

**ICANN Dakar Meeting**  
**GNSO Whois Survey WG Meeting- TRANSCRIPTION**  
**Wednesday 26th October 2011 at 08:00 local**

Note: The following is the output of transcribing from an audio. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases it is incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages or transcription errors. It is posted as an aid to understanding the proceedings at the meeting, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

Liz Gasster: Again this is Liz Gasster with the ICANN Policy Staff. We're just beginning the WHOIS Survey Working Group meeting in Dakar. Do we have anyone on the line please from remote participation?

Okay, we'll take the roll of who's in the room I think, starting there if you wouldn't mind.

(Spence Asquarias): Morning, this is (Spence Asquarias), ICANN Staff.

Steve Sheng: Steve Sheng, ICANN Staff.

Berry Cobb: Berry Cobb, ICANN Staff.

Don Blumenthal: Don Blumenthal, Public Interest Registry.

Liz Gasster: Liz Gasster, ICANN Staff.

Michael Young: Michael Young, Architelos. All right, thank you very much Liz. So we open the meeting. The first thing I'm going to suggest we do is since we only have two

- I think two people from the actual Working Group, volunteers from the Working Group, myself and Don, we're going to throw the agenda out the window and make a new one up.

So let's mostly make it an open discussion forum, and Liz I'm going to reiterate some of the conversation we had prior to opening the meeting, which was I'm going to take an action item to go around to the volunteers, particularly the Subchairs.

Don I know had some family issues that tied him up for the last few weeks, and it's a terrible shame but thank you Don for coming back into the fold and putting the effort in going forward.

But we seem to have a problem at this point in time in the industry with people being extremely busy with the changes that are going on right now. So I'm going to do a health check on people's ability to commit time to the group.

And whereas Liz and I had talked about the work items that we've agreed to still being perfectly valid, we may see if we can restructure the way that we're going to accomplish the work in respect of people's ability to volunteer time.

So that will be - that's a task I'll need to go ahead and work my way through the group following some of the volunteers and see if we need to restructure that. Does everyone agree with that?

Wendy Seltzer: Wendy Seltzer. I'm sorry to join you a few minutes late.

Michael Young: Welcome Wendy.

Wendy Seltzer: Thank you.

Michael Young: Oh we got Wilson online. Hi Wilson. Don, you were about to say something I think.

Don Blumenthal: No, just, I mean, I agreed when you were talking about it that given the level of the participation, it's worth polling, revisiting or what structure whatever it's - whatever we need to do to get these things started, yes.

Michael Young: Great. Just to reiterate the structure that we did with the Subchairs in the groups, for the record it was designed because when we had our first couple of meetings, we seemed to have a large number of volunteers and quite a number of people comparatively to some groups that are willing to take some leadership positions, so that's why we broke into three subgroups to parallelize the work a little bit.

I think we won't try and touch the actual work items themselves, just the structure of how we accomplish them. Don, do you have - or Wendy or anyone else, Berry - does anyone have any comments on - did we look at those three areas of work, what priority if we were to serialize them how you would approach them?

Don Blumenthal: I think the structure's good, you know, those three Working Groups make complete sense. It would be too bad to have to serialize because then I think there's a lot of give and take that would help the process as things go along.

If we had to I'm not sure about the order. It might be worthwhile, and I hate to do this to myself, to jump in first to at least get a good track on what other activities are going on, what other people view as the more general interest before we burrow down into developing the details.

Michael Young: Okay. Maybe a bit of a split between parallelization and serialization might work too. Maybe what we could do - and Liz and other Staff members because you guys have organized so many of these meetings, I'd love your feedback.

But we talked about doing Co-Chair meetings that are separate and then Working Group meetings, you know, one week and then a Co-Chair meeting to stay coordinated every second week.

Maybe what we should do - and we did that on the basis of people saying they could handle, you know, meeting every second week in terms of their time commitments.

Maybe what we should do is just a meeting every second week, extend it to be, you know, 90 minutes to two hours, call the, you know, ask everyone to come to the call including all the members of the Subgroups, not just the Chairs. And what do you think?

Liz Gasster: I think that adds a level of predictability that people can schedule rather than trying to, you know, the Vice Chairs I think schedule their own meetings with their Subgroups with, you know, the Staff's assistants. It might help. Yes.

Michael Young: And, you know, and in all honesty too if people can't make the entire two hour meeting, then what they can do is they can log in to the section that they're producing some work on too, right.

Okay, so why don't we try that? Why don't we, you know, put out an email Liz to the list explaining we're going to try that structure as a starting point? I'll also go around and make some calls to the volunteers in the group and see if they have any ideas, and see if that will work for their time commitment.

I'll ask people to be honest too if things have changed for them with the industry changes and they feel they can't put much time to the group. You know, I'll ask them to clarify that because they'd rather just say, you know, if they can't do anything for the next three months let us know and then we'll have to make plans around that.

