

InCommon Update, Spring 2009

A report about collaboration activities supporting federated access.

The InCommon Federation, in conjunction with Internet2, supports a number of collaboration activities aimed at increasing the use of federated access to protected resources. Here is an update on the focus and activities of these groups. You can find more information about these projects and others at www.incommon.org and on the InCommon wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate

NIH/Silver Pilot

The National Institutes of Health — along with the University of Washington, Johns Hopkins University, UC Davis and Penn State — are actively engaged in a pilot exploring InCommon Silver assertions to access applications that require NIST Level of Assurance 2. Silver and LoA2 both include stronger identity proofing and other security requirements. The pilot will include several faculty members with various roles from each of these participating InCommon member institutions accessing the NIH Electronic Research Administration (eRA) application. The pilot will work through identifying the information required to complete transactions, the assertion of InCommon Silver credentials, and the next steps for more tightly integrating institutional data into the application. The goal is to provide a real demo at the Federal Demonstration Partnership meeting in Sept. 2009. spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCNIH

TeraGrid

TeraGrid has a pre-production site at <https://go.teragrid.org/> demonstrating how TeraGrid users will be able to access TeraGrid resources after logging in to their InCommon member Identity Provider. When the site is fully functional, TeraGrid users will be able to open terminal sessions connected to TeraGrid resources where they have accounts and download certificates to their desktops that they will be able to use to authenticate to TeraGrid services. The next steps are peering the site with more InCommon Identity Providers and gaining The Americas Grid Policy Management Authority (TAGPMA) (www.tagpma.org) accreditation for the back-end Certificate Authority so the certificates are accepted across TeraGrid.

Student Services

The InCommon Student Collaboration Group has collaborated with the American Association of

Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) to encourage the use of identity management systems and federation. The goal is to further digital identity and federated identity understanding and practice in the student services area.

The collaboration was instrumental in developing a successful Internet2/EDUCAUSE identity management CAMP in February 2009, serving registrars and IT professionals. Also under development is an identity management track for the AACRAO Tech meeting in July 2009. The group has also helped drive a pilot project to test federating with the National Student Clearinghouse. spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate/InC-Student

Library Services

The InCommon Library Service collaboration was assembled to investigate problems related to online access of library services and resources, and explore how federated identity could improve the user and library experiences. The first phase of the project recommended a hybrid Shibboleth/EZproxy solution as showing the most promise.

In March 2009, a number of universities spun-up phase 2 to further define the hybrid solution, with the ultimate goal of putting the hybrid into production. Participants have divided into three subgroups to work through use cases and develop solutions for specific situations, as well as to determine ways to encourage the federation of content services. More information is available on the collaboration wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/inclibrary/

US Federations

This community collaboration group is exploring the building of federations within and across state boundaries. This effort is supported by Internet2, EDUCAUSE, and InCommon.

The group's monthly calls, which began in December 2008, have focused on hearing presentations about federations and related technology. Presenters have included representatives from NJVid, the state

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federations in Texas and California, the InCommon Federation, and the emerging K-20 federation in North Carolina.

The monthly call/communication sessions will continue to explore issues related to federations, sharing of experiences and identifying solutions, and building on strategies used by state university systems. Further information is available on the wiki: spaces.internet2.edu/display/USFederations/

SharePoint

The SharePoint collaboration group met through the second half of 2008 and the first part of 2009, working through potential use cases for a federated SharePoint, looking to generate a few case studies. The group also discussed several technical approaches to providing federated access to

SharePoint and conducted a survey to determine the scope for the group and whether to expand to discuss other collaboration tools in general, in a federated environment.

The group found significant interest in SharePoint, but could find no large, pressing specific needs for federating the software at this time. Activities were suspended until more demand surfaces for federated SharePoint.

In the meantime, members of the group will develop short case studies based on SharePoint federating work being done at the University of Texas System and at the Committee for Institutional Cooperation, a consortium of the Big Ten schools and the University of Chicago. Information is still available on the wiki space: spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate/InC-SharePoint

About InCommon

InCommon provides a framework of shared policies, trust-establishing processes, and technology standards for universities and service partners to follow. This greatly streamlines collaboration with multiple organizations. For example, institutions and service providers could spend time establishing operating principles, technology hooks, and agreed-upon data exchange elements with each partner, or they could do it once by joining InCommon and then leveraging these common elements for many relationships.

InCommon Benefits

- InCommon supports Web-based distributed authentication and authorization services, such as controlled access to protected content resources.
- Participants exchange information in a standardized format, reducing or removing the need to repeat integration work for each new resource.
- Access decisions and user privacy controls are decided on a case by case basis for each resource, providing higher security and more granular control.

- Institutions experience reduced account management overhead by eliminating the need for separate accounts to access particular resources.
- Campus and company IT professionals provide protected content to multiple organizations using a single authentication framework.
- The home institution controls when an identity is disclosed, and how much information is revealed.

Who can join InCommon?

Any accredited two- and four-year higher education institution can join InCommon. Additionally, higher education participants can sponsor their online service providers. For more information, and a list of participants, see www.incommon.org.

InCommon Web: www.incommon.org

Collaboration Wiki:
spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCCollaborate

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