

## Access to electronic resources for walk-in users in Higher Education Institutions

### ***A short paper for SWRLS – March 2010***

How do we, as a regional community, address the fact that many academic institutions have resources that the general public should be able to access?

#### **Issues**

1. Licences
  2. JANET (Joint Academic Network) protocols
  3. Technical infrastructure
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1. Licences – the licences for many JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and NESLI (National Electronic Site Licence Initiative) e-resources permit access by walk-in users to HEI (Higher Education Institution) libraries, but others do not.
  2. JANET – although some IT/Computing departments in HEIs claim that the JANET acceptable use policy does not permit use by people who are not staff or students (or otherwise associated in some way with the institution) this clearly is not a concern for IT departments in other HEIs.
  3. Technical infrastructure - technical “workarounds” need to be employed so that if walk-in users are to be permitted access to the HEI’s network, they do not also get access to services and resources that they are not entitled to use. Processes also need to be in place to track the usage/users.

#### **Solutions**

1. The Research Information Network (RIN) is concerned that JISC and SCONUL make every effort to support HEIs in their endeavours to ensure organisations can make the information and datasets, that are created with public funding, accessible to researchers.

*A JISC/RIN invitation has recently published for proposals to investigate and quantify the extent to which members of different communities in the UK can gain ready access to formally-published scholarly literature..... and to identify priorities in filling gaps and overcoming barriers to access, and actions that might be taken to that end.*

It is important that, if we cannot bid for this, we keep a watching brief on the outcomes.

2. The University of Nottingham has a clearly established Walk-in User project that works within the JANET protocols and allows the general

public access to a “limited” (but still extensive) number of permitted resources.

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/is/library/walkin/index.php>

For a further discussion on the possibilities of interpretation of the JANET Acceptable Use and Connection policies please see appendix.

3. The University of Exeter controls access to walk-in user e-resources through IP (Internet Protocol) authentication. For this, they use their Library Management System’s Web Access Management (WAM) software. This allows them to control access at the individual resource level by user groups.

The University of Huddersfield has a set of pre-existing accounts. Walk-in users register at the desk and their details are attached to one of the accounts. This is limited to 6 machines in the cybercafé.

### **Action for SWRLS?**

What is it that is preventing HEIs from implementing some of the solutions devised by other organisations? If it is the cost of staff time and the lack of priority given to such initiatives then perhaps we need to find some funding to make the time and thereby raise the priority of this work?

- Establish a project that releases staff time at one or more SWRLS institutions to do more research into technical and policy issues? The outcomes might be a set of suggested solutions that could be presented to libraries and computing departments for implementation.
- Establish a project that releases the time of technical staff to implement some of the solutions already identified in the literature? The outcomes would be technical workarounds that could be shared between organisations.
- Other?
- Timescales?

## **Appendix**

In the **JANET Acceptable Use Policy** (para 2) it states that:

*JANET is maintained primarily to support education and research within the UK public sector.*

It also states that:

*It is not a public network.*

However, it does state (para 9) that:

*JANET may be used by a User Organisation (ie HEI) and its members for any lawful activity that is in furtherance of the aims and policies of the user organisation.*

So, if one of our HEI's aims is to undertake knowledge transfer with the local community, then presumably we are covered?

Also (para 22) indicates that:

*A User Organisation may extend JANET access to other individuals on a limited basis where this is done in pursuance of the UO's remit and for which it receives public funds, provided no charge is made for such access. [e.g. provision can be used to permit a guest of the UO to gain access for the purpose of maintaining contact with his or her home organisation, or of carrying out his or her teaching or research activities whilst using the UO's facilities. It is expected that such use will be occasional and reasonably time-limited.]*

So, this might account for many of the requests that public libraries and HEIs get to use the walk-in resources at HEIs.

The **JANET Connection Policy** includes an annex relating to "Organisations outside the Higher and Further Education and Research Communities eligible for connection to JANET". This identifies a category of organisation that can normally be connected to JANET with the permission of JISC. This includes (para 1.3):

*Public libraries, either directly or via local or unitary authorities.*

And (para 2.1):

*Local or unitary authorities and other public sector bodies, for the purpose of delivering lifelong learning along with other services that cannot be disaggregated from lifelong learning services.*

And even (para 3.2):

*Local and unitary authorities and other public sector bodies for other public sector activities not directly concerned with learning, but where the use of JANET is to the benefit of the local community or to the public in general.*

So, the spirit, if not the letter, of the JANET protocols would be met if HEIs could provide access to the JANET network for public library users since they would be helping public sector bodies, and particularly public libraries, in delivering lifelong learning, and benefitting the local community.

If JANET is prepared to permit public libraries to access JANET, then why not permit their users to access it via HEIs where there is, arguably, a greater range of e-resources, many of which include various titles whose licences permit walk-in use.

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