cover paper and supplies. Bailey said his total investment in the byREQUEST system was less than $10,000.

Once the Class Openings report went out online using the Public Folders capability in Exchange, "the Instructional Associate Deans made delivery of that single report mission-critical," Bailey said, "and we've never looked back since." He added that byREQUEST provides significant spool file management services above the capabilities provided by MPE/iX.

At the Seattle Community Colleges, Bailey and his staff have set up byREQUEST to see the spooler files through a session logged onto the 3000. "It gives you unique ways to look at the spooler on your 3000," Bailey said. "byREQUEST makes it easy to format your list of spoolfiles, so you can define spoolers by criteria to determine what spoolfiles display in a particular spooler. It gives us the ability to organize all the output files."

At the Seattle Community Colleges, the operators use command files to control when and if any reports go to a printer. All reports that are sent to a printer are printed with an SPSAVE option to let reports get reprinted on demand — without having to re-run the production job.

"A good share of our nightly production we're just dropping off into folders on our e-mail system," Bailey said. "That information is available anytime day or night, , from anywhere" using Web browser access into Exchange. When folders get full, the college writes the contents onto CD ROMs. "I'm doing data warehousing, in essence, providing them with usable formats with the report data when they need it for research."

The software translates reports in formats as varied as Excel spreadsheets, HTML, Word Perfect and PDF. "It's no problem," Bailey said. "You give each individual the format they prefer to have, for the pages that are associated with them."

A future project will let the college e-mail rosters each day of the registration periods to instructors and professors. "Only about 50 percent of the faculty want an electronic roster they can use as a gradebook," Bailey said, "but the ones that want it, want it really bad." At Seattle Community College, byREQUEST lets the IT management mail reports to only those who, well, request it. ⚡

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