E-Billing Not Only Good for The Environment and Students, But Also for SIU’s Budget

The Challenge

Paper billing has long been one of the chief headaches for college and university staff. For Southern Illinois University (SIU) Carbondale, the billing situation was a consistently frustrating, expensive affair. An average of 26,000 tuition bills had to be processed, printed, and mailed. They also had problems with students’ addresses changing or being entered into the system incorrectly. Boxes of returned envelopes would start to amass, waiting for someone to have time—a limited resource in the bursar’s office—to deal with them.

In addition, many students needed more than one copy of their bill. Some needed extra copies for multiple family members sharing the cost of tuition. Others needed a copy to submit to their employers for reimbursement. Whatever the reason, every request for an extra bill meant more staff hours to process the request and more money to cover the printing and postage costs.

To cut back on those costs—and to support the university’s goal of moving towards a paperless campus—SIU was badly in need of a more efficient, not to mention cost-effective, way to manage their billing processes.

The Solution

Enter FormFusion, the Document Enhancement & Distribution Solution from Evisions, which made it easy for SIU to make their billing process entirely electronic. Not only has switching to electronic billing (e-billing) solved all of the frustrations they’d been suffering from with the old system, but it has also significantly reduced the staff’s workload and saved the university more than $88,000 a year.

The most obvious advantage to e-billing is that SIU no longer has to spend the money and
time on producing hundreds of thousands of paper bills every year. Mailing delays are no longer a concern. Printing and postage costs have disappeared. The ever-growing stack of returned envelopes no longer clutters up the bursar’s office.

Instead, using FormFusion—and the optional PL SQL Script Director Module—SIU produces PDF versions of every bill, uploads those PDFs to the student accounts on SalukiNet (the university’s student portal) and sends notification emails to everyone they just billed. With the new system, all of their students have access to their bills 24/7, can print off as many copies as they need and even grant access to authorized thirdparty users, if they so choose.

Implementing e-billing with FormFusion was a very straightforward process. SIU began planning for the switch in July 2010. After creating a bill template with FormFusion’s suite of design tools, SIU worked through Evisions’ e-Bill Integration Guide (available through the CO-OP User Community) to configure FormFusion to upload the individual bills to students’ SalukiNet accounts. By September they put the new system through its paces, and by December of that year they were dual-billing with both paper and electronic bills.

In May 2011, they moved strictly to e-bills. Not only has the bursar’s office saved more than $88,000 a year between staff hours and postage and printing costs, but SIU’s printing and shipping departments have also been able to cut back on their staff as a result of the switch. Both the students—who no longer have to keep track of paper bills or request additional copies—and the staff—who can now send 26,000 bills with a couple of clicks of the mouse—have been very satisfied with the FormFusion solution.

About FormFusion

Today, approximately 80% of all documents are paper based; this is a highly inefficient and costly medium. FormFusion, a document enhancement and distribution solution, gives organizations complete control over the design and delivery of their output while automating processes and eliminating paper stock. It can be used for Purchase Orders, Grade Mailers, Transcripts, Student Bills, Invoices, Tax Forms, Letter Generation, and more! Users can rearrange data, add images, change the layout, formatting, color and fonts, as well as add information not included in the standard output file. FormFusion converts standard application output into more attractive, functional and efficient electronic documents, and then intelligently distributes them over a variety of delivery channels including print, email, Web or imaging integration.

For more information, please visit www.evisions.com/formfusion.

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Evisions helps higher education and research organizations work better. Our software eases your administrative load—so you can get back to the process of learning and discovery. Built and optimized for administrators, our solutions help you stay on top of your many tasks and responsibilities, reduce hassle and waste, and work more efficiently.

“E-billing has helped me keep track of my statements by allowing me to view them 24/7 online. Even better, I can give my parents access to view them online too! No more waiting on snail mail or losing statements!”

Ali Holford
Student

“We experienced so many benefits from implementing E-billing by using FormFusion! In the first year after implementation, we saved over $88,000 in printing costs and postage alone, which made our school administration very happy. We saw reduced personnel time necessary to process our bills. E-billing also drastically reduced our return rate from the post office for those students that failed to update or forward their addresses. Students, proxies, and staff now also have convenient access to billing statements online at any time. When the benefits include convenience, proven significant savings, and happy students, staff, and school administration, it’s a winwin for everyone! It doesn’t get any better than that!”

Jill Kirkpatrick
Bursar