

## Notes from a Conversation with Steve Carmody, Brown University on Portals, Security, and Web Services, 21 July 2005

*Publisher's Note: On 3 August Mr. Carmody had been unable to review and comment on these notes. Telephone conversations are often not as precise as written communications; Mr. Carmody may have a different perception of what was said and implied. Use with caution.*

### Summary

- Internet 2 recognizes that portals are being implemented and there are use cases for enabling Shibboleth security at the portal level. Additional use cases could be helpful. (Steve, I could not find the portal use cases on the Internet 2 Shibboleth site searching for portal; could you provide a URL).
- Applications—specifically portlets or channels—could obtain authentication of the user from the portal or separately from Shibboleth. Separate authentication would increase load; accepting portal authentication requires trust. (The uPortal team anticipates the second).
- Although Shibboleth is being implemented by publishers and other sources of eContent, different publishers may be requesting different attributes which would defeat, or at least reduce the value of Shibboleth authentication.
- A new version of Shibboleth—version 1.3—will be available soon (and became available July 26, 2005).
- Shibboleth supports SAML version 1 and version 1.1, and will in the future support SAML 2.<sup>1</sup>

### Background

Higher education in the United Kingdom is implementing Shibboleth as a national scheme for authentication, primarily to access licenses content. This implementation moves authentication from a central database and proprietary system—called Athens—to a federated system supporting local implementations and standards-based attributes based on SAML.

The ESUP-Portail project in France has expanded from a research project—4 universities—to an implementation in 17 universities and 33 other education schools and

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. government is certifying SAML 1 interoperability. The SAML 2 specification was approved 15 March 2005. This specification attempted to reconcile Shibboleth and Liberty Alliance with the SAML work. Scott Cantor, Ohio State University, was the principal author.

organizations. Shibboleth will be used for federated authentication; JA-SIG's CASE is used for Web signon for uPortal and now for Moodle.<sup>2</sup>

JA-SIG's uPortal project now supports the CAS (Common Authentication Services) software developed by Yale University, and a service-based version of Columbia University's Permissions and Groups System (PAGS) as well as uPortal. (The new PAGS will be available with uPortal Version 3.0 expected late this calendar year).

## Suggestions

The purpose of the conversation was to determine whether there were Shibboleth uPortal implementations and who may be interested in developing and testing a Shibboleth implementation. The second part was the need to standardize SAML attributes since the need for and definition of these impact local directories, data collection and maintenance processes, and feasibility and costs of inter-institutional interoperability.

Steve suggested that the uPortal community should submit use cases to the Shibboleth project. He thought there would be someone from the Internet 2 MACE effort interested in assisting. uPortal would benefit from someone who could guide the implementation and interpret the vision of the Shibboleth project.

No suggestions emerged on how to get broad consensus on attributes.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on meetings with the ESUP Portail development team at the University of Valenciennes, 12 July 2005. Notes of this meeting are not yet available.