



OpenAthens LA 2.0
Bath Spa University
Case study



eduserv



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OpenAthens LA 2.0 is an 'out-of-the-box' single sign-on solution that universities and colleges can use to take advantage of a range of access and identity protocols such as Athens, SAML and Shibboleth.

"All students have hassle free access to the resources they need."

Matt Durrant
Bath Spa University

In need of single sign-on

When Bath Spa University was looking for a solution to its single sign-on needs, that wouldn't increase the cost and burden on its IT staff, it quickly recognised the benefits of OpenAthens LA 2.0 and became early adopters of the new software and service from Eduserv.

Bath Spa University had been using the OpenAthens MD (classic Athens) service along with IP authentication for a number of years. Whilst this was successful and reliable, library staff realised that students and staff were regularly forgetting their username and password. This would often result in both students and staff choosing not to use the electronic resources and if they did contact library staff to gain their login details, it was considered time consuming for all parties.

Bath Spa University wanted a single sign-on solution that made it easier for their 8,000 students and staff to access electronic resources. It hoped this would increase the use of electronic resources and reduce the time library staff spent administering user accounts.

Matt Durant, Bath Spa University's Information Manager (Digital Resources), began to research the options available to the university to introduce single sign-on. Matt said:

"The project started off with the title of 'Shibboleth' because we thought this was the only option available to us. However the project title quickly changed to 'single sign-on' once we had seen a demonstration of OpenAthens LA 2.0 in 2009."

After speaking with Eduserv and seeing a demonstration of the benefits OpenAthens LA 2.0 offered, Bath Spa University decided to take the opportunity to be one of the first universities in the country to implement the new service.

Matt explained there were a number of reasons Bath Spa University chose to implement OpenAthens LA 2.0:

"OpenAthens LA 2.0 offered out-of-the-box statistics that would help librarians calculate the value each resource delivered to the university. This was only available through Shibboleth by accessing complicated log data – something our librarians wouldn't appreciate."



The simple administration features also provided the university with the confidence that OpenAthens LA 2.0 would improve the experience of staff and students.

"It is a lot easier for us to configure the system for authentication – making sure all students have hassle free access to the resources they need."

Cost effective

Matt recognised that the benefits would not just be to library staff and end users but also to the wider infrastructure of staff within the university:

"Computing Services at the university were worried they did not have the time or expertise to program and support the open source software offered by Shibboleth. Therefore, we were excited at the option of a fully supported service from an organisation that has played such a massive part in authentication in the UK."

Matt continued:

“This also presented a real cost benefit to the university. Whilst opting for Shibboleth was initially free, there would be significant cost and time implications for staffing the project that we wouldn't need to worry about with OpenAthens LA 2.0.”

Fully supported

OpenAthens LA 2.0 was implemented in the university during September 2009. Matt highlights how the continual support and expertise from the creators of the system meant that the implementation was quick and easy and left university IT staff to focus on their core business.

“The support we received from Eduserv was great. When we did experience a couple of difficulties, Eduserv sorted it all out for us straight away. This meant, from our point of view, the implementation was completely hassle-free and we were able to use the service in no time.

“The benefits to staff and students could be seen immediately. The training and support we received meant library staff could easily manage the system and provide a better service for end users. The feedback we have received from all the staff and students is incredible.”

The university is really pleased with the benefits they have received from OpenAthens LA 2.0 and they hope to continue to enjoy the advantages the service provides.

Matt concluded:

“Implementing OpenAthens LA 2.0 has been ground breaking. It has really created a cultural change within the university. Staff find it a lot easier to use and recommend a lot more resources to students as they know they will all be able to access them easily.”

OpenAthens LA 2.0 was available to Bath Spa University under its existing OpenAthens subscription. The upgrade demonstrates how institutions can migrate from a managed directory service to local authentication quickly with minimal impact on IT resources and budgets.



Tel: +44 (0)1225 474300
Fax: +44 (0)1225 474301
Email: contact@eduserv.org.uk