

AUSTRALIAN ACCESS FEDERATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



CHAIR'S REPORT



I would like to take this opportunity to thank our community for their support during 2020, a year none of us will likely forget. Despite the significant challenges placed on the research and education sector, the AAF continued operation, business as usual.

In 2020 the AAF carried out several important engagements with national and international communities. It also undertook a number of fundamental projects to advance the important services it delivers for Australian research and education. At the height of the pandemic, the AAF implemented steps to ensure the reliability of our systems and services. Importantly, the federation enabled access to online services that supported global COVID research. It also enabled online teaching and learning to continue virtually to meet the needs of subscribers. This challenging time created many opportunities that allowed the AAF to better serve teachers, students and researchers across the sector.

Cyber-security has remained a high priority for the AAF and in 2020 the company continued to invest in its cyber roadmap. The need to safeguard AAF systems and processes continues to be crucial in delivering a robust national service that provides value and reliability for customers. Many AAF subscribers have now committed to move to Rapid IdP, the AAF's cloud federation connection. The adoption of this service will continue to ensure the high level of security in the federation.

2020 was also a significant year for ORCID in Australia. As the ORCID Consortium lead, and with the support of members, the AAF undertook a maturity assessment of ORCID implementation in Australia. The AAF and two member organisations also took part in the ORCID Member Portal pilot program. This provided the opportunity to be directly involved in development of the service prior to its global release in 2021. The adoption of ORCID identifiers has increased 400% since the consortium commenced and now sits at over 152 000 Australian related ORCID records. The use of ORCID records in reporting has assisted in tracking COVID research collaborations globally.

The AAF has a vision to enable a more interconnected, efficient and secure National Collaborative Research Infrastructure System (NCRIS). In preparation for the next federal government eResearch infrastructure roadmap process, 2020 saw the development of a national Trust and Identity Strategy. The strategy focuses on a system-wide approach to trust and identity to help support future research infrastructure. The AAF sees this approach as vital in securing an important injection of resources for an NCRIS Trust and Identity Accelerator and Incubator program.

Throughout the year, the team continued to participate in engagement activities and events while moving to an online format. The AAF leads the European Union-funded Asia Pacific Increasing Federated Identity, Roaming and e-infrastructure (iFIRE) project. A number of successful virtual events were held as part of the initiative, to build federations in developing nations in the Asia Pacific region. Participation in online events provided a platform to connect and collaborate globally.

The next phase of the AAF's cloud-based Rapid Identity Provider (Rapid IdP) service was released in December 2020. Work funded by the Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC) resulted in the service supporting direct integration with enterprise identity solutions such as Azure AD, F5 and OKTA. Importantly the timely release of these features has supported a number of members that had their operations impacted by COVID. The service is now fully sustained through subscription income and the AAF will continue to work through a migration pipeline from on-campus to an AAF-managed Rapid IdP into 2021.

The AAF Project Team continued to work directly with national research infrastructure bodies in advancing their capabilities. The Australian BioCommons is an example where world-class infrastructure collaboration platforms are being explored to support the future needs of life-science research.

From an internal perspective, the AAF has implemented a number of important projects throughout the year to further enhance the brand value and support member engagement. Key activities included a new website and the introduction of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

VerifID Global, the AAF's privacy-preserving verification service, went from strength to strength in 2020 with expansion through adoption by the UK Federation. There is further interest in this service globally and opportunities to expand will continue to be explored in 2021.

In 2020 the AAF continued to demonstrate thought leadership nationally and internationally in trust and identity management. A summary of these achievements is reflected in the following Annual Report.

FIONA RANKIN

Chair | Australian Access Federation Ltd.



NCRIS PARTNERSHIPS



AUSTRALIAN BIOCOMMONS ACCESS & AUTHENTICATION INFRASTRUCTURE (AAI) PILOT

Working in partnership with the Australian BioCommons to explore authentication solutions for life science research. The project aims were:

- integrate Galaxy Australia with the federation
- pilot integration of analysis tools with the federation
- collaborative research activities for non-AAF affiliated researchers.

The AAF's leadership in trust and identity, established technologies and global initiatives is fundamental to the success of this project.

