Introduction

In AccXES v7, a new job accounting module is being introduced. This completely replaces the accounting function that was introduced in v4. This white paper will describe the high level differences between the old and new accounting modules. It will then address how to transition current uses to the new system.

Legacy Job Accounting

In the original job accounting scheme, the AccXES Controller handled just about everything. The accounting administrator defined account IDs through the Controller at the copier UI, printer UI, or WebPMT. A tab delimited file of accounts could also be read in through the floppy. The accounts were numeric only and forced into a 6.4 account.sub-account architecture. There was also a limitation on the maximum number of IDs. Only 100 accounts were allowed with a maximum of 20 sub-accounts under each account. ACT, drivers, and walk up users would have to enter a valid account ID for the job to be processed and then the Controller would update the log. The only log information kept was a running total of square area processed for bond, vellum, film, and scanning.

If multiple devices were being tracked, the administrator would have to define the accounts on all the controllers. The data would then have to be manually merged together.

Job Based Accounting (JBA)

The new accounting module breaks the accounting system into two pieces. In many ways, it follows a client – server model so we'll take some liberty and call them the External Accounting Server (EAS) and the AccXES Controller which acts like the client. However, don't take the model literally and imply EAS is a network server or needs a server version of operating system (OS). The EAS is simply a piece of software running on a PC on the network.

The EAS is where the accounting administrator now defines IDs. There are now two 32 character alphanumeric IDs for user and account. There is now also the concept of association or permission. A given user can only use certain accounts on certain machines. These associations are also defined by the administrator on the EAS. The last item defined are the devices which will be accounted. The EAS sends to each of the defined AccXES Controllers the list of valid user IDs, account IDs and their associations. The Controller will then validate each job to ensure a valid user ID, a valid account ID, and that the user can use that account ID. The details of each job are logged in the Controller's job log file. The EAS pulls the detail log files from each Controller. Depending upon the EAS, this could be manually initiated by an administrator or automatically done based upon a timing interval. It deletes the file on the Controller after successful transmission. The EAS can then perform some type of tally function to summarize the data.

Each AccXES Controller can be setup such that accounting is either Enabled or Optional or Disabled. If Enabled, users have to provide a valid user and account ID combination for that device in order to submit a print request or make a scan or copy. If Optional, users will still be prompted to enter in their IDs. If they choose to, they can simply not enter any IDs. The job will still be run and then logged against IDs called GenericUserID and GenericAccountID. Obviously if accounting is disabled, users are not prompted for IDs at all.

XES is providing a very lite EAS called AccXES Account Management Tool (AMT). Equitrac has a product called OfficeTrac that will also work in this system as a more feature rich accounting server. Other third party packages may become available in the future.

ID Schemes

Within the new 32 character account and user IDs, there is a lot of flexibility for extensions or "sub-accounting" and linkages. This is an exercise in creativity, but several possibilities are listed here to help get the ideas flowing.

User ID	Account ID
Full Name	Company Name or ID
Employee ID	Project name or ID
Company.Person	Budget Category
Person.Shift	Department.Budget

Building.Floor   Project.Group.Month

Migrating IDs from the Legacy Accounting to JBA

To move from the current accounting process and data to the new one could be a fair amount of effort. It begins with a fundamental choice to make between two options: either continue to reuse the current account numbers that you've defined, or start over and take advantage of the 32 character alphanumeric account and user fields.

If the latter, there is little more to say here. You simply define your new ID scheme and enter them into AMT or OfficeTrac. Any mapping between the old and new IDs is a manual paper process.

If you want to reuse your current IDs, we need to look at your current definition scheme. There seems to be two popular overall schemes. A) using the sub-account field as an extension of the account field to simply make more accounts and B) having the sub-account represent a user. If you think you have something different, you'll have to think about how to take what you have and move it into accounts and users.

AMT has a feature to import a legacy accounting file (pull-down menu selection of File – Import). AMT will not do anything with the previous square area data. It will simply look at the old accounts and try to set up new users or accounts. A radio button selection tells AMT to either put the entire account.sub-account as an account ID or to put the sub-account in as a user ID. If you select to import the old accounts as purely an account ID, the entire legacy 6.4 format account ID will used to create an identical JBA account ID (account, sub-account, period and all). For example, an account 10 and sub-account 3 would be imported as 10.3.

Obviously, an account ID and a user ID must be unique. You can't have two users with the same ID. Therefore, when importing and using sub-account as a user, AMT "eliminates" redundant sub accounts. For example, 100.50 and 200.50 could be two legacy accounts. When importing those as account and user, AMT will create 2 accounts (100, 200) and 1 user (50). If user 50 under account 100 is a different person than 50 under account 200, then you will have to manually create another user ID. If user 50 was the same user, that ID can be associated with multiple accounts after the import process.

Migrating Job Data from Legacy To JBA

Legacy job accounting assumed a billing program, spreadsheet, or other mechanism existed to track data over the long term. Square area usage reports for accounts were created as simple TXT files to be re-purposed. AMT is initially based off the same principle. Tallied data reports can be saved to ASCII files for secondary usage. Therefore, there is no ability to move any historical job data into a new EAS.

Define devices and associations

After defining the IDs, the new features of AMT take over. You have to define all the devices (printers, DDS, DS) that you want to include in job accounting. This process is similar to the device manager in ACT. You then have to create associations. This answers the question of who can use what accounts on this device? Once these steps are completed, the data is transmitted to the devices and the system is up and running.