



Report from the NHS-HE Content Group to the NHS-HE Forum for its meeting on 9 November 2006

1. ATHENS account linking: a View from UCL

Assessment

Betsy Anagnostelis co-ordinated UCL Library Services participation in an ATHENS account linking pilot with participation from the UCL Institute of Child Health and the UCL Institute of Neurology

The pilot aimed to gather feedback on 34 usability questions. Overall there was agreement among the three testers that the interface was straightforward to use; linking was easy to set up for the three testers, but they are all seasoned ATHENS administrators. It is unclear therefore how straightforward a user would find this to do without support. On the basis of this experience, the setting up process would probably need to be guided by an information professional to avoid frustration.

The requirement to link the ATHENS LA account first could present an additional problem for users, if they were to undertake their own linking, as distinguishing one type of ATHENS account from another might be a challenge. The need to have a non-institutional email account through which to administer the linking is understandable and coherently explained, but could act as a barrier for users who do not have ready access to such an email address.

Careful documentation on how the linking is actually undertaken is probably necessary, to allow trouble-free backtracking in case of unanticipated difficulty. Uncoupling the linking did seem to work without repercussions.

Because providers had not committed to the pilot, there were instances when the linking did not actually allow access to an otherwise authorised resource. It was therefore not possible to have a full view of how the linking could be expected to work in a trouble-free environment. The overhead for providers of implementing software that recognises the linking is probably a factor when considering whether the pilot can feasibly progress to something sustainable. Some familiarity with troubleshooting access problems with different resources is probably also important. As all three UCL testers are seasoned ATHENS administrators, they could interpret difficulties with ease.

The fundamental challenge of working with the same resource across two different ATHENS userids is not resolved with this linking solution (and it is not easy to see how this problem could anyway be overcome). In other words, if the same

resource is accessible through two different accounts, simply linking the ATHENS accounts does not result in a conjoining of the personalization achieved through both - but rather the primary account will take priority. Although it is possible to change the default account, some familiarity with the linking concept would be necessary to avoid confusion. This may be beyond most users' reach.

Views from the testers

- "pretty easy to use in terms of the functionality of the site and the linking of the accounts"
- "a great step forward, if it will work properly. I think users would probably need a lot of support in doing they're settings as they would be confused as to which resources are UCL and which are NHS, but that's another thing to worry about once it is all working properly and publicly accessible"

2. Report commissioned by the JISC NHS-HE Procurement Group on possibilities for future collaboration between HE and the NHS on the purchasing of e-content

An externally-commissioned Report by the JISC and LKDN into the procurement of electronic content across the UK National Health Service and Higher Education sectors is given as Appendix 1 to this report to the Forum [see separate link on website]. The Report will inform future directions for the NHS-HE Content Group and is being discussed by the JISC NHS-HE Procurement Group in a meeting before Christmas.

3. NHS/JISC join-up

On 11 December, Dr Malcolm Read of JISC and Sir Muir Gray, Director of Clinical Knowledge, Process and Safety for the NHS, are meeting to discuss Sir Muir's 'strategic aim of having a single service for NHS professionals who also work in Higher Education, or Higher Education employees who have honorary contracts with the NHS'.

As Chair of the NHS-HE Content Group and the JISC NHS-HE Procurement Group, I am attending the meeting with Lorraine Estelle of the JISC, to advise on content issues.

I would expect various lines of work to be initiated in terms of content, and I will keep the Forum informed of developments.

Paul Ayris
Director of UCL Library Services and Chair
NHS-HE Content Group