

Software Solutions for Managing Public Access Terminals – June 2001

Rev. 1

Introduction

Time-out software comes packaged in many forms. Most of the software products have been developed by software makers from one of three markets: desktop control, cost recovery, or patron management. Few time-out products exist that simply track the length of a session and then shutdown the computer. Most products interact with other programs or provide additional features that relate to managing computers used by the public.

The first section [Time Out Software – No Extras](#) includes the simplest type of time-out software. These have been selected from a larger pool of very basic programs that are generally designed for the home market. Most of these products are not suitable for a public library. However, the four included in this section might be appropriate in certain situations.

The second section [Reservation and Time Out Software](#) includes products that automate the process of reserving public access terminals as well as controlling the length of the sessions. In some cases, these programs allow the patron to make their own reservation, while others require library staff participation.

[Desktop Control Software with Time Controls](#) summarizes some of the products offered by the two makers of well-known desktop control software, WinSelect and WinU. Using these products for controlling the length of a patron's session provides the advantage of ensuring that the desktop remains consistent for each patron and reduces maintenance headaches. But these products are less likely to provide features associated with reservations, patron databases, print control or cost recovery.

The most sophisticated products are the [Complete Patron Access Solutions](#), which generally provide the features of all the above programs. They may be sold as one integrated package, or sold in individual modules. In most cases they provide a link to your existing integrated library system making it easier to manage patron accounts. They generally provide cost recovery options for printing and some fees and offer relatively sophisticated reporting capabilities. In one case, the product requires the use of smart card technology, while most products offer this type of integration as an option.

The [Card Readers](#) section provides links to smart card vendors known to service libraries. In most cases, card readers can be used in conjunction with many of the products described in the other categories. In most cases, if the product requires a login, you can assume the patron can swipe a card instead.

[General Resources](#) provides some useful links to material on the Internet including articles written by Joan Frye Williams and Karen Schneider, a web page of time-out software links maintained by Jack Albrecht and links to two libraries that have rolled out smart card solutions that seem to be working for them.

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Time Out Software – No Extras

Time Limit Manager

<http://www.fortres.com/products/tlm.htm>

Fortres, the makers of Clean Slate and Fortres 101, just released this new time-out product, Time Limit Manager (TLM). TLM has an Admin TLM and a Client TLM component. The Admin component is used to create a floppy disk encoded with time and date restrictions. The floppy is then used by patrons to “load time” into the public access terminals. A time clock is displayed for users throughout session and they are given a 2-minute warning when their time is running out. Once time runs out, all programs are closed and the patron is logged off.

Computer Timer

<http://www.librarygeek.com/timer.html>

Free time-out software created by a technician at the Northwest Regional Library System in Florida. Originally designed to work with Gates computers but will work with other systems too. Features: inactivity time-out, custom “time is up” and “agree to IUP” policy pages, visible timer with warnings, shuts down some programs (browsers) but not Microsoft Office nor Corel suite programs, limited override capability.

Tempo

<http://www.winselect.com/pages/download/tempo.htm>

Shareware program from HyperTechnologies, the makers of WinSelect. Login starts timer then login name and timer remains visible on desktop. No other features.

WatchDog

<http://www.sarna.net/watchdog/>

This program is really designed for home use but could be used in a library. It can be used to restrict time associated with a login on a daily, weekly or monthly basis and can set a minimum time lapse required between logins. Also can restrict programs a user can run or restrict login by time of day.

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Reservation and Time Out Software

PC Cop

<http://www.pc-cop.com/>

Made by Card Meter Systems, this client-server product manages multiple public access workstations from one interface. Patron must sign up for computer with library staff who enter patron name and PC Cop assigns them a PC and generates a password for the session. If no computers are available they can be put on a waiting list or a reservation can be made. When the patron's assigned computer is available, their name appears in the login box (on the screen) and they must enter their special password to begin the session. Once successfully logged in, the timer remains displayed and warnings are provided until their time runs out. At the end of each session, PC Cop can be set to close all open programs, empty the cache and open any URL you define. The next scheduled user's name then appears and the computer is ready for the next session. Staff, using User Administration screen, can extend or end user sessions, view the status of reservations and the waiting list, and view the time left on all current sessions. Administration module requires Microsoft Server NT 4.0. Patron access computers can be Windows 95/98/NT.

