

**InCommon Update
I2 Member Meeting
April 23, 2007**

The InCommon Update was an opportunity for participants to learn about the latest news and projects from the federation and discuss strategies for increasing membership value.

Library Pilot – Steve Carmody

Five schools are looking at adopting Shibboleth as a replacement for IP-based access control: Penn State, the University of Chicago, Cornell, Brown, and the University of California at San Diego. A working group is identifying the set of issues and plans to have two or so schools in production this fall.

One question involves handling the transition, involving the vendors, between Shib-enabled and IP-based access control. This will need to be done so as not to disrupt the browser experience, but understanding that not all vendors will support Shib at once. Once that issue is resolved, there needs to be a way to assure the schools and vendors that the transition will work.

Teragrid Pilot – Tom Barton

The Teragrid includes nine partners and receives funding from the National Science Foundation. The organization wants to make its resources available to a much larger user base. Currently, a PI receiving a large grant receives an account at the Teragrid. With efforts to reach a much wider audience, Teragrid is looking at federating so it does not have to manage authentication. In essence, it will outsource authentication to the federation. The approach is to position the Teragrid resource providers as InCommon Service Providers. Teragrid is completing the process of joining InCommon.

AACRO/Registrar Pilot – Renee Shuey/Bob Morgan

This pilot will demonstrate leverage federation use for student-related processes – admissions, transcripts, enrollment verification, financial aid and other areas. There seems to be good traction with AACRAO and registrars.

There is significant potential in simplifying the transmittal of student information. Migrating from undergraduate studies to graduate school is one example, and migrating from a community college to a baccalaureate institution is another. Federated admissions and transcripts processes could be useful and time-saving.

There is outreach occurring right now with registrars and with the undergrad/grad school transition, but there is nothing going on with community colleges (which are unlikely to be Shib-enabled). One suggestion was to try to simplify Shib installation for such institutions – “Shib in a box.”

There are other sets of services that provide benefits to students, based on the fact that they are a student (travel and software discounts, for example). Such organizations rely on some method—typically the registrar—to verify enrollment. Releasing affiliation, for example, to these types of service providers would make this a much simpler process.

Status of US Government Partnerships – Renee Shuey/Bob Morgan

To what extent does the federal government support federated access? InCommon has been working with US agencies and with the federal government's E-Authentication initiative. InCommon and E-Auth have been working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and hope to have several services federated by the end of the summer.

The Department of Education will be among the first to have applications available. Initially, these will be the low Level of Assurance (LOA)/low use applications. The intent is to move to the low LOA/high use realm. The National Institutes of Health have signed an MoU with InCommon and will soon federate a few lower risk applications

Apple iTunesU – Renee Shuey

Penn State University (PSU) starts conversations with potential vendors, including Apple, talking about federating. At this point, Penn State has a couple of hundred professors participating in iTunesU, making about 2000 podcasts available. PSU will not expand beyond this level – that is to all campuses/faculty, without the federation and Shibboleth. Renee reported that other campuses are waiting on iTunesU decisions until Apple has Shib in place. She also believes that involving a current InCommon Service Provider, perhaps Elsevier, would help make the case with Apple.

Attracting additional Service Providers/Selling InCommon

Those in attendance brainstormed on the types of things InCommon could do to either attract additional SPs or enhance its outreach.

- Concise FAQ for SPs, including articulating the value proposition
- Case studies of particularly good interaction with vendor and what vendor sees as the value (vendor quote, too, or testimonial)
- Provide information such as the number of students/faculty/staff represented by InCommon higher education participants.
- Provide boilerplate language for RFPs that require vendors to federate
- Recruit non-traditional content providers (like travel discounters)
- Somehow show the InCommon brand when the transaction happens so people see that they are using the federation services. If it is transparent to users, institutions may forget about the benefits.
- Communications/reporting to member-institutions
- Who are the audiences for InCommon outreach?
 - Within institutions – high-level administrators such as provosts and CIOs
 - Service Providers/potential SPs
 - People responsible for purchasing security infrastructure
 - Current InCommon higher education participants
- Promote InCommon's scalability – list the number of users that the membership represents.
- Promote identity management and that InCommon is your way to enable/simplify ID management outside of the institution
- For SPs---here's what you get for your money (most session participants agree that InCommon is not a tough sell)

- Use bankcards as examples for various audiences – your Visa and MasterCard are federations of banks.
- Provide simple but elegant diagrams or animations
- Advocate @ NACUBO and other associations

Closing discussion centered on whether using open source federating software (like Shibboleth) is an issue. The general consensus was that information officers and business offices have to be educated that open source software can be just as effective as commercially available software and that there is support in the form of a user community.