

# **Remote access to online resources at the University of Moratuwa Library**

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## **Introduction**

Access to online journals, bibliographic databases, online catalogues and the Internet have altered the traditional library usage patterns, behaviors and expectations of modern library users over the last few decades. Online searching has become the norm and users always expect Google or Wikipedia style access to the library resources. Libraries should have a mechanism for supporting these expectations and behaviors to provide a quality customer service and to fulfill their mission to support teaching, learning and research.

Since 2003, the Library has provided access to many online resources. In the beginning of 2003, the IEE initiated giving access to online versions of their journals, along with print subscriptions, on a complimentary basis. Under this scheme, the Library of the University of Moratuwa gained access to 17 online journals in 2003. In year 2013, the library subscribed to 5 full text databases and 28 individual online journals and magazines. ACM Digital Library, Emerald, IEEE Explore, Grove Art Online and Science Direct are databases that are available for year 2013. Other than these subscribed electronic resources, library has introduced number of free e-journals and e-books to its users.

Many surveys have been conducted to investigate library users' acceptance and use of electronic resources (Groote & Dorch, 2001; Rusch-Feja & Siebeky, 1999). Their findings have indicated a decrease in the use of print journals suggesting online journals as the most preferred source in finding research

literature. Punchihewa (2008) conducted a similar study to identify user attitudes towards online resources at the Library, University of Moratuwa. In his study, Punchihewa further analysed the obstacles that users have to face when accessing online resources. Unavailability of remote access was the prominent obstacle highlighted by many users in that study. Kiriella (2010) has stated the users' requests to improve the facilities provided for accessing e-resources collection of the library.

### **Statement of the problem**

Though library has subscribed to many electronic resources, many publishers have provided access through IP authentication and not by user ID and password. Publishers have restricted the access by institutional IP address. Library has provided the range of IP address to publishers when the agreements were signed. This way access is possible only within the University premises for all the users. This has created a major barrier for the users who need to access e-resources remotely and mostly through their home desktops. Users always expect to access information from anywhere, anytime. Unavailability of remote access is a critical problem specially for the postgraduate students who do not visit the University regularly. This leads to reduce the usage of these valuable resources though library has spent millions to purchase them.

### **Objective**

As there are regular inquiries and demands for accessing library e-resources remotely and also to increase the usage, library should provide a remote access mechanism for its e-resources by fulfilling the gap between vendor restrictions and user requirement.

### **Design**

With the solution provided by the library for remote access, the users accessing from outside the University IP range (outside the University) must change their web browser proxy setting according to the instructions provided by the library. Then they must login to the new proxy server using their University email address and the individual password. Thereafter, user requests are forwarded to the new proxy server which has University IP address. The real servers can recognize this as authorized IP to allow access to commercially licensed resources.

Using this concept, a joint project was conducted between Center for Information Technology Services (CITeS), University of Moratuwa and the library to provide remote access. Existing Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) server was used to authenticate the user and a new proxy server was configured. This allowed remote user to obtain regular, secure access to library e-resources.

## **Conclusion**

Providing the remote access to library's e-resources was one of main objectives that could not be achieved despite frequent requests being made during last five years due to various reasons. Finally library has accomplished this task and now expects the usage of current e-resources to be multiplied by several folds.

## **References**

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