Use Case - EZproxy

Scenario

EZproxy[1] authentication and access software was implemented at Newcastle University in 2011 allowing students and staff to connect to Web-based licensed content which is offered by the library from off campus. While some licenced content is available through Shibbolized login, other licensed content uses IP based authentication to determine whether a user has the authority to access the material. This can be restrictive to users, especially for students, when studying from home.

Before EZproxy was installed, in order for users to be able to access licensed content from off campus they would need to login via the Remote Application Service (RAS), which uses Citrix technology, and use an "on campus" version of the Internet Explorer application. Users would then be provided, at times, with an unusable experience when trying to view certain document formats for example PDF files. Due to connectivity issues, PDFs do not render correctly when being accessed via RAS and appeared jittery and often unreadable.

EZproxy was introduced to provide an alternative method of accessing licensed content and provide a more seamless experience to users. With the introduction of the EZproxy service, it provides a better end-user experience and helps to reduce the number of authorizations/passwords required to gain access to resources. One of the key drivers for making this service available is to work towards improving the overall student experience. Users are able to access the content from any location, being asked to authenticate via the Shibboleth login gateway before being seamlessly proxied through the EZproxy server.

The ability to be able to produce management information for the use of the EZproxy service is important for a number of reasons. The main reason is to justify the purchase and implementation of the EZproxy service at Newcastle University. Although the initial cost of purchasing the software is minimal, the time and resources involved in rolling out the service is more noticeable. The ability to be able to quickly produce reports on the use of the service is important for management and decision makers to be able to justify the continuous roll out and support of the service.

This type of information can also be vital in assisting in the continuous roll out of the service; although 1393 service links have already been updating to proxy results through the service. There may also be services which have so far not been configured to use EZproxy; the information produced by RAPTOR will help to identify any remaining services.

The ability to be able to produce usage reports of the EZproxy service is also valuable in order to ensure that users are aware of the service. Some users may still initiate a session via RAS to get access to the resources, and are unaware that they no longer need to do this with the EZproxy service in place. Producing usage graphs, by school, subject or undergraduate/postgraduate, with RAPTOR will be able to identify whether any work needs to be done to raise user awareness of the service.

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[1] http://www.oclc.org/ezproxy/

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Approach

This use case will investigate the usefulness of using RAPTOR to report on the usage of a service such as EZproxy. A number of high level reports will be made available within the project to demonstrate the configuration between RAPTOR and EZproxy.

As part of this use case, statistics will be produced for the following areas.

- Unique authentications – reporting on the number of unique authentications via the EZproxy service is the important first step. This will help to visualise the usage of the service and provides the basis for finer grained reporting.
- Authentications via user type – the ability to distinguish between the user types using the service can be important to help drive any user awareness to the correct user groups.
    - For students, this will be driven down further to their programme types, e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate.
- Authentications via schools – this will demonstrate the usage of resources within particular schools and help to identify school resources which may not be making use of the EZproxy service.