The AAF acknowledges the significant contribution of the Australian BioCommons through early commitment of resources, technical evaluations and prototyping to the project.



REDUCING BARRIERS TO FEDERATED AUTHENTICATION THROUGH CLOUD TECHNOLOGIES

Rapid IdP is the AAF's cloud solution for connecting organisations to the federation. Funded by ARDC (2019-2020), the Reducing Barriers to Federated Authentication Project focused on further evolving the service to become self-sustaining.

Rapid IdP clears obstacles for organisations to connect to the federation by removing the need for expertly skilled staff to deploy complex identity infrastructure. It also provides a secure and reliable cloud solution backed by the expert knowledge of the AAF team.

The project has increased the number of research organisations participating in the federation, enabling more researchers to gain access to national research infrastructure.

The project has delivered interfaces to today's enterprise cloud identity management solutions such as Okta, F5 and Azure Active Directory. Through this, Rapid IdP now leverages support for multi-factor authentication.

OUR PLAN

AN NCRIS TRUST AND IDENTITY CAPABILITY

As Australia moves into the next eResearch infrastructure roadmap activity, the AAF has a vision to enable a more interconnected, efficient and secure NCRIS system.

Our strategy provides a system-wide approach to trust and identity for Australia's research infrastructure.

Objectives:

- support NCRIS capabilities with the use of a common Trust and Identity Framework for Research
- creating standardised and interoperable access and authentication infrastructure.

The AAF aims to make a Trust and Identity Capability a reality that supercharges Australia's research system.

The plan is to implement an NCRIS trust and identity accelerator and incubator pathfinder program that will extend the functionality of the AAF's current solutions, and implement new identity and access technologies as they emerge.

The AAF will continue to be actively involved in the NCRIS road-mapping exercise through 2021.



ENGAGEMENT



PARTICIPATED IN
25
CONFERENCES &
EVENTS

PRESENTED
44
TIMES IN 2020

PRODUCED
4
DIGITAL ASSETS

AUSTRALIA

- ORCID CONSORTIUM WORKSHOP
- ERESEARCH AUSTRALASIA 2020
- QUEENSLAND HEALTH FORUM
- RESEARCH DATA ALLIANCE VIRTUAL PLENARY 15
- INSTRUMENTS FOR IDENTIFIERS (COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE – 6)
- ORCID SYMPLECTIC WEBINAR
- ORCID MEMBERS TOWNHALL
- BRISBANE ERESEARCH CATCH-UP
- QUDIT IDM MEETINGS
- DIGITAL & DATA ERESEARCH PLATFORMS (DDeRP)
- NCRIS DIRECTORS MEETING
- AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CYBER SECURITY FORUM

ASIA PACIFIC REGION

- APAN 50
- APAN BUILDS A FEDERATION

EUROPE

- PIDAPALOOZA 2020
- PROJECT FREYA AMBASSADOR WEBINAR
- PID SERVICES REGISTRY — WEBINAR
- PID INFRASTRUCTURE AS AN IRO WEBINAR
- FREYA PID SERVICES WEBINAR
- CROSSREF AMBASSADOR WEBINAR
- PROJECT FREYA — PID SERVICES REGISTRY WEBINAR
- IDENTIFIERS IN HERITAGE COLLECTION WEBINAR

UNITED STATES

- ORCID PRODUCT INTEREST GROUP — WEBINAR
- INTERNET 2 TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE
- ORCID BENEFITS FOR RESEARCHERS AND LIBRARIANS — WEBINAR
- UNLOCKING THE POWER OF ORCID INTEGRATION — WEBINAR

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- Asia Pacific Advanced Network iFIRE Project (Lead Agent)
- BioCommons Steering Committee
- Chair APAN IA
- Chair DDeRP CEO Group
- Chair eduGAIN Steering Committee
- IDAM Special Interest Group
- Member of REFEDS Schema Editorial Board
- NCRIS Communications Network
- Ordinary Member, REFEDS Steering Committee
- ORCID Advisory Group
- ORCID Governance Committee
- Project FREYA Ambassador
- QUDIT
- VeriFID Global with Jisc (UK Implementation)

COMMUNICATIONS



OUR NEXT PHASE: WEBSITE AND BRANDING

In 2020 the AAF underwent a brand update, and as part of this strategy undertook significant website redevelopment. The AAF has a new look and feel with a streamlined logo and colour scheme. The new website was designed to make sharing information easier with current subscribers, potential subscribers and ORCID members. Feedback gathered from the community was incorporated to ensure an intuitive website that meets the needs of users and reflects the AAF's services. The new website was launched in January 2021.

