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## The GALILEO OpenAthens Project

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## The GALILEO OpenAthens Project

By Russell Palmer

### GALILEO and OpenAthens

#### *GALILEO*

GALILEO (Georgia Library Learning Online), Georgia's virtual library, is an initiative of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. GALILEO provides access to authoritative subscription electronic resources for the residents of Georgia. Access to GALILEO is available via the University System of Georgia, the Technical College System of Georgia, K–12 schools, private K–12 schools, public libraries, and a group of private academic colleges and universities. GALILEO seeks to provide equal access to information for all Georgia citizens.

#### *Why OpenAthens?*

GALILEO began to evaluate authentication solutions in fall 2017. This investigation began as a result of major changes in the vendor platform landscape in summer 2017. In order to comply with security updates to all major web browsers, most vendors moved their platforms to https:// sites in order to better protect the security of data exchange between the user and the provider.

Even after these upgrades, some vendor products did not perform as well as expected due to the aging proxy server software. In order

to provide GALILEO users with the best possible user experience, changes were necessary.

After an initial evaluation of the authentication market, GALILEO spent substantial time evaluating OpenAthens. Multiple meetings were held internally, beginning with



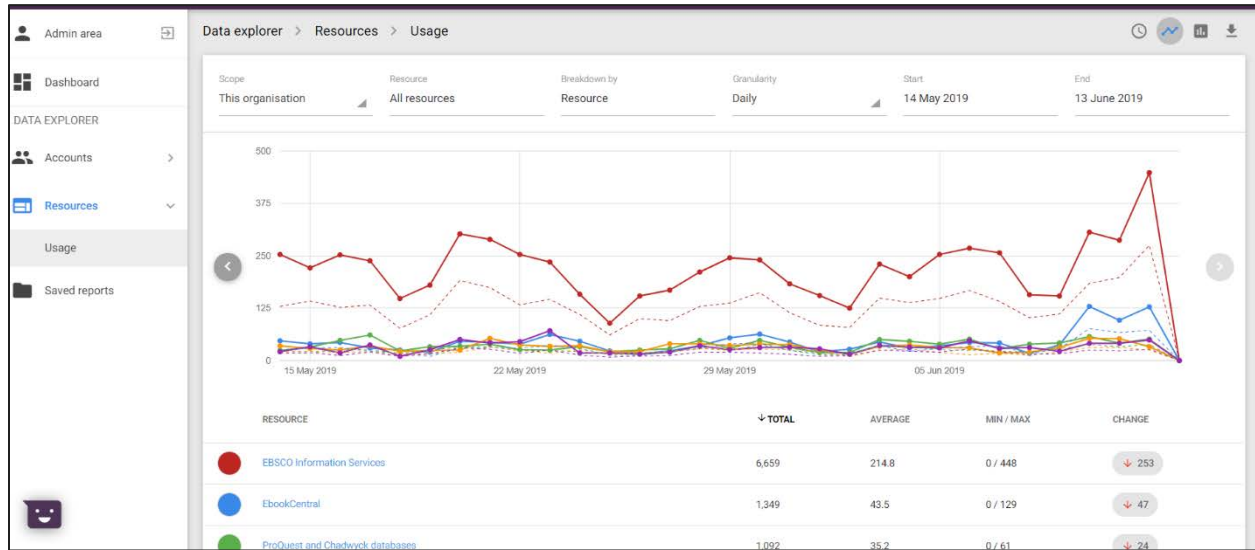
Russell Palmer, assistant director for GALILEO Support Services, presents at the OpenAthens Annual Conference in London, March 2019

introductory information and demonstrations. In-depth technical discussions followed, and as we reached a decision point, there were additional conversations on requirements. Staff from GALILEO, the University of Georgia, University System of Georgia information technology team, and OpenAthens participated.

GALILEO decided to purchase OpenAthens in January 2018, and pilot implementation began in April 2018.

#### **What is OpenAthens?**

The OpenAthens product is a library-focused platform for authentication. It uses an authentication standard called SAML (Security Assertion Markup Language) to pass login information between an identity provider (local directory) and a service provider (vendor/publisher) securely. OpenAthens provides a single sign-on solution, allowing library users to access GALILEO and locally purchased electronic resources with the same credentials used for other applications.



A sample of one month's worth of OpenAthens usage data by resource

GALILEO is implementing OpenAthens for all participating institutions. After OpenAthens implementation, GALILEO users will no longer rely on cumbersome, frequently changing passwords for access, but they will instead log in to GALILEO using credentials they are already familiar with—campus user ID and password, public library card or PINES number and PIN, or school ID and password.

In addition to providing an easier and more memorable path for authentication for users, there are benefits for library staff. The OpenAthens administration module adds a number of conveniences. Systems staff will no longer have to manage complex proxy configurations and stanza updates. The administration module collects anonymous access statistics at the database platform level. OpenAthens access statistics are updated every 24 hours, and they can be parsed into different views: time frame (daily, weekly, monthly), by resource, and, if the institution passes appropriate attributes from its local directory, by department, location, branch, and more.

OpenAthens is a United Kingdom-based nonprofit organization that provides technology support to higher education institutions in the United Kingdom and beyond. In the United

States, EBSCO Information Services provides implementation management and ongoing support for OpenAthens.

### OpenAthens Site Visit

In April 2018, OpenAthens sent a three-person team to meet with GALILEO staff to plan implementation. The team included Vee Rogacheva, the OpenAthens user experience designer; Robert Scaysbrook, head of sales; and Kristina Symes, technical solutions lead.

The team met with library staff from around the state to better understand their needs, conducted user experience interviews with library users, and reviewed technical requirements, support, and infrastructure with GALILEO staff.

