Callisto

Callisto Basic. Sharp Moon, Champaign, IL; limited access currently available free to qualified four-year educational institutions. **Callisto Pro.** Sharp Moon, Champaign, IL; pricing based on full-time equivalents (FTEs), institution type/level, and the number of access routes needed; discounts available for consortial implementations.

Description. One of the biggest challenges associated with electronic collections is making sure they are working correctly and are accessible to users. In many libraries, problems are identified when users report them, because it is too time consuming for staff to monitor and test access to the myriad available electronic resources. Callisto is a new type of product designed to automate much of this work. Described by the vendor as a ''location-aware information service for e-resources troubleshooting and management'' [1], Callisto tests access to electronic resources and alerts staff to problems. Callisto knows how to interpret providers' sites to verify whether the institution has a subscription and the titles associated with it. It is capable of determining meaningful subscription-level changes that occur, such as identifying newly available titles and databases by dynamically monitoring access points associated with an institution's online resources.

Intended audience. This product was created for use in library and research organizations. The main audience would be electronic resource and technology staff who are responsible for maintaining access to electronic content. Because reports and alerts are created in nearly real time, this product also would be useful for frontline staff in informing users of access issues and steering them to available content. Also, Callisto event reports include title additions and changes, database changes, and other data that would alert library staff to modifications in subscriptions that can be used in maintaining accurate access through the library catalog, research guides,

A–Z lists, link resolvers, and proxy servers.

Functionality and usability. Working with Sharp Moon staff, the initial setup and implementation is quick, easy, and automated. Library staff provide some basic information, such as type of authentication used and Internet protocol (IP) ranges, and install a small piece of software called a probe on one or more computers in each of the library's IP ranges. The product then attempts to connect to a predetermined list of products and services and identifies those with active subscriptions. The Callisto probe runs through each provider site on a regular cycle, usually a few times a day, to detect changes that can cause loss of access to content or highlight changes in provider title lists. To minimize the impact on the provider, Callisto makes these connections at randomized times. If a change is detected, the probe tests again a bit later to verify the change and continues to test until the problem is resolved. To capture events at more or less frequent intervals, Sharp Moon can adjust the frequency of scans at the system level. Callisto works with systems protected by firewalls and with institutional virtual private networks (VPNs) and proxy servers, and can test access to electronic resources from various access routes (e.g., a proxy server) and IP ranges.

Because Callisto is able to log off as soon as it is done verifying a subscription's status, it immediately frees up limited user licenses. Callisto does not request or download any full-text content, search for content, or connect to the library's website. Callisto never sends content requests, so the effect on usage statistics is minimal and generally limited to increased session counts only. Metrics will not be skewed and would not impede collection managers from making decisions based on usage statistics.

The documentation is extensive and generally useful once the correct topic is located, but finding a needed topic is not intuitive. A ''Help'' search capability is found on tabs but would be more useful if there were a site search that would allow one to discover topics more efficiently.

Alerts and reports. When a site is inaccessible or another problem is found, the event is logged on an event report. Most of the reported issues resolve themselves within minutes; however, customized alerts can be set up to notify relevant staff of problems that may require closer monitoring or intervention. If brief provider events or intermittent problems occur that are not captured by the probe, the system allows the subscribing institution to manually create events reported by users.

Callisto's event reports allow tracking of vendor issues, trends, and patterns in downtime affecting access to electronic resources. When issues arise, the reports list the event, along with where and when it occurred. The content of reports cannot be customized, but library staff can sort the reports by each of the reported values. Reports are retained on the vendor's website, but at this time, there is no way to export reports. The only option for getting report data out of the system is to copy it and paste it into a spreadsheet. While this obstacle is not a major issue to the overall value and ease of using the reports, adding the export feature could expedite the ability to create external reports.

Callisto Basic versus Callisto Pro. Sharp Moon currently offers a scaled-down version of the product called Callisto Basic for qualified, four-year educational institutions at no cost. Unqualified institutions, which would likely include most hospital libraries, can request a thirty-day trial of Callisto Pro. Callisto Basic limits the number of providers and functionality but does offer a chance to try the product before committing funds. The list of providers in Callisto Basic includes approximately forty popular providers of online content, including Wiley, Springer, Elsevier, and Ovid. Callisto Pro features an extensive list of providers that covers a broad range of subject areas, and Sharp Moon will work with an institution to include other providers to meet subscription needs.

Conclusion. Callisto was developed specifically for a library or research environment. It provides deep tracking for titles and automatic verification and tracking of many thousands of subscription databases, electronic journals, and electronic books within designated websites. Given the complexity and sheer volume of links that require constant monitoring, Callisto allows a proactive approach, rather than a reactive approach, to better ensure user access to electronic resources. Finally, it requires fewer staff to monitor resources, which is a welcome savings of time and money.

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Reference

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