21 492

WEBSITE USERS

17

INDIVIDUAL
MAINTENANCE
MESSAGES

7

NEWSLETTERS
ORCID | TECH
CIO

41

VALUE AND
PROMOTIONAL
COMMS

ORCID ENGAGEMENT

20

ORCID EVENTS
ATTENDED

73

INDIVIDUAL ORCID
CONSULTATIONS

150 000+

AUSTRALIAN
RESEARCHERS WITH AN
ORCID ID

iD

OPERATING IN A COVID-19 WORLD

2020 saw the world change with the announcement of COVID-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation and significant impact on the global research and education community. As the world began to change rapidly, the AAF maintained its priority to help subscribers support their researchers, staff and students by ensuring that the AAF operated business as usual.

The AAF was instrumental in helping researchers connect and collaborate online to fight COVID-19, as well as enabling access to resources for student learning. The AAF assisted subscribers to gain access to global research services via the inter-federation connection eduGAIN. This enabled trusted electronic communication for global collaboration between education and research institutions. To support Australia's teaching and learning moving to an online world, the AAF supported its members by connecting a number of services that made access for students seamless, easy and in some cases, free.

As part of AAF's COVID-19 strategy, a series of communications including videos to assist subscribers and ORCID members were released.

CYBER SECURITY

In 2020 the AAF continued to focus on implementing its cyber security roadmap. Cyber security sits under Strengthening Foundational Services in the 2020 Business Plan and is an ongoing program of work. Our focus is on four areas:

- policy development
- staff training and awareness
- operational security
- community engagement.

STREAMLINING BUSINESS PROCESSES

Over the course of 2020, the AAF undertook a major project to help streamline internal processes and increase efficiency, by implementing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

Once complete the system will ensure it can streamline customer needs and enhance future engagements. Initial phases of the project are now complete, and the following phases will integrate with Federation tooling that is currently in development.

2020 AT A GLANCE



100+
ORGANISATIONS

160+
AUSTRALIAN
SERVICES

270+
INTERNATIONAL
SERVICES

22
EDUGAIN
CONNECTIONS

74 725

AURIN (AUSTRALIAN URBAN RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK) PORTAL

AURIN, a NCRIS service, is crucial infrastructure for researchers, government and industry providing demographic information, population health data, and urban planning data.

52 476

WEBDB SERVICES

A collection of databases used by occupants of the Queensland Biosciences Precinct (QBP) under the umbrella of the University of Queensland.

50 662

NECTAR RESEARCH CLOUD (ARDC)

ARDC's Nectar Research Cloud is Australia's first federated research cloud. This NCRIS service provides Australia's research community with fast, interactive, self-service access to computing infrastructure, software and data.

25 958

CLARIVATE ANALYTICS

Clarivate Analytics provides analytics to accelerate the pace of innovation and deliver critical data in areas including scientific and academic research, patent, pharmaceutical and biotech intelligence.

16 326

QUT EGRAD SCHOOL & OTHER SERVICES

Provides students, teachers and researchers within the Australian Technology Network with seamless access to QUT services.

16 306

INFORMIT (RMIT PUBLISHING)

With over 8 million records from 100 databases of expert-curated, peer-reviewed content on education, law, business, health, humanities and Indigenous culture.

10 460

INTERSECT — REDCAP

REDCap is a secure web application for building and managing online surveys and databases. This instance has been configured for the University of Technology, Sydney.

9 209

ILAB SOLUTIONS

iLab Operations Software is an enterprise web-based management tool designed to support operations for centralised labs and shared research resources.

7 437

AUSTRALIAN PHENOMICS FACILITY

The Australian Phenomics Facility (APF, an NCRIS facility) supports open access large-scale phenotyping of humans and mice to uncover the biological drivers in human disease.

