Rethinking Authentication

Readers’ workflows are changing. No longer are they reliably connected to their institution’s network when accessing resources. IP recognition-based legacy approaches can require complex workarounds to cope with mobile workflows.

Older systems can also pose a significant security risk. IP addresses are open to various methods of abuse, and the lack of transparency makes accurate usage reporting difficult.

OpenAthens provides a SAML-based approach to single sign-on that is more secure, reliable, and transparent than IP recognition.

- **Security**
  SAML-based authentication limits exposure to attackers

- **Trust**
  Readers and resources protected from fraud and misuse associated with IP recognition

- **Simplicity**
  Full SaaS/cloud solution – no in-house development resource required

- **Transparency**
  Statistics reporting provides insight at the institutional, departmental, and individual login level

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Glossary of terms

- **Identity Provider (IdP)**
  An organization or product that confirms user identities and attributes to enable them to access content owned by service providers. Examples of IdP products are OpenAthens, Shibboleth and Ping Federate.

- **IP Address**
  A numerical reference (e.g. 123.123.123.0) that identifies the location of a device on a network or the wider internet, managed globally.

- **IP Recognition**
  A form of access management that grants access to resources based on the IP address of a user’s device.

- **OpenAthens**
  An access management system for organizations or content providers (IdPs or SPs in SAML terms) that facilitates SSO access to subscription content.

- **Proxy Service**
  Software that acts as an intermediary between users and content, often used to facilitate remote access to subscription-based content.

- **Remote Access**
  Allows users to access library holdings (particularly subscription content) with their normal login credentials when they are outside of the institution network (for example, at home or using a mobile device).

- **SAML**
  Security Assertion Markup Language. A protocol for exchanging security information between identity providers and service providers.

- **Service Provider (SP)**
  An organization that provides content or services.

- **SSO**
  Single Sign-on. Providing users with access to many different systems through a single set of login details.
Single Sign-on Journeys Compared

Authentication should provide assurance to readers, institutions, and publishers that connections are trustworthy. Legacy methods focus on recognition – based on network location – rather than true authentication of readers' credentials, which OpenAthens provides.

OpenAthens’ approach to authentication provides the flexibility to adapt to changing workflows, the security to protect against fraud and misuse, and the transparency librarians need to make informed purchasing decisions.

Visit www.openathens.org today for more information.