Meteor and Its Usage Statistics, May 2006

Meteor is a network used to retrieve student loan data from a number of different lenders, agencies, and organizations in real time. Until January 2006 the network was used by campus financial aid administrators and lender and servicer customer service representatives. Beginning in January 2006 students could access data from their campus Website using the local logon. American Education Services was the first to offer access to student borrowers based on campus-provided authentication and authorization. Suggested by Bernie Gleason at the Federal Student Aid CIO Technology Update Conference May 8, 2002, "transitive trust" enables a student to use local authentication to access records throughout the Meteor network—no separate logon required. The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid (FSA) and lenders and servicers regulated by FSA rely on campus authentication and authorization provided the college or university complies with certain security practices. The student "logs on" to a local Web application and authentication and authorization is automatically transmitted through the Meteor network.

The initial volume impact of support student access their own data is shown in Figure 1. This volume is expected to continue its sharp increase until student borrowers throughout the country have access.
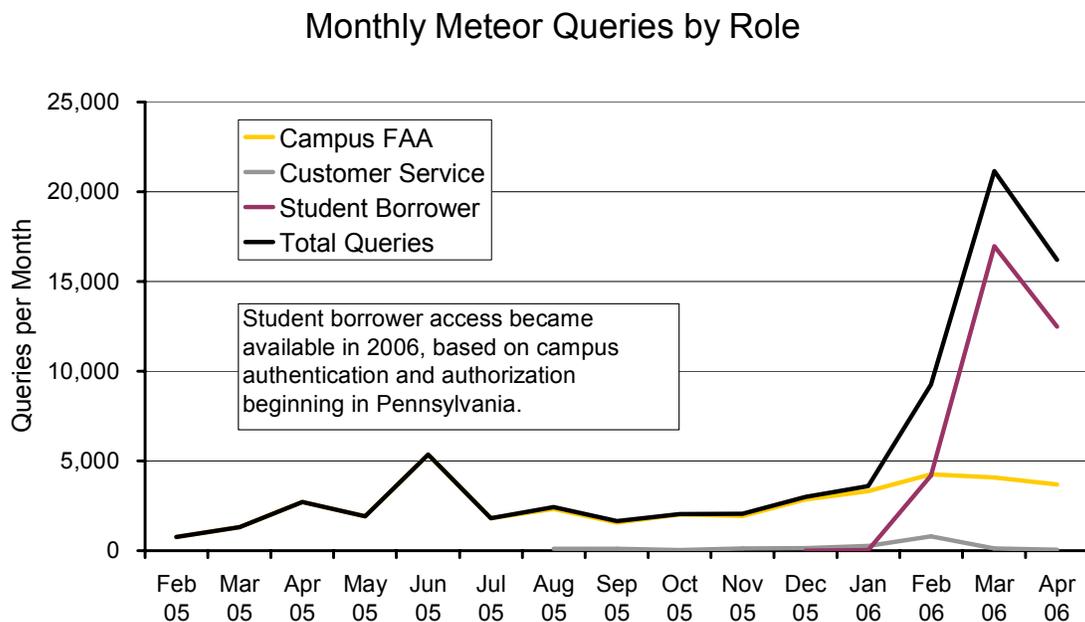
Monthly Meteor Queries by Role

Figure 1 – Monthly Meteor Queries by Role

A query consists of a number of different "transactions" or messages An index provider identifies all of the sources of data—called data providers. Then each data provider is queried individually for data about the student user. These data are integrated and presented to the user.

Shibboleth provides message and site authentication and for "levels of trust" corresponding to those mandated for U.S. federal departments and agencies.

Meteor uses the industry-standard SOAP messaging protocol. All data message are encrypted at the source and throughout the transmission to the final destination using industry standards. The Meteor software is written using the Java programming language.

Meteor began operation in 2002 and has been used continuously with no significant interruptions in service and no security breaches.