



Access management landscape survey

83 institutions responded to the survey. It was clear in the majority of cases that there had been consultation between the Library and IT services on the response; where this was not the case and two replies were received from institutions, the responses were identical in the majority of cases. This is encouraging in that the need to implement effective access management is clearly seen as a joint Library/IT problem.

The key messages from the survey are:

- The sector still has some way to go before it can be declared that federated access management has been successfully implemented;
- 37% of the respondents are looking to move wholly to a local SAML solution in or by the summer 2009;
- This number is dependent on the availability of SAML compliant resources. There is a belief that some resources will never be SAML compliant and a recognition that institutions will have to develop strategies to cope with this scenario;
- 58% of those that have purchased OpenAthens have done so primarily to provide access to Athens authenticated resources in the short term (ie until those resources are made SAML compliant);
- 39% of respondents are looking at longer term implementations or are waiting to see how services develop before committing to develop a local SAML service. This includes some institutions that are currently using OpenAthens as their sole method of authentication but who have stated that they will review the situation or will move in a number of years' time;
- 26% are currently using OpenAthens as their sole method of authentication;
- 12% expect to be operating a mixed mode of authentication for the medium to long term. These institutions are predominately running EzProxy (or similar) for IP authentication as the primary method of access with a local SAML based solution used to access resources where IP authentication is not permitted;
- The comments received from respondents suggest there is an undercurrent of resentment over the way the transition has been handled and a lack of confidence in the Federation as the way forward in some quarters.

We can conclude from this that there is a clear need for continuing support for development of federated access management solutions within institutions and that such support must be available for at least a further two years. Additionally, given the dependency of the implementation timescales on the availability of SAML compliant resources, pressure must be maintained on the suppliers to convert their resources to be SAML compliant.

Figures for the current situation:

1. Which methods will your institution be deploying to provide access to resources for the coming (2008/9) academic year?

Solution	Number of respondents
a) IP authentication using a web-proxy referral service such as EzProxy	2
b) Open Athens	22
c) A SAML based federated access management solution (eg Shibboleth)	1
Combined approach – a & b	14
Combined approach – a & c	10
Combined approach – b & c	12
Combined approach – all three	21

2. If you have purchased Open Athens has this been:

a) to provide access to Athens authenticated resources in the short term (ie until those resources are made SAML compliant)	39
b) to provide access to Athens authenticated resources in the long term (ie on the assumption that some resources will never be SAML compliant)	10
c) as a third party solution for your federated access management requirements	18

3. If you are planning to move wholly to a SAML compliant federated solution, when are you planning to migrate?

Summer 2009	31
Within 2 to 3 years (ie before summer 2011)	20
Some time after 3 years	12
Not planning to use a SAML compliant solution (for example planning to use web proxy referral only)	2
N/A – institutions maintaining the current solution.	18

In the table above the two institutions not planning to move to a SAML compliant solution are both currently using IP authentication and have no plans to move. Of the 18 institutions who are maintaining the current solution, 10 are using a combined IP/SAML solution with a variety of solutions being deployed by the other eight.

The survey asked a supplementary question on identity management solutions within institutions. The responses show that institutions have recognised the need for an integrated approach to access and identity management.

a) the two projects are closely linked and running in parallel	23
b) we will look at identity once we have completed the move to federated access management	16
c) our current identity management solution meets our requirements and is integrated with our access management solution	25
d) our current identity management solution meets our requirements and will be integrated with our access management solution	13
e) we are not considering identity management at this time	5

Comments illustrating the lack of confidence/resentment:

“We are standing well back from this at the moment as the whole area seems a bit of a mess, its difficult to implement and its not clear what the future is likely to be.”

“As an aside, the feeling of being 'piggy-in-the-middle' in this process sharpens as Jul 31 approaches, even though we have the 'OpenAthens cushion'. I was astonished that UK Federation were caught unawares by the backlog of registrations, and the extra delays occasioned by inputting institutional

metadata given that Jul 31 was on the JISC roadmap since well before last year!”

“It is looking like we will have to subscribe or risk losing access to some resources, this will only be short term and we feel we have been put in to an impossible position.”

“At the moment, we are still in the planning stages, and reviewing the situation as it unfolds. We were considering moving in Summer 2009, but this is now unsure.”

“A more general comment is that the time-frame in which to transfer mission-critical services was too short.”

“At the moment, we are still in the planning stages, and reviewing the situation as it unfolds. We were considering moving in Summer 2009, but this is now unsure.”

On future developments

“The development work is not yet done, and a combination of IP and OpenAthens access means that we can afford to take our time and get it right”

“Potentially, we may not move across at all”

“[Implementation is] Depending on suppliers - may be after 2011 if they have not all moved”

“...we will not be able to move wholly to Shibboleth as some of our resources will not be SAML compliant and, having spoken to some of the providers, may never be so. We will continue to use EZproxy to access these resources”

“Planning on a mixed economy; using EzProxy where we can and Shibb for others. No subscribing to Athens only materials!”

“We are using Open Athens to provide access to our Athens resources as Shibboleth is not yet fully operational. It is a short-term solution to allows us to provide continued access to resources with no loss of personalization features that have been set-up. Moving the resources to EZproxy would have resulted in the loss of these features.”

Peter Tinson
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