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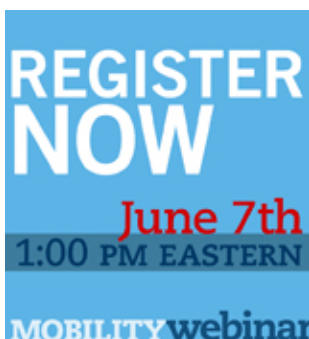
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How to Save Valuable Desk Space With All-in-One PCs

Smaller form factors, ease of management and convenience spark a move toward all-in-one PCs.

Karen D. Schwartz

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For more than a decade, patrons of the Roosevelt Public Library in Roosevelt, N.Y., had to make do with aging computers that didn't have the capacity or speed to handle many of the routine tasks users perform today. But the budget for upgrades finally came through, and when a newly built library opened its doors last summer, it included new computers for patrons and staff.

When choosing the replacement equipment, Library Director Joy Rankin and Technology Consultant Paul.

Mistretta sought a state-of-the-art computer in a small form factor that would consume little workspace and could be easily moved.

The library purchased 49 Lenovo ThinkCentre M90z all-in-one units, which combine the monitor with the CPU. When paired with a wireless keyboard and mouse, the units take up very little space, with minimal cord clutter. Roosevelt Public Library ordered most of the boxes loaded with Microsoft Office 2010 Standard, and a smaller number with Office 2010 Professional for staff.

Space Savers

"All-in-one PCs make a lot of sense for our environment," Rankin explains. "Not only do we have the flexibility to move them around, but patrons want to be able to use the machines with other materials to study or write papers. There was no room to do that with our older computers."

Rankin weighed several factors before deciding on outfitting her facility with all-in-one computers. First, the all-in-ones attract patrons who may have previously avoided the library because of its outdated technology. Making computers available provides a valuable service to the community, especially for residents who don't have computers at home.

With the new technology, patrons are better equipped to write papers, surf the Internet and use social networking, Rankin says. Customers can print materials for a fee with wireless Xerox printers. And for the first time, the library may offer video chat to its patrons.

After Apple debuted its all-in-one iMac, many other manufacturers followed with their own models, including Asus, HP, Lenovo, Samsung and ViewSonic; Vizio announced plans to enter the market this year. Chris Connery, vice president at the consulting firm DisplaySearch, notes that all-in-one shipments are on the rise; he expects the growth to continue over the next several years.

"People have gotten more comfortable with them and like the small form factor combined with large displays," says Connery. "All-in-ones are easier to buy and configure because there are fewer components, and there is only one asset to manage."

Longview Public Library's new computer lab in Longview, Texas, hosts 23 Apple iMacs. Library Director Kara Spitz got the idea to deploy all-in-ones after her daughter was admitted to Texas Tech University, which required the purchase of an Apple computer for the budding graphic design major.

70% The workspace consumed by an HP Compaq 6000 all-in-one PC compared with an HP Compaq 6000 Pro Small Form Factor PC with a 22-inch monitor

SOURCE: HP

"I realized that there are a lot of people who use our library who could benefit from having the technology to do video editing and web design," Spitz says. She also likes the sleek look and space-saving features provided by the iMacs.

Tapping funds from the Junior League, the city of Longview and Friends of the Library for the purchase, the library rolled out the new computers in February. Along with providing patrons with graphics capabilities, the library plans to offer residents classes about how to use the Apple devices, Spitz says.

Order in the Court

In Winnebago County, Ill., the court system has relied on some form of all-in-one computers for about five years, including a mix of HP Compaq 8200 Elite and HP Compaq 6000 Pro models. Judges use the units on the bench where space is at a premium, while defense and prosecutors also have the units available to them at the counsel tables. In the court clerk's offices, touch-screen models facilitate processing fines and fees.

CIO Gus Gentner says all-in-one computers are easier for workers to use and save energy compared with traditional PCs. "They also make sense for the IT department because they're easier to deploy and manage with standard images, and they come apart easily so we can swap parts in and out very quickly."

Additionally, the county plans to deploy all-in-one PCs in its jails for corrections officers to access inmate information and process inmates. The IT department is also working with a contractor to deploy the devices in secure enclosures and affix them to jailhouse walls for use by inmates.

A Path to the Cloud

All-in-one PCs make an ideal steppingstone toward cloud computing. As organizations move to the cloud, their desktop needs change. They require less memory, smaller hard drives and fewer features.

"Eventually, we'll get to the point where you'll have a 'smart monitor' — an intelligent display with less power than a PC, but enough to do the basics while accessing applications in the cloud," says Chris Connery, vice president at the consulting firm DisplaySearch.

Such a unit will consume minimal physical space while providing the type of interactive user experience people expect. It will also reduce costs and desktop complexity. The all-in-one is a step in that direction, Connery says.

About the Author
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