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E-Resources Remote Access Tools: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The remote access platform plays a major role in facilitating the off-campus access to e-resources. A library which does not have remote access platform to e-resources, is missing the opportunity to provide the off-campus access which intern usually affects the patrons negatively in terms of accessing the needed e-resources. It is quite difficult to select the suitable platform for the same purpose. Therefore, authors have made an attempt to compare and analyse the content of the RAP (Remote Access Platform) and suggest the suitable one for the academic library. Here authors have selected 5 items for the comparison and they found that all are more or less similar in terms of containing advanced features. Overall, the Knimbus Digital Library is best remote access platform compare to others to implement in the academic libraries.

Keywords: Remote Access, Knimbus, Remotlog, RemoteXS, Open Athens, EzProxy.

Introduction

In this 21st century even though we have plenty of print resources in most of the libraries electronic resources play a major role in everyone's academic life. Especially during Covid period, remote access platforms such as Ezproxy, Knimbus Digital Library, RemoteXS, Open Athens, Remotlog and also VPN have played major role in facilitating the subscribed electronic resource off the campuses. Here remote access means the platform which facilitates us to access the subscribed content of the library, off the campuses.

There is no much research conducted on the present topic. The authors have found only two literatures on the above topic and the same is presented here. Knimbus is a comprehensive Digital Library Solution which curates and integrates high quality academic content. Here one can integrate all e-resources on an 'easy-to-find' platform which is enabling resource centres to shape their online presence and fulfil the requirements of the patrons those who are migrating online to consume knowledge content (Dixit, 2018). Choukimath and Koganuramath (2011) stated that remote access with VPNs connection can be extended almost any video application, data, or voice to the remote desktop, emulating the main office

desktop. With this VPN, highly secured, and customizable remote access can be provided to anyone, anywhere, and anytime with almost any electronic device.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to compare the 6 remote access platforms and VPN method. because most of the libraries in India are using them. The specific objectives have been presented below.

- To identify the best remote access platform.
- To identify the advanced features of remote access platform.
- To promote best remote access platform in academic library.

Methodology

The current research has been employed content analysis of the library e-resources remote access platforms. In this study authors have selected 6 remote access platforms 1. EzProxy 2. Knimbus 3. Open Athens 4. RemoteXS 5. Remotlog and 6. VPN method. Initially, authors visited the particular remote access platform's website and gathered the basic required data. Later, for more information, authors contacted the Librarians who have implemented and using these remote access platforms.

Results

In this current study authors have considered 20 criteria to analyse the content of the remote access tools which are described below. During the selection process, 20 criteria were considered based on which best satisfied the most requirements in order to provide the remote access of a subscribed content of a specific library.

Comparison of E-Resources Remote Accesses Tools

1. **Cost:** It is important to note that all the above RAT (Remote Access Tools) are commercial products. It will slightly more or less to use them in a comparison with each other.
2. **Real Time Access:** Database or remote access tool with real-time access are very useful because if a new document added to the tools, user will be able to access them within no time, and authors have found that all remote access tool mentioned above have this beautiful feature.

3. **Secure and defensible:** Security and dependability are the first things we think about when implementing any software application. Here authors have discovered by their observation that all 5 tools including VPN are secure and defensible.
4. **Lightweight Directory Access Protocol LDAP:** Using this Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) technology, allows user to login into their accounts using their institution official email ID and password which can be integrated with above all the tools including VPN.
5. **Self-Registration:** We can see the presence of this feature in all the remote access tools taken for this research except VPN communication. This feature permits the user to create their own account, which will be approved by the admin.
6. **User Import:** In all above remote access tools except VPN connection allow us to import all users' data to the software in bulk, which is one of the very important features of any software.
7. **User Export:** In the table 1 we can notice that all remote access tools except VPN have user export as a feature, which allows us to download the existing the user information when and as needed.
8. **Usage Report Export:** The exporting of usage report is one of the most important feature of any kind of software application. Nobody would show interest to implement the software application unless we have this feature as it is super important to know the usage for a particular software application in order to understand it better. In all the above remote access tools but VPN communication, we can find this feature as it is extremely supreme to figure out how much productivity come from using specific software application.
9. **User Friendly:** According to the authors observation it is found that all tools are user friendly but if a comparison is made, Knimbus DL, Remotlog and RemoteXS appear to be more user friendly followed by Open Athens, but EzProxy and VPN communication do not provide as good experience as they could.
10. **Mail Alert Service:** There is no doubt that marketing is one of the best ways to engage the end user in any field, and the library is no different. Libraries can notify their users via mail of new resources added to the remote access tool using Remotlog , Knimbus Digital

library, and Open Athens mail alert service that may not be in the other RATs above mentioned.

