History and Development

Web Access Management (WAM) provides a proxy server for remote access to subscription databases and ejournals. The WAM product was purchased in 1998 and initially implemented with FirstSearch databases. Since that time, it has grown to include entries for more than 375 separate hosts.

The first version of WAM used simple “tokens” to provide access to databases. While this method worked, it required the end-user to edit a setting on their web browser. Authentication did not work with the native AOL browser. In some cases, remote users who already accessed the Internet through a proxy server could not also use the Libraries’ service.

As the number and complexity of electronic resources grew, WAM changed to a “rewriting” proxy in 2002. This was a tremendous improvement, as the end-user was no longer required to change any local settings. However, the rewriting proxy requires that each URL be rewritten to refer back to the InfoLinks server with a 0- prefix and a .library.uark.edu suffix, e.g. http://0-www.proquest.com.library.uark.edu. The need to create and maintain these rewritten links creates an extra step in serials cataloging, and, to a lesser extent, in monographs cataloging, as well.

Initially, patrons authenticated to WAM by providing a last name, ID number, and PIN number, in the same way that patrons authenticated for other catalog functions. In 2000, PIN numbers were eliminated as these caused many issues for distant patrons who had no easy way of learning or changing their PINs. In 2006, the Libraries implemented SSL secure logins for InfoLinks functions, which masked the ID number field. In 2007, the Libraries migrated to LDAP (lightweight directory address protocol) authentication, which allows students and faculty to use their UARK email login and password to access library databases. While LDAP means one less number for patrons to remember, it also adds a layer of complication for users whose LDAP entry is not complete – even though their UARK email accounts may be functioning. Since the LDAP implementation, Access Services and Web Services staff have had to spend more time working with campus Computing Services and with the Registrar to reconcile LDAP issues.

The additional security of LDAP was needed, however, as this method is much more secure than name/ID number combinations. If any user name and password is compromised, the user can easily change their password through PassWeb.

Management Interface

WAM was initially managed through the text-based admin module; Millennium management was added in Release 2005. One feature of the Millennium interface is the ability to export the entire WAM forwarding table (the 375+ entries) to share with other libraries or for occasional maintenance.

One significant management enhancement in the 2005 release was the ability to view more of the log files. This allows us to pinpoint specific user IP addresses at specific times in order to resolve access issues or abuse of copyrighted material. In addition, a WAM filter function was added to capture a more accurate count of user activity.
Patron Use and Statistics

Since 1999, patron sessions through the proxy server have increased by a factor of 300. WAM provides an essential service for all our students and faculty.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remote Sessions</td>
<td>23,521</td>
<td>69,904</td>
<td>113,008</td>
<td>570,950</td>
<td>1,999,306</td>
<td>2,316,338</td>
<td>5,825,998</td>
<td>6,947,507</td>
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In addition to total “hits,” statistics for use by patron type, by database, by month, and by time of day are collected and reported annually. Statistics are gathered from the Web Access Management reports at [http://library.uark.edu/manage](http://library.uark.edu/manage).

Desired Enhancements / Improvements

Currently, the best enhancement to WAM functionality would be to improve local response to patron problems, which is an ongoing effort. Access Services and Web Services work to resolve most patron records quickly but weekend and evening support could be enhanced. The Web Services librarian currently logs between 10 and 30 remote access issues a month; the majority of these are related to the user’s status and patron record.

The Web Access Management reports module is scheduled to be overhauled in Release 2007; currently, the process of collecting and downloading WAM stats can be quite slow and cumbersome.

The purchase of the Electronic Resources Management (ERM) product might help to manage the proxied URLs. In addition, ERM has a problem log function that would allow us to post known issues with access for specific databases or ejournals; these alerts are stored in a log which can then be consulted for future troubleshooting.

The main competitor for proxy services in academic libraries is EX Prozy ([http://www.usefulutilities.com/](http://www.usefulutilities.com/)). We have been very satisfied with the III product, which has the additional features of interacting automatically with our patron database and other system functions, and so never considered switching.

bj 03/08