Okay. So Don, I don't know or Wilson if either one of you did get any forward meeting progress with your Subgroup members.

Don Blumenthal: I didn't have any follow up. I didn't have any response when I tried to follow up, you know. If not I had a chance to speak to the new member just because we're both running in different directions the last couple of days, but I'll catch up with Avri in person and get her thoughts.

Michael Young: Thanks. Wilson, did you have any chance to meet with members of your group?

Wilson Abigaba: No, we have tried some book meeting but I've been doing backward work myself on adding the - so the - especially the bit tools and note and the bit analysis of course.

I used the tool to see how we can - if we can actually use the data experts there, use the services and maybe not two hands, being that I'm what we will say currently are unable to use those tools.

So I would - what I had - but I can present them with even the - some for - even with a sample.

Liz Gasster: Excuse me Wilson. We're having a lot of trouble hearing you and I just wonder if you have your computer muted, if you're speaking into the phone line.

Sometimes if you're watching the Adobe Connect and you haven't muted the sound there it'll cause an echo.

Wilson Abigaba: Okay.

Liz Gasster: So I wonder if you could just mute the computer if it's not, and say what you just said again please.

Wilson Abigaba: Okay, this is a computer. Sorry about that. Okay, I was saying that we did meet with the Subgroup member but I had - I was doing the survey - I was filling out the surveys myself.

I went to the venues more, filled the survey mark, also filled in the - some sample surveys and (unintelligible) and Excel and I remember to get some meaningful results, meaning that we can actually use those tools to - for the surveys.

But I would immediately get that to the Subgroup but we can - for me it's good news and I'll be able to - I'll be writing in that new cost and also giving them a sample what I produced.

And the next one part of that I did then to get things - the things forward as used too.

Michael Young: Wilson, I'm sorry. Your voice is clipping really heavily on our end and we just can't make out what you're saying. So perhaps you could type into the Adobe Connect a couple of quick bullet points.

Wilson Abigaba: Okay, let me type them very quickly, the - that other comment.

Michael Young: Okay thank you. We'll keep the conversation going while you type those in, and when you're done just let us know and then we can react to it.

Wilson Abigaba: Okay sure.

Michael Young: Sorry about that. I guess it's a bit of a low bandwidth issue.

Wilson Abigaba: Okay. It's okay.

Michael Young: So, I mean, I might as well - while Wilson's typing in his update, I might as well just open it up and see if anyone has any new items or anything they want to discuss. Bueller? Anyone? Bueller?

Okay, so on that note I had a - I'll share with the group. I had a nice conversation with Kathy Kleinman yesterday after she spent many hours I guess in WHOIS policy review.

And Liz and I were talking about that just before the meeting a little bit. Kathy's I think interested in following what we're doing and maybe we get a few people from that end of things following what we're doing.

One of the interesting things that - in the conversation I had with Kathy was that, you know, trying to have her understand that we're talking about basically functional capability of WHOIS here and requirements, not - and very carefully trying to avoid, you know, any opinion or judgment of policy.

And by that I mean whether or not the functionality basically at the end of the day is turned on and off - on or off in a particular WHOIS service implementation, because if we tie this functionality of requirements to, you know, that policy discussion in that regard, you know, any lack of consensus on the policy side could stop us from introducing potentially functionality requirements or identifying requirements which is kind of why I think.

And I'd be interested in people's opinion, but in my opinion that's why we don't have a newer iteration of WHOIS standard today, and it's because we kind of thought - I think the industry and the groups involved kind of thought that we could solve the policy and the technical functionality kind of all at once, and really they're kind of two issues, two things. Liz.

Liz Gasster: That's one thing -- it's Liz -- that I've struggled with conceptually. And I understand I guess why others have too and - because I think it's hard for

perhaps less technical people to discern always which is which, and what has the underlying functional capability from certain policy decisions.

So one of the things that might be useful for those of you who are more comfortable or expert differentiating and - is to especially when we start to think about the questions for the first Subgroup, start to actually think about questions that would make that clearer for people or examples of, you know, a phraseology of a survey question that would - goes to the functionality versus the policy decision making so that it becomes a little clearer to those who are concerned about the policy bleed over that it's possible to sort of construct in a survey without addressing those, you know, or forcing those issues.

Michael Young: And I think that's a really good feedback so, you know, favorite terms of mine to help people kind of differentiate is you lead off from requirements and you start to ask questions about functionality capabilities configurability, which leads people to realize that what we're asking with these kind of questions is what choices do you feel you need available to you, not whether or not you - what you actually choose but really what choices do you want to be able to have available to you.

And, you know, when you look at WHOIS as a system, you know, there's a couple of areas where rigidity I guess or consensus is - creates a great deal of positive results for people.

