ICPL-2005 Case Study Role-Play:  
The Portal Ploy  

Setting the Stage

As on many other campuses, the library at East Newtonia State University operates a portal, which they call simply “LP”. Using their ENSU accounts, students, faculty, and staff log in to LP and connect to – among other things – commercial resources licensed by the library for the ENSU community.

LP was created 5 years ago to deal with restrictions that limited licensed material to computers on the ENSU network. This worked well enough for people in their offices and dorm rooms and also for those dialing in to the ENSU modem pool. But with the increasing deployment of cable and DSL lines at home, as well as direct Internet links from hotels, conferences, and coffee shops, complaints about rejected connections had escalated. LP was the answer, providing Internet access that appeared to originate from inside the ENSU network regardless of where the end-user was physically located. For convenience, the portal environment was set up to allow general Web surfing and, in fact, many people do all of their Web work from within the LP environment.

Now, strictly speaking, it’s not the East Newtonia library that runs LP, it’s the campus computer center. Back in 2000, the library wrote a set of functional requirements, and the computer center acquired the server and did the programming. Since then the computer center has been operating the system, and LP has been running smoothly and quietly for over 5 years.

Or it had been smooth and quiet until this morning, when East Newtonia CIO Mark Staples read the front page of the daily student newspaper. Under the banner headline, “Library Helps FBI Spy on East Newtonia Students”, an article described how Jerry Jones, a system administrator in the server farm, had been approached by the FBI a week ago with a request for information. The FBI agent told him they were monitoring traffic on a particular Al Queda Web site, and noticed a suspicious number of connections originating from a single IP address at ENSU. The FBI had already figured out that it was the address of LP, and they wanted to know who had been logged in to the portal at certain specified times and from where. Jerry told the paper that the agent had said, “We’re trying to prevent the next 9/11” and had suggested it might be a bad idea to tell anyone else about the request. Jerry said this sounded pretty serious, and so he retrieved the information from the LP logs and gave it to the FBI agent.
Based on the story so far, Mark wondered how the newspaper had gotten wind of any of this, but the next paragraph answered that question. Apparently one of the names provided to the FBI was a student, Jack Hamilton, who had received a visit from some agents asking him to explain his browsing habits. In addition, Jack said the agents appeared to know about his trip last week to Vancouver, which “really freaked him out”. Jack immediately told the story to his roommate, the editor of the college paper, and then called his father, an attorney.

The story quoted Daniel Ortiz, director of the ENSU library, who said it was strict library policy not to divulge or even record any information about online activity of library patrons on library computers. But LP, he explained, wasn’t a library system, it was part of the ENSU computer center. Jerry Jones, the helpful sysadmin, worked for the CIO, not for the library. The paper dutifully noted that they had been “unable to reach CIO Staples by deadline for this article”.

Mark started looking through the pile of phone-message slips on his desk, but was interrupted by a call from his secretary. He had a couple of people waiting in his outer office, the library director and the University President. And also a phone call from a lawyer named Hamilton.

**Playing the Roles**

What happens next? That’s up to the brave role-players in this unrehearsed exercise. For a few minutes, we will watch and listen as participants portraying the various dramatis personae figure out how to deal with this problem. They will interact with each other and with the audience, both during the exercise and in a general discussion after it’s done.

Our gutsy audience volunteers are:
- ENSU CIO – **Mark Staples**
- ENSU Library Director – **Daniel Ortiz**
- Policy Advisor to the CIO – **Patricia Cuocco**

Our professional troublemakers are:
- ENSU President – **Barbara Skoblick**
- ENSU Counsel – **Steve McDonald**
- Student’s attorney/father – **Bob Hamilton**

And other troublemakers may emerge from the woodworks.

**Steve Worona** will act as moderator and stage manager.