Chapter 11
Remote Access Technology Problems

ABSTRACT
With any remote access technology, problems can and do arise. Some of the common problems with remote access technologies are security, broken links, and privacy. Most remote technology is relatively stable, but unfortunately, problems occur from time to time. It is important that the library has someone monitor the technology to make sure there are no problems. Users become frustrated when trying to access a resource from off-campus only to find they cannot.

INTRODUCTION
Remote access technology for library resources, digital collections or virtual libraries requires a web link, a password or a virtual private network. With any technology problems do occur. EZproxy is one of the most stable software for remote connection to licensed databases but sometimes there are problems with the links to a database or the server goes down preventing the users from accessing the resources they need. The same thing can happen with a link to a virtual library or digital collection. If the server or web site goes down people cannot access the resources. If links are changed and the virtual library is not updated on a regular basis, once again people will not be able to access the resources they need. Another issue that arises at least once a year or more is the database vendor changes the interface, the screen users enter their search criteria, sometimes the change is for the better but sometimes it makes the database more difficult to use.
BACKGROUND

One of the biggest debates surrounding remote access is security versus privacy. Librarians support equal access to information and believe everyone should have access to the information they need without restriction. Problems arise when students or other individuals use library computers or other information for inappropriate or abusive behavior. The computer address cannot be authenticated even though an incident is recorded. Even if the computer address is authenticated, librarians and libraries do not share information with third parties. Library records are considered confidential and most libraries destroy or remove information about the books borrowed by a student or faculty member after two weeks. Another issue that arises is the fact students or faculty often needs multiple passwords to access library materials remotely. Unless they are using VPN to connect remotely they will need to access the school’s portal using an ID and password then use a separate password to gain access to library materials. Multiple passwords can become a source of frustration for researchers. One other problem related to remote access is if the server for the database vendor goes offline and users get an error message or they are asked for a password or user ID. Another limitation is the number of simultaneous users for an electronic resource. This is driven usually by the cost of the resource.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

No technology is perfect and we all have experienced at some point a technology or device that suddenly stops working. It could be the result of any one of a number of problems. The network is down and everyone on campus loses their Internet connection or the e-mail server goes down and you are unable to send or receive e-mails. Other times the server from the database publisher may be down or the remote access link does not validate the user as someone who is authorized to have access to library resources. All of these issues can be frustrating for users and the library because eventually students or faculty will complain about the problems that they have gaining access to library resources when they are off-campus.

While these issues can be minor inconveniences while on campus for an off-campus user they can become a major problem. If the library web site server is down you cannot access the library’s web site and as a result will not be able to access the electronic resources you need. You will not be able to access the course management system if their server is down and as a result, you cannot submit your assignment. Technology has become prevalent in our society and as a result, we have come to depend on it and expect it will always work whenever we need it. Each of the technologies discussed in the previous chapters are subject to fail at some point for anyone of a number of reasons. Starting with the first technology distance education this chapter will examine each technology and provide a brief overview of some the technical issues that may cause problems for the end user.

Meeting customer needs is the driving force behind remote access technologies. Users want access to resources without having to come into the library. Understanding how to meet those needs can be determined from surveys and focus groups or a combination of the two. A problem with surveys or focus groups is once the information is received and nothing is done with the information. If library users participate in a survey, their expectation is, they will see changes made or problems corrected. Another problem is not doing a follow-up survey two or three years later to determine if users are still satisfied. Sometimes with implementation of recommended changes, there will still be dissatisfied users.

Another aspect of user surveys is usability studies. If the library changes their web site in the hopes it will be easier for their users to find the resources they need to ask users for feedback regarding the
Related Content

Collection Spaces and Management, Virtual and Physical, in the User Environment
www.igi-global.com/chapter/collection-spaces-and-management-virtual-and-physical-in-the-user-environment/102360?camid=4v1a

Globalization and Library and Information Science: Ethical Challenges
Ismail Abdullahi (2014). Collaboration in International and Comparative Librarianship (pp. 28-36).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/globalization-and-library-and-information-science/103069?camid=4v1a

Libraries on the Information Highway: Issues and Lessons Learned
www.igi-global.com/chapter/libraries-information-highway/31502?camid=4v1a

Usability Testing Summon on the USC Libraries Home Page
www.igi-global.com/chapter/usability-testing-summon-usc-libraries/67827?camid=4v1a