

Shibboleth Task Force Charge: Improving Online Access Management through Shibboleth

Drafted by LTAG July 2009—Accepted & Revised by SOPAG and approved by ULs Group:
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Summary: Using Shibboleth authentication as a “single sign-on” option for access to local and system wide library content and services could improve end-user experience and, after initial development efforts and given widespread vendor adoption, reduce management overhead for both local and shared library applications. The time is right to restart a collective analysis of the potential benefits of Shibboleth-based access management and, if warranted, construct an action plan to adopt it locally and encourage its use broadly. A cross-functional working group is proposed for that purpose.

What’s New: The Internet-2 Shibboleth middleware project and software has matured and is now in production use. Relevant details include:

- Version 2.0 of the standard is available;
- Vendor and University consortiums that develop/support Shibboleth have critical mass (e.g. InCommon - U.S.; JISC - U.K; and SURFfederatie - Netherlands);
- All content vendors are under pressure to support Shibboleth (especially from Europe, e.g. JISC Collections licenses now require Shibboleth-based authentication);
- Most large content vendors now offer “Shibbolized” access to their content (see, e.g. <http://access.jiscinvolve.org/federated-access-and-publishers/>);
- All UC campuses are now using Shibboleth for authentication to system wide non-library services (e.g. “At Your Services Online benefits application);
- UC’s “UCTrust” working group is ready to assist the detailed development of library use cases and action planning.¹

What’s Needed: An action plan needs to address both policy issues (e.g. the feasibility of working toward a standard of Shibboleth-based authentication) and technology issues (the technologies and technical collaboration needed to deploy Shibboleth-based services). It also needs to differentiate what can be or should be shared from what is strictly local. Elements of the plan should include:

1. *Costs, benefits, & priorities:* Assess the hypothesis that Shibboleth can/will yield service improvements and operational cost savings, and draft and prioritize UC Library Shibboleth goals. Include an assessment of the “transition hurdles and costs,” assuming a mixed authentication environment until most or all authentication is based upon Shibboleth.
[Assuming significant potential benefits are identified/confirmed in #1]
2. *Lobbying:* Propose a strategy for encouraging Tier 1-3 content vendors to adopt Shibboleth.
3. *Policy path:* Identify policy categories and, where possible, specific policies that could or should be revised to accommodate or encourage Shibboleth. Examples include content licensing, access services guidelines, locally-hosted online service development guidelines.
4. *Technology path:* Identify the technology requirements and implementation choices for supporting Shib-based access to vendor content, in-house library applications (e.g. Consortial Borrowing Service); library-hosted publications and services.

¹ As confirmed during a “Library Use Cases” agenda item at the UCTrust WG meeting of 4/27/09, presented by John Ober (CDL) on behalf of LTAG.

5. *External partnerships*: Identify required and desired partners (e.g. UCTrust Working Group), roles and responsibilities they will have, and strategies for requesting/inviting/incentivizing collaboration.

Who: Online authentication and authorization are components of “access architecture” and whose managed change affects or is dependent upon many functional areas. The UC libraries access architecture also has both local and system wide components and perspectives. However, a working group cannot be fully representational of functions and locations and still hope to produce a draft action plan. Membership should include the following roles and/or expertise drawn from as many campuses as possible:

- Library technology development and provisioning (e.g. LTAG members): 2-3 members, including the CDL representative;
- Public service user perspectives, service change management and instruction (e.g. HOPS): 1-2 members;
- Collection development/licensing (CDC): at least 1 member;
- Resource sharing, inter-library service management (RSC): at least 1 member.

Charge and timeline: SOPAG concurs with LTAG’s recommendation, and is now convening a SOPAG task force “UC Libraries Online Access Management Task Force” charged to develop a cost-benefit analysis and action plan with the elements defined above. The task force should complete the cost-benefit portion of the charge and summarize their analysis in an initial report due to SOPAG March 15, 2010. If significant potential benefits are identified it should complete a report to SOPAG with the remaining elements, and any others as necessary in a final report due to SOPAG June 15, 2010.

SOPAG Shibboleth TF membership:

John Ober , CDL (TF chair)
Declan Fleming, UCSD
Ann Frenkel, UCR
Julia Kochi, UCSF
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