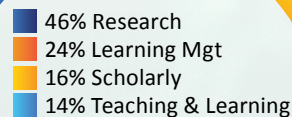
7 203

THE BIODIVERSITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE VIRTUAL LABORATORY (BCCVL)

BCCVL provides access and the ability to visualise large sets of biological, environmental, and climate datasets while concurrently running statistical analyses.

**AAF
TOP 10
Services**

SERVICE PROFILE



SUBSCRIBER PROFILE



TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT



Rapid Identity Provider

REDUCED CONNECTION TIME

47 vs **3**
DAYS WITHOUT RAPID IdP vs DAYS WITH RAPID IdP

814
RAPID IdP CLOUD DEVELOPMENTS

13
ORGANISATIONS CONNECTED TO RAPID IdP

1349
RAPID IdP SECURITY AND FEATURE UPDATES

100%
UPTIME

NOW
SUPPORTING

okta



Azure Active Directory



“The AAF filled a skills and capacity gap that we’ve got around identity management. We’re leveraging [AAF’s] experience in that space, and ability to keep Rapid IdP up and running and maintained. That frees our team up to focus on things that are more research focused, rather than getting the ‘plumbing’ in order. The indirect benefit to us is that we’re providing better services to our researchers. And that’s what we’re here to do.”

JAMES BARONA | HEAD OF ICT

South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI)

599
SUPPORT TICKETS RESOLVED

1.7M+
VERIFICATIONS WITH VERIFID GLOBAL

STRATEGIC PLAN



KEY ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Continuing to both strengthen existing and grow new partnerships, nationally and internationally, to ensure the AAF is aligned with both the national and international agendas for teaching, learning and research. Partnerships help the AAF attract funding to sustain and further advance the services it delivers.

SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

Ongoing skills development is an essential component of building the national capability in identity and access management. The AAF committed to further advancing its staffing capabilities and industry knowledge to continue to meet the evolving nature of the technologies, future policies and processes. Leading programs of skills development will assist in addressing the skills gaps for subscribers.

STRENGTHENING FOUNDATIONAL SERVICES

Continuing to strengthen foundational services is critical to ensure ongoing quality of service, value and relevance to the AAF subscribers and partners.

LEADING INNOVATION

The AAF's recognition as National Research Infrastructure (NRI) is critical to achieving impact for Australian teaching, learning and research.

DIVERSIFY THROUGH VALUE-ADDED SERVICES

Continuing to diversify operations through value-added services will further strengthen the AAF's sustainability.





AAF BOARD

Chair & Director

Deputy Chair & Director

Director

Director

Director

Independent Director

Independent Director

Company Secretary and Independent Director

Fiona Rankin

Jonathan Churchill

Paul Sherlock

Niranjan Prabhu

Ian Gibson

Karen Hill

Bruce Callow

Richard Northam

AAF TEAM

Chief Executive Officer

Chief Operating Officer

Head of Support

Head of Technology

Head of Projects and Managed Services

Principal Developer

Senior Developer

Senior Developer

Senior Developer

Senior Developer

Solutions Analyst – Identity and Access

Customer Relationship Manager

Technical Support Analyst

Technical Support Analyst (ORCID)

Communication Coordinator

Administrative Support Services

Heath Marks

Elleina Filippi

Terry Smith

Bradley Beddoes

John Scullen

Shaun Mangelsdorf

Russell Ianniello

Ryan Caught

Mikel Kew

Christopher Jones

Patrick Carnuccio

Andrew Bowness

Dalia Abraham

Melroy Almeida

Jacinta Rebelo

Marita Dore, Carolyn Plant,
Claire Ackfun, Cynthia Ramirez

SPECIAL THANKS

Australian BioCommons

Australian Research Data Commons (ARDC)

Bioplatforms Australia

CAUDIT

ORCID Advisory Group, ORCID Governance Committee, ORCID.org

The Department of Education Skills and Employment

OUR VISION

Our vision is to lead access management for Australian education and research.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to deliver secure access and identity services that connect Australian teachers, students and researchers with global online resources.