

Connecting People to Resources

Federated Access Management: JISC Guide for Academic Libraries

Briefing Paper

February 2008

This briefing is for librarians who are involved in implementing federated access management to online resources in UK further (FE) and higher (HE) education institutions. It describes the main steps that an academic library needs to take in order to roll out the new system to end-users, after the institution has completed the technical implementation work and joined the UK Access Management Federation.

Introduction

In November 2006, JISC launched its UK Access Management Federation. Educational institutions throughout the UK have been invited to join the UK federation and adopt the new federated access management technologies, such as Shibboleth. This will allow users to access a number of internal and external services while signing on only once.

JISC support

JISC is committed to supporting institutions in this changing environment. JISC is:

- Organising outreach events and training courses
- Providing case studies, toolkits, briefings and advice
- Making the services hosted by MIMAS, EDINA and other JISC services compliant with federated access management technologies

What your library needs to do

The first step is to ensure that your institution has signed the UK federation membership agreement (even if you plan to continue subscribing to the Athens service). Once the institution has joined the UK federation and any technical work has been completed, it is time to roll out the new service to end-users.

With federated access management, IT services staff are likely to take the overall responsibility for access management, while library staff concentrate on ensuring positive user experience by providing a good user interface for their library resources, user education etc. It is, therefore, important that IT services and library staff work closely together to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

Planning for change

As with any change, careful planning is key to successful institutional roll-out of federated access management. We recommend that you follow the three steps set out below to enable you to manage the change effectively.

1. Library review

Libraries should start by reviewing their existing access management practices. A library review should look at:

- **Resource access status:** All institutions should hold a spreadsheet or database of the resources they currently access, the licence period for that resource and the current method of access management (Athens, UK federation, IP address, IP proxy server etc). This can be appropriately updated as Service Providers join the UK federation, and will help you manage the information you pass to end-users
- **Defining user groups:** Create a master list of all of the user group types within your institution, such as 'member', 'staff', 'student', 'alumni' etc
- **Existing user documentation:** It is likely that the wording of information provided to end-users in print and on the web will need to be changed
- **Current e-resource management practices:** Where and how is licensing information stored? Is there an e-resources management system that can store information about end-users and their access rights?

2. Planning

A library review should help plan what needs to be done next. Likely action points for the library are to:

- Consider best access route for each resource
- Plan a strategy for resources that are not members of the UK federation
- Liaise with Service Providers to ensure that you are gaining access via the UK federation where appropriate
- Appoint a dedicated contact for user queries
- Review end-user information
- Plan for library staff or other 'friendly' users to test information and links prepared for end-users
- Plan staff awareness raising/training, if required

3. Managing the change

It is also important to decide in advance how the plan is going to be implemented, in liaison with the IT department that is implementing the federated access management solution.

- Decide on timescales and resources
- Identify a project leader and key stakeholders
- Devise a project plan
- Keep stakeholders informed via a website, newsletter or wiki

User experience

It is important the end-users understand what information they are required to enter when asked for a username and password. We recommend that all institutions and Service Providers ask users to enter their 'institutional log-in' when asked for a username and password.

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Understanding attributes

In order to protect the privacy of end-users, the UK federation does not pass information about individuals to Service Providers. Instead, it passes information about groups of users (such as member, staff, student, alumni etc) or information to allow services to be personalised.

You need to be aware of the four core attributes that the UK federation recommends, and how these relate to your resources. These are:

- **eduPersonScopedAffiliation**: defines the user's relationship with the organisation and maps directly to definitions used in the JISC Model Licence (staff, student etc)
- **eduPersonTargetedID**: used to recognise a returning user as the same individual as last time to enable personalisation
- **eduPersonPrincipalName**: a persistent user identifier that is the same across all resources. This is used for accountability and traceability
- **eduPersonEntitlement**: allows for special and unique access rights

You can find more information on the UK federation web pages, including information about which attributes Service Providers require.

Commonly, licences will cover 'members' of your institutions and possibly 'walk-in users'. If your institution is implementing its own federated access management services, these will use a directory that distinguishes 'members' (staff and students) from others, such as external library users. If your library registers all 'walk-in' users (rather than allowing public access), these can be distinguished in the directory, too.

Service Provider liaison

JISC is actively working with publishers and Service Providers to encourage them to join the UK federation and adopt federated access management. Many major Service Providers have already joined the UK federation and many others are either planning or are in the process of adopting the new technology.

In addition, the JISC Access Management Team has recently prepared further guidelines for institutions wishing to encourage publishers and Service Providers.

JISC Model Licences

The JISC Model Licence and NESLi2 Model Licence now ask Service Providers to adopt federated access management technologies and join the UK federation. All user groups defined in the JISC Model Licences map directly to attributes used within the UK federation to ensure consistency of definitions across the UK educational community.

Other things your library may be concerned about

Personalisation features

Increasingly, publishers and Service Providers provide personalisation services for their federated access management users. The use of federated access management allows Service Providers to personalise their service without being able to identify the actual user, and thereby helps your institution to meet its responsibilities under the Data Protection legislation.

If some of your users are already using personalisation features (such as saved searches or email alerts) that are based on their old Athens login, it may be necessary for them to re-register these preferences after they first access a resource with a federated login.

User statistics

Federated access management is based on internationally agreed standards, so it offers greater potential for consistent and comparable usage statistics across more online resources than older technologies.

There is work in progress on using combined institutional and Service Provider logs to provide facilities for gathering usage statistics, notably the AAIEye Monitoring & Reporting Tool being developed in Finland.

For further information please contact the JISC Access Management Team: JISC-access-management@jiscmail.ac.uk
Alternative formats of this briefing paper can be found at:
www.jisc.ac.uk/publications

Further information and resources

JISC Access Management
www.jisc.ac.uk/accessmanagement

Federation advice and support
www.jisc.ac.uk/federation

Attribute usage information from the UK federation
www.ukfederation.org.uk/content/Documents/AttributeUsage

JISCmail lists (join at www.jiscmail.ac.uk)

Announcements
JISC-shibboleth-announce@jiscmail.ac.uk

Practical information for library staff
JISC-shibboleth-libraries@jiscmail.ac.uk