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Barbara Losoff
University of Colorado Boulder, barbara.losoff@Colorado.EDU

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Shibboleth: A Project of the Internet2 Middleware Initiative

Barbara Losoff (barbara.Losoff@colorado.edu)

University of Colorado

http://shibboleth.internet2.edu/

Shibboleth, a Hebrew watchword once used to distinguish tribal affiliation, has re-emerged as a brand name for a unique middleware authentication product. Developed by Internet2, a U.S. networking consortium, Shibboleth is a federated, open source authentication suite serving research federations and higher education. Shibboleth is a freely-available product, providing seamless access across multiple institutional platforms including: databases, data, internal documents, indexes, etc. Offering a single password sign-on, Shibboleth provides a secure gateway between users and proprietary resources.

Ken Klingenstein, senior director of Internet2 likened his role in developing Shibboleth to plumbing: “connecting the pieces that will eventually bring water out of the taps,” (Weil, 2004). The release of Shibboleth 2.0 in 2008 offered enhancements that provide a “more robust and interoperable platform.” (Rotman, 2008) Although not specifically built for library research applications, the Shibboleth architecture has the potential to support e-research which is cross-disciplinary, collaborative, and distributive. Kevin Morooney, the CIO of Penn State University, underscored the collaborative value of Shibboleth saying that it provides an “unprecedented ability to deliver both improved security and privacy for users while at the same time greatly enhancing collaboration opportunities,” (Rotman, 2008).

References
