eRA Information: Accessing eRA Commons from Bookmarks and Search Engines  
Friday, September 7, 2012

For the past few weeks, the Help Desk has seen an increase in calls from customers who encounter the following error message when trying to log in:

"Internal Server Error  
The server encountered an internal error or misconfiguration and was unable to complete your request.  
Please contact the server administrator, helpdesk@od.nih.gov and inform them of the time the error occurred, and anything you might have done that may have caused the error.  
More information about this error may be available in the server error log."

eRA Commons has always had the policy of not supporting bookmarks. Commons does not support bookmarks for reasons of security. When you come to the Commons login page, it is not just a simple URL. When you come to the login page, you get:

https://public.era.nih.gov/efl/jsps/commons/login.jsp?TYPE=3355H4336&EARLNOID=06-1ec0b03f-46c7-44b3-bc0e-60a537de74d2b&GJID=65914UT

eRA applies more security to the session (the connection between your browser and the eRA Commons web site) than most web sites, primarily to protect your information. Many of the values in this long string of characters are unique to that layer of security. If a security key changes after you’ve added the site to your list of favorites or bookmark it, then the next time you visit the page, these values will no longer be valid and you will receive the error message. eRA is working on making the error message more informative than the current version.

If you wish to bookmark a URL for Commons, keep it generic. Use https://commons.era.nih.gov/ and manually add this URL to your list of favorites/bookmarks.

Similarly, some customers get to the eRA Commons login page using a search engine like Google. Searching for eRA Commons, NIH Commons or variations thereof may get you to the login page. But it may also present you with this message:

**It works!**

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The links provided by search engines are not always complete and do not define the location you are seeking well enough to get you to where you want to be.
So in both of the scenarios above, it is not necessary to call the Help Desk immediately. Try typing in https://commons.era.nih.gov/ or bookmark http://era.nih.gov/ and click on eRA Commons button on the right side of the page:

These will always safely and correctly get you to where you want to be.

*Joe Schumaker*
*eRA Communications*
*Division of Communications and Outreach*
*NIH Office of Extramural Research*

Questions? Please contact the eRA Help Desk. Check out self-help resources on the Help page before submitting an online ticket; or call Toll-free: 1-866-504-9552, Phone: 301-402-7469, TTY: 301-451-5939; or email helpdesk@od.nih.gov. The Help Desk hours are Mon-Fri, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET

Help us improve our communications; send your suggestions and feedback to eRACommunications@mail.nih.gov or call 301-435-8185.

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