

Birmingham LA Case Study

Birmingham & i2Q have provided a fully integrated Shibboleth solution delivering SSO, privacy management and integrated content filtering and content pre-positioning.

The result – reduced bureaucracy in managing teachers and learners online identities, increased e-safety and content delivery network (CDN) that ensures rich, engaging high bandwidth content is pre-positioned as close to end users as possible. This means a single login account, reduced page load times and that the network is optimised at high usage times and utilised at low usage points.

Content Delivery

Birmingham wanted to improve access to and performance of digital educational content whilst ensuring that it didn't entail school ending up with multiple servers and caches replicating functionality and increasing the support burden. This was especially the case for Knowledge Box from Pearson Education for which there was an appetite for the service but not for another box at the school. CacheStream provided them with a software solution that could be overlaid onto the existing caching infrastructure to enable content to be pre-positioned at the schools based on the schools content profile. CacheStream uses content profiles to push content to schools at network low usage times (overnight etc) to ensure that at high usage times the content was already located as close to the end user as possible, reducing page load times and disruption to lessons whilst increasing the reliability of the content.

Subscription Management

Birmingham wanted to promote local school choice over content subscriptions through a central framework of CDN and SSO. The subscription engine in CacheStream understands which users / schools should have access to which resources (free, cultural and commercial) and uses this information to present easy access to content to each user. These resources can then be organised in line with school requirements. CacheStream also provides a means of aggregating school purchases to achieve best value.

Resource Discovery

Birmingham wanted to provide a central place where teachers could find resources available to them (and add new resources). CacheStream uses xml middleware to allow users to search across multiple content libraries from a single point using Curriculum Online (or equivalent) metadata. Searches only show access to resources a user has access to.

Shibboleth and SSO Enabled Environment

Birmingham wanted to ensure that had the infrastructure in place to participate in the UK Access Management Federation – the UK educational Shibboleth ID management and SSO service. However, they also understood that it will take a while for all content services to also be Shibboleth enabled and therefore needed to provide a proprietary SSO solution for the intervening period. CacheStream is shibboleth enabled and also provides proprietary SSO into the UK leading digital content providers solving this issue and providing a holistic solution.

Integrated, granular filtering

Birmingham had an ambition to be able to deliver delegated and granular content filtering integrated into the Shibboleth environment. This was achieved by integrating the Shibboleth and proxy/ filtering authentication using the Smartfilter DA technology.

understands who teachers are when they login. The information is then used to top and tail the report to ensure faster production and better accuracy to the reports.