Computer Reservation and Desktop Time Management *Overview copyright © iTeam Resources, Inc. Edited by Tim Brown.*
Re'Quest is the premier Computer Reservation and Desktop Management product available in the market today. Its flexibility, effective and efficient operation provides for multiple operational modes, numerous configuration options to suit your operational policies while still maintaining an ease of use for your patrons. Patrons may simply walk up to a computer and if the computer is not being used sit down and start using the computer, or, a patron may elect to reserve a computer, therefore ensuring the use of a computer at a scheduled time either today or in the future. If a reservation has been scheduled for a computer, the time allocated to a walk up patron will be adjusted from the organization's default session time to the time available up to the next reservation. If there is no reservation within the default session time the patron will be allocated the organization's default session time. Through Re'Quest's central management the system knows what is happening within the environment at all times. Staff can view and adjust this environment at any time, monitor what is happening on computers and take appropriate action when needed, send information or warning messages to patron acting inappropriately, lock the computer for a review of the patron activity by an administrator, and even log the patron off the computer without even approaching the patron. This empowerment provides the staff the ability to effectively and efficiently manage the use of public access computers from a central point. All patron validations are performed against your patron ILS (utilizing SIP, SIP2, III API interface) or a student database to ensure the information on a patron is current. Depending upon your policies the system will react to patron blockages, fees/fines, age dependencies, patron expiration's, etc. and take the appropriate defined action. Re'Quest computer management will also enforce the use of public computers by categories or computer profiles defining the type of patron able to use the computer. That is all public computers may be categorized as Adult, Teen, Children or other categories defined by the institution. When a patron attempts to use the computer, the patron profile is verified for permission to use the computer depending upon the computer category. Computers may also be designated as short-term use such as email computers having only a time of 15 minutes usage by the patron. Guests to your institution may also require the use of the public computers, for either the day or for a longer period of time. This is accomplished by a flexible Guest Pass issuance where a guest pass is generated for the patron. The guest pass may be designated as being valid for a single day or for longer-term patrons as long as you want. A guest pass is not considered used until it is used as a result of a login by a patron. Once a patron logs in using a guest pass, the guest pass is considered as active and the time frames defined for it are invoked. This allows for guest passes to be generated and printed and simply handed to a patron requiring a guest pass. It is important to note that guest passes are not populated on your internal ILS or Patron system, therefore keeping all guest pass information out of your core systems. There is an abundant amount of flexibility built into the system to allow institutions to define how all public computers may be used, the duration of use, criteria of usage as well as the ability to adjust some of these criteria on the fly as needed. To fully appreciate the flexibility of Re'Quest we will provide an online demonstration of the system, or we can arrange for a free trial of the system at your site where you will have that ability to see it in practice and test its many features. Please contact us for an online demo or to set up a trial period.

Quest Reservation – Computer Resource Reservation
The Quest Reservation module operates as a dedicated self-serve Kiosk, or, may be combined with a Print Release Station. The responsibility of the reservation system is to ensure the efficient reservation or assignment of computer resources to patrons. There are two distinct modes of operation; Computer Reservation mode and Electronic Signup – first come first serve mode. While operating in the Computer Reservation mode, patrons may reserve a computer resource for today or sometime in the future through an easy to use, step by step procedure. The patron simply identifies themselves, indicates the type of computer they would like (or may simply choose first available computer), indicates the day and time they would like the reservation if doing a future reservation. Once this is completed the reservation system will present a clear list of available computers, the time the computer is available and for how long. The patron simply selects the desirable computer, accepts the reservation, and a Computer Reservation confirmation slip is printed for the patron. The patron is now free to perform other tasks while waiting for the reservation time period, or, if the reservation is for a future date to leave and come back on the day and time of the reservation. While operating in the Electronic Sign up mode, patrons are placed on an electronic wait list where the type of computer they desire is assigned to them on a first come first serve basis. The patron would simply identify themselves, identify the type of computer they desire (or first available computer), and their name would be placed on the waitlist. The reservation system then scans all computers and when a computer becomes available the first patron in the wait list desiring the type of computer which became available is assigned to that patron. The patron's name would then move from the wait list to the assigned list and the appropriate computer would be waiting for the patron. This mode of operation is not as efficient as the Computer Reservation mode as patrons must be vigilant as to when their name is assigned a computer.

