

Academy Photography

Customer case study

ID Cards Ubiquitous in Australian Schools

Academy Photography, which was the first Australian school photo business to go completely digital, has been in business since 1988, providing educational institutions with student and faculty ID cards, in addition to school photos, for more than 15 years.

"ID cards are used ubiquitously in today's society, allowing users the convenience of remote identity verification," said Noel Cordell, Card Bureau manager, Academy Photography. Yet, even before students in Australia learn to spell "ubiquitous," they can enjoy the benefits of ID cards produced by Academy.

Academy Photography, which was the first Australian school photo business to go completely digital, has been in business since 1988, providing educational institutions with student and faculty ID cards, in addition to school photos, for more than 15 years. Today, it provides ID cards for more than 200 schools, which use them for student and faculty visual identification and to interface with school systems, helping to reduce truancy by tracking student locations. "A student may use a card to pay for concession fares on public transport, to pay for photocopies, to borrow books and to verify arrival at school," said Cordell.

School administrators define a variety of needs when it comes to their ID card programs. For some, simple security is the most important function and they use ID cards for visual identification of students, staff and visitors. Others need more sophisticated support, including access to dorms, facilities and equipment. Still others use photo ID systems to automate and combine several school operations, giving students the ability to check out library books or equipment, gain access to student activities, use school computers or simplify registration. Schools that provide ID cards with debit functions also enable students to use their photo ID cards for vending machine, laundry and cafeteria payments.

Tracking student movements in and out of school is the most important function requested by customers of Academy Photography. "ID cards enable schools to analyze usage and improve efficiency, as well as keep track of students for better education outcomes," said Cordell. Because cards are produced in Academy's printing laboratory, schools receive replacement cards quickly and economically.

Academy Photography provides a card bureau, a small office with three work stations and a dedicated staff who operate three Fargo Persona card printers and one Fargo HDP600 High Definition Card Printer/Encoder, with the HDP600 being the most advanced. It features reverse image technology in which the printer prints images directly onto special film that is then fused onto the surface of a blank card through heat and pressure.

While most of Academy's clients currently use either barcodes or magnetic stripe technology, the company chose the HDP600 to be ready for future requests. Fargo developed High Definition Printing to go hand in hand with the growth of technology-rich smart cards. Often, the embedded electronics in these high-security cards cause irregularities on the card's surface, making them difficult to print. Because the printhead of the HDP600 does not print directly onto the card surface, image quality is unaffected by a card's surface irregularities.





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*Reuben Bou-Samra,
Business Development Manager*

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Cordell was instrumental in selecting the current Fargo equipment, although Academy had been using Fargo printers for years, long before his arrival in 2005. "The features most important to us were high quality prints, low waste and fast printing," he said. "The HDP600 also offers us the ability to print and encode smart cards in the future."

"The introduction of the HDP600 gave Academy the option of producing cards with superior quality over those of its competitors," said Reuben Bou-Samra, Business Development Manager, Briell Marketing Pty Ltd., the company that sold the Fargo printers to Academy. "Times are changing, and schools are demanding only the best. The HDP600 certainly offers Academy a competitive edge."

Academy Photography provides a variety of options for its clients. "Sometimes the school buys the cards, sometimes the students do, and other times we provide them for free," said Cordell. Free ID cards? "We provide ID cards free to many schools as a value addition to our primary product, school photos," he added. Often, Academy's student and faculty photos can be used for the cards, thus requiring only one photo session and saving the school resources.

ID cards not only provide convenience and security for students and faculty, but they also save time for office staff who input attendance details and process roll calls. Academy provides images formatted on a CD ROM as well as in hard copy reports for school records. These reports provide information in instant real-time, and they are tailored to each school's desired manner of capturing and reporting attendance.

In today's open educational environment, many schools struggle to keep track of their students. Those using Academy Photography's ID card program, however, have a ubiquitous advantage.