### Pilot Implementations

Over the summer of 2018, GALILEO coordinated with OpenAthens to start setting up 18 volunteer pilot institutions from around the state. The pilot project provided valuable insights about best approach to OpenAthens implementation across different library types. Rogacheva returned to Athens, and along with GALILEO staff member Russell Palmer,

conducted site visits and analysis for five pilot libraries, and the project was underway. Agnes Scott College was the first GALILEO library to go live with OpenAthens in October 2018. As of this writing, 12 of the pilot sites are live and OpenAthens is working well.

GALILEO and OpenAthens learned much from the pilot implementations. GALILEO implemented process improvements for gathering lists of e-resources from member libraries.

Communications with institutional IT staff is now clearer and more efficient. Documentation continues to improve based on feedback from the pilot institutions, and it is now centrally found in the [GALILEO OpenAthens Implementation Guide](#) on LibGuides.

### **OpenAthens at Your Library: What Will Change?**

#### *GALILEO Password Changes*

Once OpenAthens is implemented across all GALILEO-participating institutions, the GALILEO passwords, which are issued quarterly, will no longer be required. Users will log in with their existing credentials. This will better protect GALILEO and locally licensed content from unauthorized use.

#### *On Site IP Access*

GALILEO implements OpenAthens in parallel with existing on site IP authentication, so users do not have to log in via OpenAthens to access resources as long as they are on campus or in the library.

### *Guest Users*

All GALILEO institutions need to be able to provide temporary access to guest users, visitors, and other authorized users who may not have local credentials. If an institution is not using IP authentication, you will need to add guest users in the OpenAthens administration area, which is simple to do. Libraries may wish to maintain a few guest accounts to accommodate those

users when an OpenAthens administrator is not available.

### *Updating Links*

Links (permalinks, express links) will need to be updated in learning management systems, LibGuides, library web pages, and other platforms. GALILEO is implementing OpenAthens so currently active links will work as long as the proxy servers are maintained. GALILEO staff, with the help of staff at the pilot locations, have written a [guide to linking changes](#).

### **OpenAthens and Privacy**

GALILEO and OpenAthens are committed to protecting user privacy. OpenAthens records the number of times a database is accessed. However, activities within a database, such as searches and article downloads, are not recorded by OpenAthens. If a library chooses to pass appropriate attributes (like “department” or “branch”) that data can be used for reporting, but the user’s identity remains anonymous.



OpenAthens staff visit Athens, Ga., in April 2018 (Vee Rogacheva, Kristina Symes, Robert Scaysbrook),

Because OpenAthens is located in the United Kingdom, it complies with the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). As part of our agreement with OpenAthens, GALILEO abides by the same standards for maintaining data and privacy.

There are a number of resources detailing the privacy and security policies and procedures on the OpenAthens website, including an [information security white paper](#), an [overview](#) of OpenAthens GDPR compliance and readiness, and the [OpenAthens privacy](#) information page.

### **OpenAthens Implementation: Getting Ready**

OpenAthens implementation will be slightly different for each institution. In order to prepare for each implementation, GALILEO staff will ask institutions to verify or provide some key information:

#### *Collection Call: Locally purchased resources*

GALILEO staff will reach out to library staff at each library/library system/school system as part of our collection call process. We will send a list of locally purchased resources that we have listed on GALILEO. Library staff contacts should provide any additions or subtractions to that list based on the instructions provided.

#### *Questionnaire: What GALILEO needs to know about your library*

A short questionnaire will be sent to the GALILEO e-resources contact at each library. This survey consists of a few questions about

how you would like OpenAthens to be configured at your institution.

#### *Making the Connection: What GALILEO needs from your IT staff*

For PINES and public K–12 libraries, we are working with technical staff at PINES and the



OpenAthens staff Vee Rogacheva and Kristina Symes meet with Mike White, a member of the GALILEO support team, to discuss helpdesk workflows.

State Department of Education to achieve the necessary technical connections. For University System of Georgia and Technical College System of Georgia libraries, the connection process is complete. For non-PINES public libraries, private higher education institutions, and private K–12

institutions, GALILEO will reach out to you and your local IT staff to coordinate connection configuration.

### **Timelines**

GALILEO and its vendor partners OpenAthens and EBSCO tentatively plan to complete the OpenAthens implementation for all academic institutions in the summer of 2019.

Implementation for public libraries will follow during the fall of 2019. Implementation for K–12 schools will begin in spring 2019.

### **Authentication: Cornerstone for New Development**

GALILEO is deeply committed to the vision outlined in its strategic plan: to facilitate the creation of knowledge and provide tools and resources to meet the lifelong learning needs of all Georgians.

During the strategic planning process, library and user feedback identified the following development priorities:

- Make authentication as easy as possible
- Implement recommendations from the user-centered design process to improve the GALILEO user experience and interface(s)

This year, GALILEO implemented significant changes in order to achieve these priorities: improving authentication with the OpenAthens implementation, improving development processes and priorities, convening the GALILEO Development Advisory Committee to facilitate the user-centered design process, and kicking off the GALILEO portal redesign project.

GALILEO recently began working with the GALILEO Development Advisory Committee. This committee is charged with helping GALILEO

technical and support staff to establish development priorities for the GALILEO portal redesign project.

The OpenAthens implementation project is key to addressing GALILEO development priorities. It is a complex and challenging implementation; however, a library-focused, easy-to-use, and customizable authentication solution is essential to achieving GALILEO's vision, and OpenAthens is the cornerstone for building a better GALILEO.

GALILEO is committed to making this transition as simple and beneficial to participating libraries and users as possible. We look forward to providing a better, more useful, nimble, and sustainable GALILEO for all Georgians.

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