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## GCN Lab Review | For better security, touch your printer

Biometric add-on ensures sensitive files don't sit around on shared printers

By John Breeden II, GCN Staff

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NO KEYPAD NEEDED: The Silex Secureprint applies fingerprint biometrics to printer security.

Silex SecurePrint

**[GCN Lab Reviewer's Choice]**

**PERFORMANCE:** A

**FEATURES:** A

**SETUP:** B

**EASE OF USE:** B+

**VALUE:** A

**PRICE:** \$699 for base kit

### REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:

Making a nonsecure environment safe for printing is no easy task. Although the Silex kit takes a little effort to set up and maintain, it works well considering it does something most network printers were never designed to accomplish.

### CONTACT:

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Salt Lake City  
(866) 765-8761  
[www.silexamerica.com](http://www.silexamerica.com)

Once you have the fingerprint reader and the printer plugged into the print server, you then connect an Ethernet cable from the server to the network. You may have to change some settings on client computers at this point, since the IP address of the printer may be different now that you are using the print server as a hub.

Once this was complete, we had a working print server, and all the printers connected to it could be accessed normally using standard desktop menus.

To activate secure printing, you need to install Silex software on each client that needs the feature. Then you need to enroll your fingerprints with the system. The easiest way to do this is to bring the fingerprint sensor over to your client PC, which needs to have a USB port. The kit comes with only one fingerprint reader, though others can be purchased.

You can then enroll one or several fingerprints with the system. Only the minutiae of your print is stored on your

Security is more than just passwords on your desktop. Every agency knows physical security is just as important. However, within a department there is normally not much to protect documents from users already in the building. And that can cause trouble.

The most obvious problem comes when a document is printed on a shared printer. Even a document that originated on a secure desktop within a locked office becomes vulnerable when it is sent to a printer down the hall. Just because someone works with you doesn't mean they have the same need or right to read a document. Moreover, there could be cleaners or other visitors in the area. By the time you get to the printer, someone might have read or taken your sensitive document.

Secure printing is a feature we're starting to see on a lot of new printers. When a user prints a document, they are usually asked to assign it a code, which must be entered via a keypad on the printer to release the job.

This is a good feature, but the keypad method has some limitations. And you might not have \$10,000 or more to purchase a new network printer with this feature, even if you need a secure environment.

The SecurePrint kit from Silex Technology can help set up a secure printing environment, protected with a biometric fingerprint sensor, even if your printer is not currently designed for it. All the printer needs is a USB port.

The kit comprises an SX-5000U2 multiport USB Device Server and a Silex fingerprint reader. Setup in the GCN Lab was relatively easy. We simply plugged the Silex fingerprint reader into the print server and then attached the printer the same way. With both the fingerprint sensor and the printer plugged into the server, there were still two free USB ports. These can be hooked to other printers if you have them nearby.

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system, so if you're worried about someone getting your print out of the system, it won't happen. The minutiae are a series of points on your fingerprint that means something to the program but not to anyone else. All users will have to enroll themselves at their client PCs. The enrollment process on a Mac is only slightly different.

Once you are enrolled and the fingerprint sensor has been returned to the print server, you're ready to print files securely. When you print a document, you specify that you'd like to activate the biometric security. Once the document has been sent, you need to run a program called SX Virtual Link. This links your PC to the fingerprint reader, which is stored at the printer. When you are ready, walk down to the printer and place your finger on the reader.

The reader compares your print with the minutiae stored back at your PC and if there is a match, releases the document to the printer. The SX Virtual Link application automatically terminates and disconnects once a document is released.

The setup and management of the secure print process is not the most elegant we've seen, but considering you're MacGyver-ing a secure biometrics application onto an unsecured environment, it works surprisingly well. And you can upgrade your security without having to buy a new batch of printers.

At the very least, you can use the kit as a stopgap method until you can purchase a full-scale network printer with secure printing capabilities, though once you go through the long install process, you have created a secure environment that is easy to live with.

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