So for example data output structure and kind of protocol related issues are ones where we'd really like to have consistency, because it makes it, you know, more cost effective for service providers.

It makes it easier for consumers to actually draw down the information and - but what's actually in that information, you know, usually ties back to policy, right.



And whether or not you - how much of that information out of the Registry systems do you make available through WHOIS is also policy decision. Technical decision is, you know, can I turn on and off each field, right, and each data element?

Can I create a capability in this system to differentiate between people querying a WHOIS system, for example the functionality so, you know, that WHOIS access, right?

Do I have three different, five, ten different types of WHOIS users defined or do I leave a framework that says I could have 100 if that was the use case? And the system's capable of configuring all of those and outputting a different degree of WHOIS information for each user class, so that's all functionality. Go ahead Wendy.

Wendy Seltzer: This is Wendy and I'm wondering whether part of the reason it's difficult to get people to separate those is because some of the functional choices impact the policy decisions that can be made later.

And so if you make the display possibilities more granular you open up options that some people may favor as a policy matter, and other people may disfavor.

And so some use one site as a proxy for the other or just as a stalling on the entire discussion. I don't unfortunately have a way to address that but - except for the continual emphasis that we are not making the policy decisions about what choices would be made on any of those levels.

We're not even at this point choosing among the technical options, but putting them on the table and trying to describe them more clearly.

Michael Young: All right, I think that's really well phrased and, you know, I would agree with that fully. The other - on the other side of the coin the people doing the

technical work, and I'm going to talk about, you know, kind of my subculture a little bit for a second.

And that is, you know, we like our work well defined so that we can define our own success criteria. You know, and when you do test cases you know what the results are supposed to look like.

So too much functionality defined all at once, too much configurability and granularity - it can become confusing as well. So you'll see when you kind of look at the history of work around this in the IETF, you'll often see the first thing that happens.

And what's happening in the related WEIRDS list right now is an effort by the technologist to narrow the requirements down to stuff that they can get done.

And even if it's sometimes just an effort to stage the work, you know, give us the first three things. We'll solve that and then we'll look at the next five things.

And unfortunately sometimes that I think is what creates some of the constraints for people that want to configure a system one way to address their view of the policy considerations.

The technologists have not, you know, in their first iteration of something or even their second or third iteration has not - and have not introduced enough functionality for, you know, somebody with a policy vision to articulate that vision physically in the system.

So, you know, part of our survey questions I think is trying to grasp what the prioritization in that functionality is. You know, and we have a few things in the industry right now that are painful, you know, very obvious to us like, you know, inconsistency in the data output is the big one that we've struggled with for years.

But now that's, you know, exasperated by the fact that we have IDNs to consider and we have IDN Registrars to consider. It's not just enough to express the domain name in characters, but the related contact information because the entire population that's - that Registry is orientated to could be using that native language that that Registry's focused on, right.

And to that matter there's a lot of existing agencies, particularly law agencies, legal agencies and individuals that are concerned that they're going to be able to read the output from WHOIS, because they are used to conducting business around the Internet in English because that's the way the systems have been configured.

So, you know, you - right away you end up with a requirement there that comes to mind that says, "Oh well, I probably need WHOIS output that's multiple languages at the very least or has that capability." Whether or not you decide to use the capability again is the policy question.

Liz Gasster: It's Liz. I mean, I think the challenge is also for the survey takers, like we've spent a lot of time talking about this and we might generally speak - we know what we mean now with differentiating.

But in terms of phrasing the survey so that a survey taker who could be anyone, you know, close to this debate or further away from this debate understands that they're being asked about technical functionality versus what policy features they want to see I think is difficult to convey perhaps, and that there's the potential for survey takers to think that they're being asked to weigh in on the policy decisions, rather than being asked to weigh in on the technical functionality, and that that could create a - results that aren't as meaningful as they otherwise could be.

Michael Young: And it could drag us into debates, you know, and stop forward progress. Okay so - well let's go to Wilson since he's got his comments in.

Liz Gasster: First of all Wilson thank you very much. Wilson is - has put his comment into the chat because we've had a little bit of technical difficulty, and I'd like to read that now.

He says, "We haven't met as a Subgroup but I did some work regarding the surveys. I reviewed Survey Monkey, Survey Gizmo and Google. I was to export the results to SPSS from my laptop and also some analysis which is good news, meaning we can use those tools.

I used sample questions. I will email the sample report," - sorry, one second. I'm just scrolling, "and analysis of the questions in due course. Regarding the survey I haven't done that yet, but will contact Avri as she seems to have a lot of knowledge and experience in this field, especially the people who will actually give us valuable feedback. Thank you."

