

# A nationwide access management service – Athens

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**Abstract:** *The Athens service enables secure access to online services for universities and colleges throughout the UK and overseas. The key features include “single password sign-on” to multiple resources and fully distributed management of user accounts. The service is used by all UK higher education institutions and many users in allied sectors.*

*Use of Athens has now reached “critical mass”, with over 800,000 accounts at more than 300 institutions, 100 National Health Service Trusts and most Scandinavian universities. Commercial data services, some in the USA, are adopting Athens as the only viable way to make their products available to customers in the U K education community. Athens manages access to over 150 different information resources from a range of data service providers and more are being added as the service grows. Athens has become a cornerstone in developing a national academic service environment, known as the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER).*

*Athens brings many benefits to its various user groups. For students, lecturers and researchers, it means a single username and password for access to the dozens of online resources used in the course of their work or study. For the administrator at an institution, usually in the library or computer centre, it provides a set of tools for managing the thousands of users for which they are responsible. For the service provider, Athens makes the service more attractive to users and removes the chore of providing usernames and passwords to users and administrators.*

*Athens has had far-reaching effects on the community. For individual users, administrators and service providers alike, Athens is accepted as an essential ingredient in the provision and use of online resources. The community’s future needs are now being identified, and a replacement, codenamed “Rome”, is being developed.*