Replacing the Hard Disk Drive in 4100/4101 MFP

Ever since the days of the 4V and the 5Si, it has been possible to add a hard disk drive to your HP laser printer. These hard drives were mounted directly to the formatter board, and were primarily used for permanent storage of fonts and forms, so that these would not have to be downloaded from the computer during each print job.

It didn't take long for HP to find an easier way to physically install the hard drives – they are now mounted on EIO cards, which just plug into one of the printer's EIO slots, exactly like a JetDirect network card does. On some printer models, you may need to initialize the hard drive after installing it, but in general, installing a hard drive is "plug and play".

There are exceptions to this, though, and one of them is the 4100/4101 MFP series. "MFP" stands for "multi-function printer" – in addition to printing, these printers can scan, copy, send emails, and send and receive faxes (optional on the 4100 MFP, standard on the 4101 MFP). They are also designed to be networked among multiple users. With all that going on, it should be no surprise that an MFP needs a lot of memory. In fact, it needs so much memory that a hard disk drive is no longer an option – it's now an essential part of the printer. And it's used for more than just fonts and forms – you might also find individual users' print jobs stored on the hard drive, among other things.

So far, all this is true of any MFP. What seems to be special about the 4100/4101 series is that part of the printer's firmware is also stored on the hard drive. So, if you need to replace the hard drive for any reason and you just "plug and play", the MFP will no longer work properly (in particular, fax functions don't seem to work at all) because part of the firmware is missing. This often leads people to suspect that they got a defective hard drive, but that's usually not the case.

The solution to this problem is to re-flash the printer's firmware. Like most newer HP printers, these models have the latest version of the firmware available for free download from HP's website. You just download a file to your computer and then follow the instructions to flash it to the printer. Once you have done this, the MFP will be fully functional again. Files and instructions can be found at the following link:

http://h20000.www2.hp.com/bizsupport/TechSupport/SoftwareIndex.jsp?lang=en&cc=us&prodNameId=35635&prodTypeId=18972&prodSeriesId=83239&swLang=8&taskId=135&swEnvOID=54

Note that this web page references the "4100mfp series" – this includes both the 4100 MFP and the 4101 MFP (same firmware for both).

—Dennis Kosterman

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