SignUp

<http://www.pharos.com/products/signup.asp>

Pharos System, makers of UnipriNT, created this self-service system that allows patrons to make their own reservations. Once a reservation is made, only that patron is allowed to log into the reserved computer at that time. Patrons can customize their desktop environment and use those settings on any PC. Access levels and daily user quotas can be set for individual users. The product integrates with many 3rd party filtering products, some patron databases (DRA, III, Dynix and Pinnacle for example). Statistical reports are available. Server component requires windows NT 4.0 or 2000 Server. Client machines can be Windows 95/98, ME, NT 4.0, 2000 or Mac 8.5.

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Desktop Control Software with Time Controls

WinU

<http://www.bardon.com/winU.htm>

Secure Windows System Management and Remote Administration

Full Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000 user interface replacement with security access control, timeout, logging, web-browser monitoring, remote administration, and other configuration options. Presents a simplified user interface and lets administrators set how much time each program can be used.

WinU also logs all accessed websites, provides statistical logging and provides desktop security features including making drives read-only or invisible, locking the CD-ROM drive and wallpaper. Time limits for each user can be set per day, per week or per month. Can be centrally administered. Runs on any Windows machine.

WinSelect and Tempo

<http://www.winselect.com/index.html>

Tempo, described above can be used in conjunction with another Hyper Technologies program, WinSelect, to create a secure desktop environment with time controls. WinSelect allows system administrators to selectively control or disable third-party program features and Windows operating system features including opening, saving and printing, control of icons, shortcuts and folders and the boot-up process. Tempo, a free module available from Hyper Technologies, adds a login screen and timer. Available for Windows 95/98, ME, NT 4.0 and 2000.

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Complete Patron Access Solutions

CybraryN

<http://www.cybraryn.com/products/cybraryn.htm#time>

Computers By Design provides a patron management solution in their CybraryN product starting with a customizable user interface that can restrict access to specific programs. Existing patron database can be used to authenticate users. Most major ILS products are supported. Provides desktop and system controls, can suggest breaks at specified intervals, logs off users after a specified time and resets all applications for the new user.

CybraryN can be used with another Computers By Design product, CybraryRSVP, to automate scheduling of public access PCs. Patrons can schedule themselves at the next available PC or at scheduled times. They are provided a receipt with their reservation information and are granted a grace time for late arrival before the computer is returned to the pool for re-assignment.

CybraryPrint can also be purchased separately to control the use of printers and to assist with charging users and collecting payment for print jobs. CybrarySite, yet another product, can be used for PCs to be used exclusively for Internet access (kiosk mode).

Library Guardian

<http://www.libraryguardian.com/>

Guardianet's Internet Access Management and Print Management products are based on a smart card technology. Internet Access Management manages patron time, access levels, terminal reset and personalization. Print Management controls printing and cost recovery.

Internet Access Management closes the browser and clears the cache at the end of each session, provides filtering based on patron selection (set at the time they sign up for their library cards), yet allows each patron to come back to a familiar desktop complete with their own favorites, cookies and web history. The program maintains anonymous session, machine and financial statistics, allows for patron specific time controls and over-rides, and allows the library to restrict access levels. Print Management allows library to recover costs associated with printing while providing additional privacy for patrons by verifying jobs to be printed and holding printout at a release station until patrons are ready to pick them up.

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Complete Patron Access Solutions (continued)

Library Online Computer Booking and Time Control Module

<http://www.sri.bc.ca/CompBooking.htm>

Strategic Resources, Inc. (SRI) has developed this client-server solution “to address the entire booking and computer use cycle.” System accommodates multiple branches and can handle multiple workstation types. Patrons can be assigned a computer on the fly or can make reservations via touch-tone phone or the Internet. Monitors and reports usage statistics, handles filtered or unfiltered Internet access, allows for one-time or temporary non-patron bookings, notifies via e-mail or phone in the event of workstation unavailability, provides numerous options for block bookings and controls for groups of computers, and differing branch schedules. Shows patrons warnings when time is running out and then automatically logs them off at the end of their time slot. **Server-side requires SQL Server on NT.** Workstations can be Windows 95/98, NT or 2000.

