

## Shibboleth Federation Hosted Services\*



\* This brochure describes technologies available to the MAMS Testbed Federation. As the Australian Access Federation is yet to be finalised, its technologies may differ.

### Introduction

The MAMS Testbed Federation differentiates itself from other Shibboleth Federations by providing some commonly needed tools for its Members. These tools enable Federation end-users to collaborate with other users securely in real time. These Federation tools, which would otherwise require considerable local maintenance from each Member to run them individually, can more efficiently be provided as a suite of hosted services available from the Federation for use by Members.

Some of the tools already in deployment include Federation Chat Helpdesk, Shibbolised SubEtha Mailing List, Shibbolised OpenMeeting, with others to come in the future.

### Federation Chat Helpdesk

The Federation Chat Helpdesk evolved from the successful deployment of the Online Librarian (OLL) project that was funded as part of MAMS Minigrant received by Murdoch University and Macquarie University. OLL has been running as a production service for over 2 years offering help to students of the two universities allowing them to ask reference desk questions directly to a live (online) librarian. Both universities have thus been able to increase their information desk's operating hours, adding 22 hours per week. In the first 8 months, the information desk received close to 1600 calls. Murdoch OLL team has recently received an Australian Learning and Teaching Council award for their outstanding contribution to student learning experience.



Federation Chat Helpdesk and Online Librarian are both based on Shibbolised Jabber Instant Messaging infrastructure, also called "Shib-Jim".

Federation Chat Helpdesk continues to offer the advantages of OLL by allowing users to chat directly with any MAMS support team member online. Multiple support members can handle and transfer *conversations* in real time to other members (eg,

transfer from Helpdesk to Advanced Technical Support). This approach has major advantages over other forms of communications (e.g. email), as responses can be provided in real time, enabling the dialogue which is often required for complex queries, as opposed to simple question and answer queries.

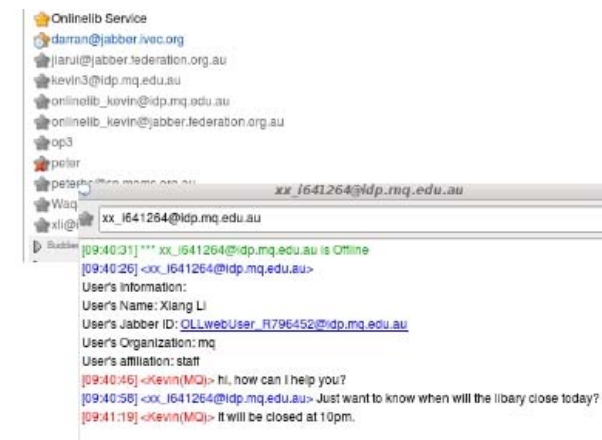


Figure 1 Librarian view of chat (with user information)

Some features of Federation Chat Helpdesk are:

- User information is known prior communication to the MAMS support team thus allowing support team members to more quickly and accurately target the questions/answers. This reduces the need for the typical introductory questions to discover user's background (e.g. name, institution, etc).
- Multiple anonymous support team members can collaborate in real time, all represented as a single support team.
- Smart assignment based on user's attributes. Certain support team members can be pre-allocated to serve some users automatically based on users' attributes such as their institution.
- Second level operator support and conversation transfer.
- Automatic statistics collection and backups.
- Transcript email and feedback for any user who would like to refer to the transcript of the conversation.