11. **Admin Dashboard:** It is important and mandatory to have an admin dashboard in any software application since without this feature it not so comfortable to work in any software application as it allows us to modify different feature within a specific software application according to our requirements. It can be found in almost every tool considered for this study except Ezproxy and VPN connection.
12. **Browse Option:** Knimbus Digital library, Remotlog and Open Athens all offer Browsing option which is not there in the rest of the all above RATs. This feature allows new users to explore the database content.
13. **Advance Search:** There is an “ADVANCED SEARCH” tool in Knimbus Digital library, Remotlog and Open Athens which we can utilise to search data by tile, author, keywords and etc. This tool is not available for the t of the above RAT.
14. **Filter Option:** In the era of big data it is quite hard for us to find relevant data or information in a short amount of time. In this case filtering option helps us to remove all the noise and provide only the relevant and needed data. Remotlog ,Knimbus Digital library, and Open Athens all provides users with this capability filtering documents based on title, author, subject, publication source and publication year, etc. it doesn't there in rest all other Above mentioned RAT.
15. **Mobile App:** There is no doubt that we all live in a multi-screen era with everyone having a smart phone and libraries will find it very valuable if resources are accessible through a mobile application, such as the one offered in RemoteXS, Remotlog and DL which cannot be found in any other RATs which are consider for this study.
16. **Search By:** it enables us to search data by tile, author, keyword and etc. which is present in Open Athens and Knimbus DI only which is not present in other tools.
17. **Federated Search:** In the 21st century progresses in the field of technology the tool “SEARCH” is plays a very significant role in providing the data at a users' fingertips especially “FEDERATED SEARCH” tool. With this feature, we can search the data from all subscribed content in the library, which is an optional feature that that is only offered by Knimbus Digital library and Open Athens; it can be found in other remote access tools.

18. **Indexing Facility:** Knimbus Digital library and Open Athens provide indexing capability to subscribed content which can be searched later by the users. This feature enables us to index the subscribed content in remote access tool which can be searched later by the users. The rest of the remote access tools do not offer this feature.

19. **E-Catalogue:** It is well known that cataloguing is a vital tool for finding the required document in a short amount of time in the library and Knimbus DL and Open Athens offer the same E-cataloguing facility of a subscribed content of a particular library whereas rest of them which are mentioned in the table 1 may not offer this feature.

20. **Data Access Limitation:** Here authors have found that Unlimited data can be accessed from the above all tools.

Table 1

Sl. No	Criteria	EzProxy	Knimbus DL	Remotlog	Open Athens	RemoteXS	VPN
1	Cost	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Real Time Access	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Secure and defendable	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	LDAP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Self-Registration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
6	User Import	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
7	User Export	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
8	Usage report export	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
9	User Friendly	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
10	Mail alert service	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

11	Admin Dashboard	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
12	Browse Option	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X
13	Advanced Search	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X
14	Filter options	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X
15	Mobile APP	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X
16	Search By	X	✓	X	✓	X	X
17	Federated Search Engine	X	✓	X	✓	X	X
18	Indexing facility	X	✓	X	✓	X	X
19	E-Catalogue	X	✓	X	✓	X	X
20	Data Access Limitation	X	X	X	X	X	X

Findings

- All the remote access tools are commercial. All the tools provide real time access to e-resources. They are secure and defendable tools including VPN. They also have the provision to restrict the user by issuing user ID and password.
- With regards to self registration, user import, user export and usage report export except VPN other tools are having these features.
- Although Virtual Private Network is not a remote access platform per se, it is a simple way to protect your online privacy.
- Knimbus and Open Athens tools fulfil around 19 criteria out of 20 set for testing their efficiency. Remotlog tools takes next level of competency as it fulfils 15 criteria out

of 20 and found successful in many university libraries. RemotXS platform is in third level and it satisfies 11 criteria out of 20 which is considered as very moderate level.

- Based on the observation and feedback from LIS professionals regarding RemotXs and EZProxy platforms, authors felt that it is not highly recommended these platforms while considering them for remote access of e-resources as their functionalities does not suit the entire requirement.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, based on the observation and feedback from LIS professionals regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of remote access platforms, it is felt that in spite of the fact that all tools allow remote access to electronic resources. Knimbus and OpenAthens are the most popular tools in the market due to their adaptability, effectiveness and suitability followed by RemoteLog and RemoteXs. It is having more features than any other e-resources remote access tools.

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