PC Reservation

<http://www.interfacesw.com/pcreservation/howitworks.htm>

Interface Software, the makers of LPT:One a print control product, has created this highly modularized suite of programs to manage public access terminals. Individual modules include Client Module which controls each public access computer, Management Console for setting system-wide preferences, managing reservations and logging statistics, Remote Reservation Stations for adding remote sign-up and self-service options, SIP Validation and Authentication and Accounting modules provide authentication control with your existing library management system and Reporting Module adds detailed statistical summaries. There are three modes of operation provided: Standalone, Staff Managed and Self-Service.

In standalone mode, patron logs in with a PIN given to them at the front desk. The timer remains displayed. Visual and audible warnings can be set to warn that session is ending due to time or inactivity. At end of session, all programs are closed and the computer is returned to the pool of available computers. Staff-managed sessions can be via reservation (not just walk-up) or where special PCs are defined (Gates machines, express systems, word processing stations, etc). Staff can end or extend staff-managed sessions, reboot computers or even shutdown the computer. Self-Service mode makes it possible for patrons to book their own reservations. The patron is given a receipt indicating their session start time and end time, their PIN and the name of the computer to which they’ve been assigned. All modules can be run on any version of Windows, no server is required.

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Complete Patron Access Solutions (continued)

SAM

<http://www.comprisetechologies.com/libraries.htm>

Comprise Technologies offers SAM (Smart Access Manager) for controlling all aspects of the public access computer including desktop control, PC reservation, time controls, Internet filtering and printing. Time Manager controls session length and inactivity time-outs and intervals between sessions. Reservation Manager is used by patrons to make reservations on any computer or over the Internet and can be used to reserve other subscription-based resources as well. Internet access can be unfiltered, restricted to Comprise Technologies' KidNet or limited by your own library policies. Print Manager controls printing and invoicing for printing. Charges can vary by printer. Desktop Manager provides control over desktop and system settings. Report Manager provides statistical information about computer use, sites blocked, print jobs (but not all URLs visited). The patron access terminals are centrally managed, can be tied back to your existing patron database and used at multiple branches. Works with most major ILS products.

SparkNet NP800 Public Authentication System

<http://casi.blaze.ca/products.html>

Currency Activated Systems, Inc. (CASI), a company created by a library employee, has created a server-based patron authentication system that integrates with existing patron databases. It provides advanced booking via phone or Internet and times out users (after providing a 2-minute warning) at the end of their session. If a patron logs in to a computer that has been reserved within the next hour, the patron is warned that their session will be short. Patrons with reservations must login within 5 minutes of their scheduled session or the computer is returned to the pool for reassignment. Remaining session time, patron name and any problem codes associated with patron are viewable in real-time monitor. Prompts, user settings and individual computer settings are customizable and managed remotely. Keeps statistical logs of computer use and provides summary reports by computer, library or system. **Server component resides on a Unix-based system provided by company.** Client software can be run on all Windows platform and Citrix.

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Card Readers

XCP Products-2 - <http://www.compcontrols.com/Products/xcp.htm>
Maker and/or reseller of the popular vend-a-card systems.

Model A-321 PC Time Controller - <http://www.actinc.theshoppe.com/A321.htm>
Hardware-based mechanism for controlling time limits at public access terminals. Requires a valid card to be inserted to enable PC to function.

Diebold - Card Systems - <http://www2.diebold.com/opccsol/default.htm>
This company provided the smart card system installed the program used by Hickory Public Library. See the article about them in the General Resources section.

General Resources

“Internet Session Time Management Solutions”
http://www.infopeople.org/training/past/2000/diff_situations/
Handout from InFoPeople Managing Difficult Situations in the Library Workshop. Prepared by Joan Frye Williams, March 2000.

“Time Control for Workstations”
<http://www.ala.org/online/netlib/il1298.html>
December 1998 article by Karen Schneider appearing in Library Journal.

Computer Timer Software Evaluation and Specs
<http://home.earthlink.net/~coyote8/timers.htm>
Jack Albrecht’s website with links to information about time-out software.

Hickory Electronic Patron Cards (HELP)
<http://www.ci.hickory.nc.us/library/general/helpcard/help.htm>
Information about the smart card system in use at Hickory Public Library in North Carolina, the self-professed first public library to introduce smart card technology.

Press Release: Englewood Public Library Installs “Smart Card” Internet Access Control System
<http://www.ci.engagewood.co.us/news/Press/smartcard4-20-99.htm>
Englewood Public Library's 1999 press release about SmartGuardian (now known as Library Guardian).