

RMIT University boosts print speed and quality for students with HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer



At a glance

Industry: Professional Photography and Graphic Design

Business name: RMIT University

Headquarters: Melbourne, Australia

Website: rmit.edu.au



Challenge

- Improve print speed and quality for art and design students.
- Reduce the printer service and management requirements for Information Technology Services staff.
- Ensure printing resources are available when students need them.

Solution

- The HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer with HP Vivid Photo Inks.

Results

- Students received improved print quality with photorealistic presentation of detailed images such as digital art and architectural renderings, up to size A0.
- Reduced management overhead for Information Technology Services staff with options for self-management by students and remote management by staff.
- Faster print times for students with wait times reduced from 40 minutes to less than ten, leading to more jobs produced each day.
- Wider choice of print media including matte and semi-gloss finishes offering choices for students in the look of their finished work.

“We’ve been running the Designjet Z6200 hard in the lead up to end of year presentations and exhibitions and it hasn’t missed a beat.”

– Remi Krawiec, Technical Services Coordinator, RMIT University



For design students at Australia’s Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, getting the right print quality for their submitted work is a vital factor in their overall assessment, and can impact how they commence their professional careers. So when it came time to upgrade the professional printers available to students at the university’s College of Design and Social Context, it was crucial the printers installed met the expectations of students and staff alike, in terms of quality and reliability.

With more than 74,000 students spread across five campuses in two countries, RMIT University is Australia’s largest tertiary education institution. The Melbourne-based University is vocationally-oriented, and is organized into three colleges that cater to specific disciplines.

Of these, the College of Design and Social Context covers the disciplines of art, media, architecture and design, fashion and social studies, amongst others. Many of the courses offered within the college place a strong emphasis on visual communication, and often require students to submit high-quality hardcopy prints of their work as part of the assessment process. This can include anything from highly-detailed architectural renderings to large format, high-resolution photographs and digital images.

The prints are a significant component of a student’s assessment, making production a potentially stressful exercise. Not only must the printed output be of the highest quality, but the printers must also be available for students to use when needed.

In-house print capabilities

Traditionally students would rely on external printing facilities to produce high-quality prints, but since 2008 RMIT University has invested in building its own in-house print capabilities at its campus in Melbourne’s central business district. The printers are managed by the university’s Information Technology Services (ITS) group.

Throughout that period, the college has implemented several wide-format printers from different suppliers, including HP Designjet 800 and 5500 printers. So when increasing student demand meant it was time for a new addition to its fleet, HP was one of three suppliers considered.

According to Remi Krawiec, the Technical Services coordinator for ITS at the College of Design and Social Context, “the college had a number of criteria that needed to be satisfied, starting with the need to be able to rapidly and reliably deliver high quality prints. As the workload on the printers is driven primarily by the study schedule of the students, usage tends to peak around assessment times. With prints critical to a student’s assessment, the device chosen had to be reliable under such strain.

“Predominantly students would print folios between A2 and A0, and we would have 100 people trying to print their work in one day,” Krawiec says. “So we were looking for something fast and able to sustain that sort of volume.

“The college also needed a device that was very easy to manage. Students have access to the print facility 24 hours a day and staff cannot always be on hand to attend to problems. Now students have the ability to configure and manipulate their own printing. We simply make sure the device is online, profiled correctly and printing at the best quality it can.”

Competitive tender

After sourcing quotes from three different companies, the college selected the HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer, supplied and installed by HP reseller Celmac. Krawiec explains, “It was the college’s earlier experience with HP Designjet Printers that helped decide in HP’s favor. The HP Designjets have always been good for us. They are quite the workhorses when it comes to coping with our load. They’ve always been reliable.”

Previous HP printers were purchased on the basis of their rapid throughput. In this instance the print quality and variety of available media were the priorities. “The printer needed to be able to do a range of things, not just a black and white draft print, to give students the ability to use that device for their final volumes,” says Krawiec. “So we needed the quality of the HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer. Being able to use various media was one of the key attributes we were looking for.”

Krawiec explains, “Another benefit of the HP Designjet Z6200 Printer is the ability to manage the device via a web browser. It allows levels of security and manipulation via the web interface. From our perspective, it requires very little work to maintain its color-correctness, it is very easy to manage, and we haven’t had to do a lot. It has built-in accounting, which we reference constantly, to monitor the volumes and peaks of printing.”

The HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer meets the college’s need for a device that students could easily manage themselves. “It has a nice, easy-to-follow display that can inform students if something is not right or if it is low on ink. Whatever problem they have, it is actually quite intuitive and gives straightforward instructions,” Krawiec confirms.

Beating expectations

The printer is a hit with students in terms of its speed and quality of output. According to Cortney Bruch, a senior specialist lab tutor within the college, print times have decreased from 40 minutes to less than ten minutes with the HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer, which has eliminated much of the stress students felt as they waited in the queue for their work to be printed. Given these prints form part of a student’s assessment, waiting in line and hoping the machines will keep producing high quality prints can be an anxious experience for students.

“At peak times, when there are hundreds of students using it each day, five to ten minutes per print is amazing,” says Bruch. “The quality is so realistic, especially for fine art photography as well as for architecture students producing photo-realistic renders. With such high quality images it really makes a difference when the printer is producing what you see on screen.”

According to Krawiec the HP Designjet Z6200 Photo Printer performs admirably against the various selection criteria. “We needed the quality of a photo inkjet, and it needed to be fast and reliable.”

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4AA4-5183ENW, April 2013

