



## Review: Print Audit 5 print management software

### Keep tabs on who's printing what, and manage your costs

**Manufacturer:** <http://www.printauditeurope.com>


#### Technical specifications

#### Ratings

**Overall rating:** 

**Features:** 

**Ease of use:** 

**Value for money:** 

**Ave. user rating** Not rated yet

**Rate this product**

#### Verdict

**Pros:** Monitors local as well as network printers; Apple Mac client; Autocad and Microstation plug-ins; local caching when client disconnected; bundled reporting tools

**Cons:** Client deployment can take some time

**Overall:** Print Audit 5 is a flexible print-monitoring tool; small companies will be most interested in the cost-recovery features

Alan Stevens, Personal Computer World 06 Jun 2006

There are lots of good reasons for using Print Audit 5 (PA5).

It can, for example, tell you who's printing what and whether they're really using that expensive multifunction laser you've just installed or a desktop inkjet that costs the earth to keep in cartridges.

More than that, however, it lets you monitor and manage your print costs.

Unlike most print-management tools, **PA5** is client- rather than server-based which makes for a somewhat lengthy setup.

It does, however, confer the advantage of being able to monitor all types of prints, whether to locally attached printers and plotters or via a network print server.

No changes to the Windows drivers are needed, and plug-ins for Autocad and Microstation will be installed automatically where these applications are detected.

Deployment starts with the creation of the database used to hold the collected data, along with installation of a special client communicator program and management/reporting tools.

On a small network (up to 50 users) a flat-file (Access) database is provided, but for anything bigger you'll need Microsoft's SQL Server – either the full package or the free MSDE or SQL Express editions.

Fortunately no database knowledge is required, and there is no need for client PCs to have database access, with all the transactions handled through the client communicator using a user-selectable TCP port.

The client communicator needs to be installed on an always-on Windows host; typically, the database server.

However, if it's switched off or becomes unavailable for any reason, clients will continue to cache print data locally until communication is re-established.

Next you need to create a network-distribution folder from which the PA5 client will be loaded onto every PC to be monitored.

That can either be done manually or, more usually, automated using login scripts, Group Policy or the custom client status and deployment tool included in the package.

Once installed the client software starts logging print activity straight away, no matter what the source.

Job query and reporting tools are also provided to make sense of the information collected, with a choice of standard reports and a custom report generator.

Data can also be exported for further analysis and imported into accounting packages if required.

By default, everything is priced using a base rate of 10p per page, which you can alter using custom profiles applied to the lists of printers and network users collated by the software.

Cost modifiers can be applied to reflect paper size, colour and duplex printing, plus there are facilities to ignore printing to a file, pdf generation and printing from specific applications.

Finally the software can be set to ask users to input customer or job information via a pop-up whenever a print job is processed.

Up to four custom codes and associated values can be defined. Users can also be asked for Pin codes before they're allowed to print.

You can manage printer access by redirecting large documents to the most appropriate devices and by setting document quotas.

A great tool for small engineering or architectural practices wanting to charge for printing, PA5 is equally useful for anyone looking to understand their print spending and manage it more effectively.

The data collected can be a real eye-opener and, configured correctly, it should pay for itself quickly.