Michael Young: Wilson that's great. Thank you. That's a good step forward. So, you know, I think this is a really interesting discussion. Steve, it looked like you were going to push your mic button there for a second. Did you - okay so that's a pass.

Yes, I mean, at the same time, you know, going back to what Wendy and Liz was saying, you know, we do want to ask policy - what we want is if someone has a policy consideration we want - we'd really like to see them translate their policy vision into functionality, what they think they need to accomplish.

And then we're not going to debate the functionality per se. We just want them to articulate what functionality they think would give them a choice, you know.

That allows us to build the system that ultimately, you know, once the policy decision is arrived at amongst those stakeholders, it's just a matter of

configuring the system to address a decision rather than build the system from scratch at that point.

Don Blumenthal: Yes and I think the data - the thing we'll have to be careful of there though is more approaching it in the affirmative, look for what do you want because I can see the policy overlap or proxy, which I think is a real good way to put it, weighing in on no, there shouldn't be this capability but not for tactical reasons. For other ones.

Michael Young: Well and that goes back to I think what was being said before that Wendy mentioned, right, is, you know, the potential for most people on here - the potential for people to try and obstruct functionality in the view that it might also obstruct policy that they don't agree with, right.

And, you know, we're all grown up here and being realistic that sometimes that happens in, you know, circles where decisions are being made. We just have to be careful that, you know, that we're not enabling that type of choice in this group as best we can.

Berry Cobb: It's Berry. So, you know, that's kind of way behind the curve with respect to everybody here and trying to catch up and all the WHOIS buckets that exist out there.

I definitely believe it's going to be a challenge to separate the two, policy versus technical, in the surveys. Somehow we'll have to tee it up in a way that this is definitely nothing to do with policy whatsoever, but when I think about some of the questions I still - somehow I envision that somehow policy's going to leak into those or just set those questions up in a framework that they can understand.

But really my question is in the history of WHOIS and all of the activities that have gone on, has there ever been a survey just solely on the policy of the community?

And I kind of take us back to the survey we did in PEDNR. You know, that - it turned out very useful for what we were trying to accomplish and we, you know, we got really great community feedback about that kind of stuff.

So is anybody - has that kind of survey been done in the community just strictly from a policy perspective? And I don't really mean to introduce this into this technical discussion, but I'm just - for my own benefit.

Michael Young: Well there's a huge history to it actually. There's been a number of different efforts to gather information on WHOIS. Maybe Liz can do a - or Steve or somebody can do a recap on that.

Steve Sheng: So there are different surveys that's done in the past as far back as five to seven years ago. There's a WHOIS team that look at, you know, the purpose of the data.

There's a team that look at the, you know, the kind of beginning of the purpose, the protocol, you know, what they want to be in the data. Those are in I think 2003, 2004 survey.

It's in the - it's on the WHOIS page. When we did the WHOIS requirement report we take those survey input and saying, "Okay, if we were to implement this what technical need, like what - how - technically what capabilities need to be there?" So - and that - some of those surveys forms the basis of this report.

Michael Young: So I'll open it up one more time to the floor and then if we don't have anything else, we might as well wrap up. And I'll follow up on my action items to describe whether we're going to restructure the meetings going forward to the list.

And Liz I guess we can work with Staff to get them scheduled in regularly.  
Don, you look like you're about to push the microphone.

Don Blumenthal: Yes, the other thing that might be worthwhile doing, and I know we all have a feel for the different efforts, we just try to sit back and figure out what all the different ICANN, non-ICANN, whatever efforts are going on concerning WHOIS to try to see if we can - well if nothing else be aware that - let's see if there's even any way to swap ideas and resources.

Michael Young: Thanks for volunteering for doing that Don. Yes. No, but in all - I'm kidding but at the same time I guess I would've, you know, I think that totally falls within the scope of work we kind of talked about with your Subgroup, so yes, that'd be great if you could look at that.

Don Blumenthal: Okay I think I've got a pretty good handle but I'll ask around to make sure.

Michael Young: Thanks Don.

Steve Sheng: With regard to the efforts I think there's the - it's one of the IRD Working Group, the - in the IETF there's this WEIRD list. There's this thick WHOIS Issues Report.

There are a couple of other things I can think of and I can help to - with afterwards and get those lists to you too.

Michael Young: Is there anyone else online Liz?

Liz Gasster: There are people online but there seem to be no other questions or comments. But if anyone would like to ask a question or make a comment, this is a small-attended meeting.

We're just having kind of a casual conversation of the Working Group itself on next steps, so there are a couple of others too who've joined us in the room.

So if any of you would like to make any comments about the work we're doing or ask any questions, now would be a good time. In the absence of discussion I think we may close the meeting early.

Michael Young: Absolutely. Let's go.

Liz Gasster: Okay, I want to thank everyone for your participation and attendance in this meeting, and this concludes our session. Thank you.

END