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### Center Spotlight



Are you an alumnus of RIT or CIAS? Do you work in the imaging or graphic arts industries? Then why not reconnect with RIT and fellow alumni? Look below to see some upcoming CIAS alumni events!

#### **Graph Expo Alumni Reception**

*(Chicago, IL) - Sept 12*

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#### **CIAS/School of Print Media**

##### **Isaiah Thomas Awards Reception**

*(Washington, DC) - Sept 21*

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#### **CIAS/School of Print Media**

##### **Isaiah Thomas Awards Ceremony**

*(Washington, DC) - Sept 22*

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#### **CIAS/SPAS Photo Plus Alumni Reception**

*(New York, NY) - Oct 28*

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## Drop2Print: Using Print Specifications to Find Print Service Providers

Desktop publishing tools have enabled individuals, groups, and businesses to create print-ready documents they can readily send to desktop or networked printers. However, for documents that will need to be produced in larger quantities or with different binding and finishing options than are available through the desktop and networked printers, the process of identifying an appropriate print service provider can present a challenge.

This is due to the lack of a common vocabulary and method for communicating job requirements (customer) and services available (print service providers). Additionally, many digital print service providers have unique storefronts with proprietary methods for submitting content. This may lead to customers having to fill out a separate job ticket for each company's storefront, which can be a tedious task.

The goal of this month's research project, *[Drop2Print: A Model for PDF-Specifications to Drive the Discovery of Print Service Providers \(PICRM-2011-07\)](#)*, by Patricia Albanese, Tona Henderson, Michael Riordan, and Benjamin Vanderberg, was to create a prototype and model for a simple, easy-to-use tool for end users to discover the specific print service providers that meet their requirements for production and fulfillment. The resulting prototype, [Drop2Print](#), is an easy-to-use desktop application that leverages the specifications of an end user's PDF document to simplify the discovery of appropriate print service providers.

To find out about more alumni events, visit the [RIT Alumni Association website!](#)

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### Print in the Mix

Print in the Mix is "a unique site demonstrating the role of print as a viable information medium in the marketing mix." This **free** resource is published by the Printing Industry Center.

#### Sample Fast Fact:

*According to the study, today's shoppers are digging up more information, from more sources, before they buy. The survey reveals that the average shopper uses 10.4 sources of information to make a decision in 2011, up from 5.3 sources in 2010. Those 10.4 sources range from TV commercials and magazine articles, to recommendations from friends and family, to websites, ratings and blogs online.*

[Read the full fast fact here.](#)

Have you visited **Print in the Mix** yet? Find out how this site can help you 'make the case' for print!

[printinthemix.rit.edu](http://printinthemix.rit.edu)

*Funded by The Print Council*

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**Industry Education & Training**

## Methodology

To get a better sense of the pieces of information that are important to pass on to a print provider, a range of specific print service providers were evaluated to establish benchmark data on how job specification information was gathered and utilized. This research was limited to print service providers who offered only electrophotographic or wide-format inkjet printing services.

The specific goals of this initial research were to:

- Define the common job-ticket specifications across a range of digital print service providers. This includes small, medium, and large-scale print service providers.
- Determine the unique limitations of different print service providers. For example, what finishing options do they provide?
- Determine the number of print service providers using JDF as their means for describing job information.

The print service providers studied were:

- **Digital Publishing Center:** The [Digital Publishing Center \(DPC\)](#) is a student-run facility in the School of Print Media of Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). The DPC provides an educational and testing environment for students and facilitates the production of class projects. The system's workflow uses a combination of Xinet for asset management, Dalim Twist for pre-flight and processing, and a variety of digital presses from Xerox and Canon for print production. Submission is done through an online portal.
- **Lulu:** [Lulu](#) is a digital print provider well known for its ability to allow customers to easily produce their own personal books. They provide a number of binding and paper options and have an intuitive front-end portal.
- **MagCloud:** [MagCloud](#) is a web-based, on-demand magazine printer. It allows members to print letter-size magazines between 4 to 100 pages. Users have virtually no control over the technical specifications of their publication.

RIT provides training in both traditional and digital technologies using world renowned instructors, comprehensive prepress and press labs, and state-of-the-art imaging facilities.

Our programs and services can help your organization make the most profitable use of new technologies, enhance productivity, boost customer satisfaction and produce a healthy bottom line.

**Upcoming industry education programs include:**

**September 19 - 22**  
[Orientation to the Graphic Arts](#)

**October 12 - 14**  
[Color Printing Fundamentals](#)

**October 24 - 26**  
[Digital Printing Bootcamp](#)

**October 26 - 28**  
[Lithographic Troubleshooting](#)

For more information on these and other programs, or to register for any of these programs, visit

[printlab.rit.edu](http://printlab.rit.edu)

**About the eReview**

The *eReview* is a monthly publication of the Printing Industry Center at RIT for registered Affiliate companies. Articles are also published in the quarterly printed publication *PrintReview*.

