



Newcastle Selects Grouper to Support Collaborative Research



Located in the northeastern part of England, Newcastle University is a forward-looking, research-

intensive community of more than 20,000 students, faculty and staff.

Members of the community need convenient access to a range of tools and scholarly resources to advance their projects. But with Newcastle’s research programs spanning a wide spectrum and crossing subject boundaries and faculty divides, group and resource access management present a significant challenge. The fact that Newcastle includes a medical school adds to the complexity, since medical students are affiliated with both the university and with various teaching hospitals, as are most of their instructors.

After looking at several alternative tools and strategies, Newcastle selected Internet2’s Grouper Groups Management Toolkit and Shibboleth® Single Sign-on and Federating Software for group and resource access management.

The Problem

Until recently, the identity and group management services within the Newcastle community were managed in an ad hoc way. Despite the numerous departments, research institutes and research centers on campus, there was no central directory for the majority of the identity information. Most groups had their own group management process, ranging from informal knowledge to papers on bulletin boards to data in Excel spreadsheets.

Newcastle recognized the need for a flexible, centralized group management system that would provide a better user experience, greater consistency in service, and lower application development times. A federated approach was considered crucial to handle the prevalence of collaborations outside the institute, with regional partners and other regional universities, hospitals and health services.

The Solution

According to Caleb Racey, leader of Newcastle’s middleware team, the university chose Grouper Groups

Management Toolkit “because it was flexible, was able to understand our fragmented identity stores, and supported multiple user interfaces, enfranchising different user types. We also liked the fact that Grouper is a mature product, developed by people active in group management for years, with a strong community of developers and users.” One more important advantage was that Grouper would integrate with Shibboleth, the open-source software package for federated web single sign-on.

The Result

The first deployment of Grouper involved provisioning access to wikis throughout the university. Based on the success of that implementation, Newcastle then deployed Grouper to provide role-based access control to manage campus room bookings. This implementation involves using Grouper’s web services and Talend (an open source data integration tool) to export Grouper user roles and load them into the Scientia Syllabus Plus Room Booking service.

Making the system more efficient, Newcastle uses the Grouper Loader to bring their organization structure into Grouper, and that “org. chart” data is automatically updated at intervals to reflect any changes. This allows room booking access to be assigned to a department or team, without having to individually assign access to each member.

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The library also uses Grouper, combined with Shibboleth, for controlling access to online archived resources and other key resources. Next, Newcastle plans to leverage Grouper’s new audit functions, in combination with Shibboleth, to begin tackling issues of user access control and delegated authority.

About Grouper

Want to learn more about what Grouper can do for your campus? Read more about Grouper on the back of this page and at grouper.internet2.edu.



Grouper Groups Management Toolkit

Giving Stewards Control of Groups to Manage Membership and the Resources They Access

Internet2's Grouper Groups Management Toolkit enables project managers, departments, institutions and end users to create and manage institutional and personal groups. It puts the control of a group in the hands of its steward and enables the person to manage the membership and the resources a group can access.

Why Should I Use Groups?

Separate applications may use groups to track an individual's role, or to determine which users are authorized to access the resource. Because groups are managed separately in each application, keeping the membership roster consistent across these services becomes very difficult. If a member left a project, for example, the group's email list, wiki space, calendar, research database and other shared resources needed to be updated separately.

Grouper provides a way to define a group once and use that group across multiple applications.

Manage from One Location

Grouper consolidates group information and creates a single point of management. Membership changes are done once and provisioned to the applications. A group owner can define membership, create a group structure within a domain, or delegate all of this to someone else.

Distribute Control

Grouper keeps the group membership decisions in the hands of the business/group owners, access control in the hands of the application owners, and the technology management in the hands of the technologists. Individuals can also use the system to review their group memberships.

IT administrators are relieved from the burden of keeping up with the day-to-day group changes and Grouper increases the overall integrity of the policy and technology interaction.

Help Collaboration Happen

With Grouper, an owner sets up a group in one spot, feeding membership information to applications like

email lists and calendars. The owner needs no technical skills to create, change or delete groups or members. For example, a researcher might create a group and enable members to participate on an email list or view a web site. Students use Grouper to set up and manage groups for similar applications as they work together on shared projects and class work.

Grouper enables group management institution-wide and on an individual level, providing more secure, robust and responsive methods to control access to resources.

Ease Staff Support Load

Grouper separates the management of groups from the technical system, so a change in technology has no effect. This reduces the end-user support calls associated with underlying infrastructure changes. Removing IT from the middle of managing groups will help ease your helpdesk headaches as well.

How Do I Get Started?

To learn more about the Grouper Groups Management Toolkit, visit the Grouper website (<http://grouper.internet2.edu>) and join the community by participating on the email lists and attending the workshops and presentations offered around the country.

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