

# Shibboleth SP Error Handling

Error page templates and customization



## SWITCH

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## shibd Error Handling

- fact of life: things can go wrong when running a Shibboleth SP
- `shibd/mod_shib` includes error handling for four types of errors:
  - authorization failures: `accessError.html` (“Authorization Failed”)
  - metadata-related errors: `metadataError.html` (“Unknown or Unusable Identity Provider”)
  - non-redirectable non-SSL requests: `sslError.html` (“POST Failed”)
  - general processing errors: `sessionError.html` (text depends on specific error)

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# Standard accessError.html

- default error description is fairly vague

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**Authorization Failed**

Based on the information provided to this application about you, you are not authorized to access the resource at "https://sp.example.org/secure"

Please contact the administrator of this service or application if you believe this to be an error at [webmaster@example.org](mailto:webmaster@example.org)

## Customizing the error page(s)

- content of the HTML templates in `/etc/shibboleth` can be adapted by taking advantage of `<shibmlp tagname />` elements
- list of available `tagnames` (about a dozen):  
<https://wiki.shibboleth.net/confluence/display/SHIB2/NativeSPErrors>
- some of them might sometimes be undefined (contactName and contactEmail of the IdP e.g.), so use `<shibmlpif tagname>...</shibmlpif>` if needed

## Other error handling options

- as an alternative to using the templates, set the `redirectErrors="..."` attribute on the `<Errors>` element in `shibboleth2.xml` to define a handler URL which is passed the error details as GET parameters:  
`https://example.org/error?now=...&requestURL=...&errorType=...&...`
- extend your application logic to deal with the case of an attribute missing from the environment – and display your own specific error message, possibly giving more details as to what attributes are missing, or why certain attributes do not have the required values (affiliation "staff" e.g.)

## Conclusion

- error template customization: adapting `accessError.html` is useful for cases where attribute requirements are uniformly applied to all protected content
- for more sophisticated diagnostics (for the user), extending the application's error handling allows more fine-grained control