**[Forward this eReview.](#)**

Once users have uploaded a file for a magazine, they are able to share it through their website with other MagCloud users, as well as have it printed and shipped to themselves and others.

- **FedEx Office:** [FedEx Office](#), formerly FedEx Kinkos, is a national chain of retail outlet print shops that offer digital printing, copying, and binding services. Unlike other print shop franchises, every shop is owned by FedEx, making it the seventh largest printing company in North America. In addition to walk-in jobs, FedEx Office provides an online portal for customers to submit jobs for output at a retail store. Customers are able to pick up their prints at a retail store or have them shipped to their door.
- **Staples:** [Staples](#) is a national office supply retail chain. In addition to selling office supplies, many Staples retail stores also offer digital printing, copying, and binding services. The company also provides its own online portal for submitting jobs for pickup within retail stores.

Each of the previous print service providers' different workflows and specifications were analyzed to find commonalities. Consistent specifications were determined and were used to create the core job ticket.

The core job ticket includes the following fields:

|            |               |                     |
|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Salutation | Phone Number  | Proof               |
| First Name | Email Address | Bleeds              |
| Last Name  | Job Name      | Cutting             |
| Company    | Color         | Binding Edge        |
| Address    | Quantity      | Binding Type        |
| City       | Orientation   | Folding             |
| State      | Duplexing     | Lamination          |
| Zip Code   | Paper Size    | Pick Up or Delivery |
| Country    | Paper Type    | Due Date            |
|            | Paper Coating | Notes               |

While several companies have systems that request information beyond these specifications, these are the core pieces of information that were common to any job. Additional information may also be required for large-format jobs and for jobs requiring

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## About the Center

Dedicated to the study of major business environment influences in the printing industry precipitated by new technologies and societal changes, the Printing Industry Center at RIT addresses the concerns of the

more intricate finishing. These core fields of information laid the foundation for the development of the system architecture.

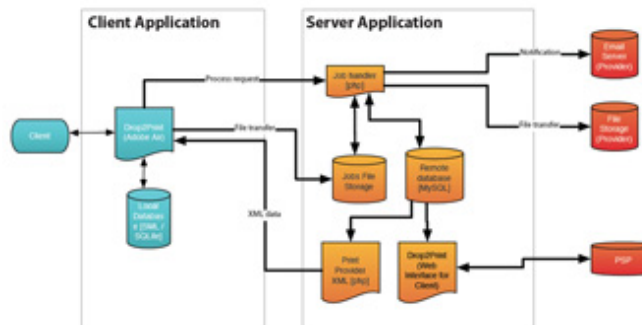
The next step was to create a list of the most common products produced by the sample population of print service providers. An examination of these products was used in the creation of pre-defined job ticket templates, which are listed in the full monograph.

## Development

Multiple platforms were considered for the development of the interface application for the customer side. A desktop application was considered a high priority, as it allows the customer to have the application interact directly with documents on the desktop and allows for the use of drag-and-drop and other interactive features. Different development platforms were assessed, including Java and Adobe Air. Adobe Air was chosen because of its affinity to Adobe PDF and its rapid, user-friendly development.

**Figure 1. Diagram of the Drop2Print client and server system**

[click to view image full size](#)



## Results

**Figure 2. Main page of Drop2Print website**

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printing industry through educational outreach and research initiatives.

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The desktop application for Drop2Print was written in Adobe AIR. This cross-platform application allows customers to fill their job ticket, find print service providers that suit their needs, and then send the file to the print service provider for production. Additional options for users, such as using pre-defined templates, are also available. These templates are for users who are doing common jobs such as unbound 8.5" x 11" sheets or a saddle-stitch calendar. User profiles also include a feature to enable users to change their geographic location to support searching for a print service provider when traveling or when using a distributed print model for production.

The server application allows print service providers to:

- Register a profile with Drop2Print to have their print services included in client search results.
- Set conditions on their profile to filter the jobs that they will accept.
- Transfer files from the client's computer to their FTP server.
- Download the most recent client job information submitted to their company.

## Conclusion

Drop2Print is currently under development. More information on the project is available at <http://opl.rit.edu/projects/drop2print/>.

**Complexity Rating: 1**

Rating reflects complexity level of statistical analysis: 1=none, 2=moderate, 3=difficult.

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## 2010-2011 Research Monographs

To read about this research in detail, download the monograph from: <http://print.rit.edu/pubs/picrm201107.pdf>

Research publications of the Center are available at: <http://print.rit.edu/research/index>

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