Desk Quest – Desktop Management
Desktop Software which is installed on each patron/client workstation. The software manages each patron session with respect to allocated session times and ensures session time policies are adhered to. All computer reservations for the appropriate desktop are known to the computer and if the computer is waiting for a patron reservation ensures the correct patron login. Wait times for patron reservations are configurable and if a patron does not log in before the wait time is exceeded the computer becomes available for other patrons or reservations. If the computer is not being used, patrons may simply sit down and identify themselves and begin to use the computer. If a reservation is pending within the allocated session time, the patron's allotted time will be adjusted to ensure their session does not go past the pending reservation; otherwise, the full session time is allocated to the patron. Patrons total daily usage time is also monitored to ensure the patron does not exceed the daily usage policy. Patrons are notified when their session is close to ending so they may save any work and prepare to be signed off the computer. During this notification time period Desk Quest will evaluate how busy the environment is, and, if the evaluation determines the environment is not busy offer additional extended time to the patron. The amount of time offered is set by a configurable policy. Desk Quest also displays a running session clock which indicates the amount of remaining time the patron has in their session. Desk quest has many configurable options which staff may or may not activate such as the acceptance of a Computer Use Policy, Filtered or Unfiltered Internet usage, allow multiple logins on different computers, allow or deny usage if a certain value of Fees/Fines are due, limit usage by type of patron (ie: child, adult), etc. There are also two distinct operational modes of Desk Quest: Windows Desktop Mode and Menu-ed Desktop Mode. Operating in the Windows Desktop mode, the patron sign-on display is readily displayed on the windows desktop. Once the patron identifies themselves Desk Quest will transfer control to the windows desktop. The desktop is then used by the patron as any windows desktop would be. Operating in the Menued Desktop mode the patron is presented with menued options to choose from. This is a much more controlled environment and the applications available on the menus presented to the patron are configured by staff during the initial installation.

Quest Computer Administration – Central Administration Management
The Quest Administration module is installed in the staff area of the organization and provides staff with the overall view of the public access computer environment. The administration module is truly the staff operational control center of all the public access computers. This module operates in real time displaying to staff all operational computers and the status of the computers as to whether they are currently in use, waiting for a pending reservation, or available for use. There are multiple views of the environment available to staff and staff can drill down to individual computers and take appropriate actions against the computers such as logging a patron off the computer, sending messages to individual computers or all computers at once, powering down a computer, making a computer unavailable for maintenance, finding out who is logged on a computer, extending time to a patron, and much, much more. There are multiple calendar views available to staff, selectable by date, where all activity of the public access computers can be viewed. Staff can adjust computer reservations, make computer reservations, delete computer reservations, and extend computer time and reservations. Color coding on these calendar views allow staff to quickly identify computers currently in use, reservations pending, and activity that has become history. At any point in time, the patron time remaining on a computer can be determined. The patron database is also available from this administration module and it is from here that staff may block patrons from activities within the system such as banning from the internet, banning from making reservations, banning from logging on, etc. It is also from this module where the system policies are set such as setting the daily open and close times, default session times, maximum daily usage times, allow multiple reservations, allow multiple logins, etc. Also, this administration module provides the ability to change computer assets in respect to the asset default session time, whether the asset is available for reservations, the type of desktop to be used by the asset (Windows format or Menued format), whether the asset is offline for maintenance, etc. Any number of Quest Administration modules may be installed in the environment and if the organization has clusters of public access computers which have different staff responsible for each cluster then an administration module would be installed for the staff responsible for the cluster. This gives the staff control over their environment. An extremely powerful feature of the administration module is the ability of a superuser to manipulate the environments of branch libraries. That is a superuser from a central administration point can manipulate the policies and operating environment of a branch located down the street or across town. This capability truly provides central management of the entire public access computer environment.