

Glossary of terms

This glossary of terms will help to explain acronyms, terms and phrases encountered in our industry. By breaking down these terminologies we aim to enable you to make an informed choice about the products and services that could benefit your institution or library.

Active Directory Federation Services

A Microsoft product used to enable secure access to Windows networks.

Administrator/Admin

Often used to describe a librarian responsible for issuing usernames and passwords to patrons.

API – ‘Application program interface’

A set of rules (known as protocols) used by programmers to create applications.

Attributes

Information about us as individuals e.g. email address, job title or department.

Authentication

The process of logging in with usernames and passwords.

Authentication token

A method of storing username credentials to permit access to your chosen online services. This means you do not need separate logins.

Authorization

The process of permitting access to protected/subscription content.

The Cloud

The online storage of data, or software.

Dashboard

A web page that provides a simple visual summary of key information relating to user habits.

Data centre

A series of computer servers used for cloud storage and the sharing of large volumes of data.

Deep link

A link to a specific piece of content, whether that's an article, book chapter, image, or other resource.

Directory

A list of an organization's member information. For example, name, department, or email address.

Discovery service

A web service that allows you to search many different online resources at the same time.

Document delivery

A service that helps you purchase access to a specific document [the same term is used for physical document delivery] that is unavailable in an organization's library.

Domain

A website address that represents an organization e.g. www.openathens.net

Entitlement

The subscription resources you are entitled to access as a member of your institution.

Federated access management

Using the protocols and policies provided by a federation.

Federation

A group of identity and service providers that enable access to online content in one place.

Identity provider

An organization that confirms your identity and provides your access to online content owned by libraries. This is what we do at OpenAthens.

IP Address

A numerical reference (For example, 123.123.123.0) that identifies the location of a web-connected device on a network or on the internet.

IP authentication

A form of access management that gives you access to resources based on the IP Address (geographic/physical location) of your laptop or mobile device.

IP range

The range of IP addresses used by a particular institution, organization or country.

Link resolver

A software that helps libraries connect you to a resource after confirming that it is within your institution's subscription.

Metrics

The use of statistics in an area of work. For example, metrics help a library learn more about usage and make informed decisions on resources.

OpenAthens

That's us! We make accessing knowledge through a single sign-on easy.

OpenAthens Federation

An international federation run by OpenAthens. All OpenAthens customers are in the federation. A federation is a group of organizations consisting of identity providers and service providers which enables access to content via agreed attributes and eligibility.

Open source

A software code designed to be seen, modified, and distributed by anyone.

Open Access

A publishing model that allows online journal articles, books and other material to be free to access for everyone without a subscription.

Organization identifier

Unique to an organisation, the identifier allows services providers to recognise the subscribing party.

Portal

A webpage that provides access to a variety of different online resources.

Proxy service

Software that helps you gain access to subscription-based published content based on an institutional IP address.

Publisher

An organization that edits and publishes the books, journals, and papers that you access.

Redirector

The OpenAthens Redirector is a tool that allows you to add a consistent prefix to database links. When this new link is followed, the redirector works out the best way to get the user there - no need to maintain separate links for on-site and off-site access or work with complicated 'WAYFless URLs' (the redirector uses them so that you don't have to).

Remote access

Gaining access to your library's collection of books and journals globally, no matter where you are based. You could be at home or using a mobile device.

SaaS – ‘Software as a Service’

A SaaS solution provides you access to cloud-based software through a web browser. This means you do not need to install any software on your computer locally.

SAML – ‘Security Assertion Markup Language’

A method of sharing secure information between identity providers and service providers.

Scope

A process used to identify organizations, usually their domain name.

Seamless access

Providing access to content/articles/journals without the need to sign into multiple services or websites. It really is seamless!

Service provider

A term for an organization that provides content or services.

Shibboleth

An open-source system for organizations that using SSO (single sign-on) to provide your access to subscription content.

SSO – ‘Single sign-on’

Giving you access to multiple online systems through a single set of login details.

Subscription

An agreement your institution has with a vendor or publisher to provide access to a specific online resource(s), paid for by your institution.

URL – ‘Uniform resource identifier’

A web address that links you to a specific website. Our URL is www.openathens.net

UX – ‘User experience’

This is your impression of the design, and ease of use, of a website while you are using it.

User journey

This refers to the number of clicks you need to take to access the content you are looking for.

VLE – ‘Virtual learning environment’

An online service for educational institutions that gives access to a range of learning resources, including learning course information and study content.

VPN – ‘Virtual private network’

Software that provides you with secure remote access to a network from outside of the organization itself.

WAYF – ‘Where are you from’

A service that will ask you to confirm your organization before granting you access to content.

WAYFless URL

A clickable link for direct access to content. This URL already includes information to bypass WAYF.