LaserUser 2.5

by Philip J. Brandenberger

LaserUser is a Control Panel (cdev) which controls aspects of LaserWriter-based printing on the Macintosh. It serves a purpose similar to ChooserUser, though is a more complex, and more useful solution. It is intended for use in a network environment where multiple users use Macintoshes which print to a central printing site. One must be able to distinguish different users' printouts; the only reliable way to do this is by printing a cover-page for each document with the user's name on it (and the name of the document, time, etc.). Most software provides for the selection of a cover-page in the LaserWriter print job box, and the so-called "chooser name" provides the user-name which appears on these cover-pages.

There are two main difficulties: one, users won't always select the correct cover-page option, and two, users won't always remember to select the Chooser and change their user-name before printing. ChooserUser addresses only this second problem, by signalling Apple's RESPONDER to request a name during startup. The problem with this, of course, is that users must then remember to restart the computer. This is fine, of course, for floppy-disk based Macs– each user probably has a personal system disk which retains the correct Chooser name. However, for public-use Macintoshes with hard-disks, this is unsatisfactory, because users will not remember to restart the machine any more often than they will change their user-name in the Chooser.

ChooserUser fails to address first concern above entirely: that users will print documents which don't have a cover-page on them, negating the value of a correct user-name entirely.

LaserUser was written to address these concerns. It is a Control Panel which installs at startup to wait for the user to print. After the user has sent the "Print" command, LaserUser presents this dialog box:

The current Chooser-name is supplied in the box for the user to edit, or press return to accept (or click "Print..." of course). The Chooser-name is updated, and the document is printed under the entered name.

To make sure cover-pages appear on documents, LaserUser can place cover-pages on documents being printed, overriding any cover-page setting in the "Print..." dialog box. To allow flexibility, cover-page options are configured in the Control Panel.
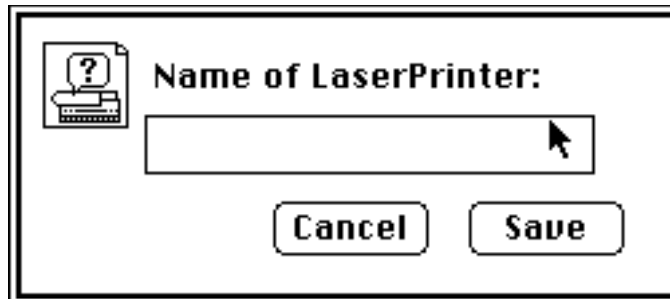
If the "Cover Page Monitor" box is unchecked, the cover-page settings in the application's "Print..." dialog are left unchanged.

If the "Cover Page Monitor" box is checked, LaserUser attempts to decide whether the document should be printed with a cover-page. The rationale is this: in many cases, some LaserWriters on a network are for public use and would need cover-pages; other LaserWriters would be private, though still accessible from the network. Therefore, these public LaserWriters would need cover-pages, where it would be a waste of paper to print cover-pages to private ones.

IMPORTANT To print cover-pages on ALL documents to ALL printers, you need enter only one name for a LaserWriter, which is "LaserWriter".

The scrolling list in the Control Panel lists the printers which need cover-pages; any other printer selected will not receive a Macintosh-designed cover-page. NOTE: Some spooling software, such as Alisa Systems and Pacer generates its own cover-page independent of a Mac-based one– thus it is possible to get two cover-pages for one document. In these cases, enter the name of these spooled printers as not needing a cover-page from LaserUser.

To add a new LaserWriter name, click on "New...." To edit the present list, select the desired printer name and click on "Edit...." This box will appear:

into which you enter the name of the printer, USING CORRECT CAPITALIZATION AS IT
APPEARS IN THE CHOOSER. Wildcards are acceptable: *LaserUser matches all of the name
entered to any part of the name of the selected printer.* Therefore, entering the name "Bertha's"
would assign cover-pages to both printers "Bertha's IINT" and to "Bertha's IINTX".

LaserUser performs one additional task– to optionally restrict the user to a single copy per print
job. If the "Multiple Copy Monitor" box is checked in the Control Panel, a user printing more
than one copy will be warned that only one copy will be printed, and LaserUser will reset the
count of copies to 1 before the document is transmitted to the printer.

LaserUser is useful in a network environment which serves many users, many of whom are
doubtlessly inexperienced, or don't follow rules (such as college students). Because of this,
LaserUser's settings (in the Control Panel) may be configured as desired, and then *Locked* so the
LaserUser Control Panel is unavailable. If you click on the "Lock..." button, this box will
appear:

If you select "Lock," the LaserUser configuration window will be unavailable after you close the
Control Panel. THERE IS NO WAY SHORT OF HACKING this change can be reversed; do
not lock these settings without making a backup of your configured LaserUser first.

COMPATIBILITY:
LaserUser works on every machine tested, including Macintosh II,IIx/cx,IIsi,IIci,IIfx,SE/30,SE,
and Plus. There is no reason to believe it won't work on an LC. It is 32-bit clean and Virtual
Memory compatible, and works equally well (though with color icons in 7.0) under both System
6.0.x and System 7.0.

SETUP:

Place the LaserUser Control Panel in the System Folder for System 6.0.x, or in the Control Panels folder in the System Folder for System 7.0. LaserUser must load at startup to be effective, though it can be configured without restart.

ERROR CONDITIONS:
If LaserUser is unable to find it's program file, it will notify the user. If LaserUser detects that a LaserWriter is not the selected printer, it will do nothing short of emitting one beep.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
LaserUser's algorithm for setting cover-pages may be inconsistent with the naming of LaserWriters on your network. Because LaserUser ignores AppleTalk Zone criteria entirely, each LaserWriter with the same name, regardless of its zone, will receive the same cover-page options. It isn't a great idea to have the same name for LaserWriters in different zones anyway, but here's an example of a "problem" network:

A set of 5 LaserWriters, all on AppleTalk, with certain names. The printers are also on AppleTalk as spooled printers by ALISA Print, Pacer, or some such software, mapped into a separate zone from the actual printers, though with the same names. The spooled print queues will generate their own cover-pages, so the queues need not be sent a cover-page separately. When printing directly to the printers, however, the Mac ought to send a cover-page.

SOLUTION: name the queued printers something different, such as "PACER:Grumpy" for the queue of the printer "Grumpy".

Additionally, the way LaserUser matches printer names means one can enter minimal search keys in LaserUser to specify many printers (note the example given above). However, this also means that LaserUser will be confused by having one printer's name a subset of another IF their cover-page options are to be different. Examples:

Printer Names: "Laser", "Laser IINTX"
Search Key (entered in LaserUser Control Panel): "Laser"

LaserUser could very well match the name to "Laser IINTX" instead of "Laser".

SOLUTION: If you want these printers to have different cover-page setups, name them so that their names differ within the length of the search key. For instance,

Printer Names: "LaserPrinter", "Laser IINTX"
Search Key: "LaserPrinter"

This would pick only the correct printer.

VERSION HISTORY:
2.5 – first publicly released version.

LaserUser is free for non-commercial use. It may not be altered, other than by its own Control Panel. It may not be bundled with any product, for sale or otherwise, without the permission of the author or the Swarthmore College Computing Center. It is provided without an warranty or guarantee of any kind; The author and/or Swarthmore College is not liable for incidental and

consequential damages of its use.

LaserUser was written by Philip J. Brandenberger to simplify central printing from the Swarthmore's hard disk-based public Macintoshes.

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