WHOIS STUDIES UPDATE

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WHOIS - Definition

• WHOIS -- provides public access to contact information for Registered Name Holders

• Requirements are in ICANN agreements

• Required data (thick WHOIS) – nameservers and DNS configuration data, registrar, start date, expiration date, and registrant contact information, technical contact and administrative contact.

• Thin WHOIS -- only data sufficient to identify the sponsoring registrar, status of the registration, and creation and expiration dates for each registration.
Sample WHOIS record:

Registrant: ICANN
4676 Admiralty Way Suite #330
Marina del Rey, California 90292 US
Phone:+1.3103015817

Administrative Contact: ICANN
4676 Admiralty Way Suite
Marina del Rey, California, 90292
Phone:+1.3103015817 / FAX:+1.3108238649
Email:domain-admin@icann.org

Technical Contact: ICANN
4676 Admiralty Way Suite
Marina del Rey, California, 90292
Phone:+1.3103015817 / FAX:+1.3108238649
Email:domain-admin@icann.org

Domain servers in listed order:
NS.ICANN.ORG
A.IANA-SERVERS.NET
C.IANA-SERVERS.NET
B.IANA-SERVERS.ORG
D.IANA-SERVERS.NET

Registered Through
GoDaddy.com, Inc.
Domain Name: icann.org
Created on: 14-Sep-1998 04:00:00 UTC
Expires on: 07-Dec-2012 17:04:26 UTC
Last Updated on: 13-Aug-2009 15:10:10 UTC
Why are WHOIS studies important?

• WHOIS policy has been debated for many years
• Many competing interests with valid viewpoints:
  – Law enforcement, IP owners, others want easy access to accurate contact information
  – Individuals and privacy advocates are concerned about privacy protection and abuse of public info
  – Governments want their legal regimes to be followed
  – Providers are reluctant to absorb new costs, Registrars earn revenue from privacy services
• Few policy changes to WHOIS (prohibition against use for marketing, conflicts procedure)
Goals of WHOIS studies

- No PDP underway now
- GNSO Council hopes that study data will provide an objective, factual basis for future policy making
- Variety of topic areas selected are targeted at informing key policy issues of concern – providing information such as possible causality in increasing spam and other harmful acts; useful info about registrants; use of proxy and privacy services, etc...
- Technical consideration of alternatives, especially in light of the growing number of international registrations
WHOIS Studies Overview

- The GNSO Council has identified several broad WHOIS study areas
  1. Misuse of public WHOIS data
  2. Registrant identification study (previously “misrepresentation”)
  3. WHOIS proxy and privacy services study
  4. Display of non-ASCII character sets in WHOIS
  5. Compilation of current and potential WHOIS service requirements
1. Misuse Studies

• Will study extent of misuse of public WHOIS data to generate spam or for other illegal or undesirable activities. Two approaches:
  1. **Descriptive Study** – will survey registrants about specific acts they have experienced that they believe occurred using WHOIS contact data; survey registrars about how WHOIS can be queried; and survey others about reported incidents from cybercrime, research and law enforcement organizations.
  2. **Experimental Study** – will measure a variety of harmful acts by classifying messages sent to test domains registered by a representative sample of registrars. Will compare harmful acts associated with public vs. non-public addresses and examine impact of public WHOIS and anti-harvesting measures.

• **RFP released 27 September – responses due in 60 days**
1. Misuse (cont’d)

• 2 types of studies may compensate for limitations inherent to each:
  – Can’t measure % of all queries that lead to misuse
  – Difficult to track harmful acts. Was WHOIS data exploited?
  – Difficult to reliably assess anti-harvesting measures
  – Difficult to trigger or measure harmful acts in experiments
Registrant Identification Study

- * previously “misrepresentation”
- Looks at how registrants are identified in WHOIS
- Will study extent to which domains used by legal persons or for commercial purposes:
  1. Are not clearly identified as such in WHOIS; and
  2. Are correlated to use of privacy and proxy services
- Also using RFP approach, posted 23 October, responses due 22 December
Registrant Identification cont’d

• Review sample of domains looking for names or organizations that are either patently false, appear to identify a natural person, an organization engaged in non-commercial activities or a privacy or proxy service – for further analysis.

• Results will quantify domains registered to natural vs. legal persons and domains used for commercial vs. non-commercial purpose, distributed by gTLD, geo region and proxy/privacy use.

• Failure to clearly identify as a legal person
Registration Identification cont’d

• Challenges:
  – Study can only provide empirical data, there is still debate about what uses are impermissible (e.g. use of proxy services by legal persons)
  – Difficult to identify licensees of domains registered by proxy services
  – Large numbers of ambiguous owners (legal vs. natural persons) could skew results
  – Disagreement re: commercial use
WHOIS Proxy and Privacy Services

• Study the extent to which privacy and proxy services are abused to:
  1. Obscure the source of illegal or harmful communication or activity; and
  2. Delay source identification
• Plan to pursue a similar RFP approach
• TOR drafting not yet begun
• Hope to complete by end of year
4. Display of non-ASCII character sets

– Proposal recommended examination of various client interfaces to assess implications for the accuracy and readability of WHOIS contact information

– A new SSAC-GNSO Technical Working Group will consider display specifications for internationalized registration data (WG tasking may pre-empt WHOIS display study)
5. WHOIS Service Requirements

- May 2009 request from GNSO Council
- Staff tasked to collect and organize a comprehensive set of requirements for the WHOIS service policy tools
- Intended as an accurate and neutral compendium to help Council consider alternatives
- Status and update will be covered in Part II of this presentation.
Next steps and ways to get involved

• Attend the Internationalized Registration Data (IRD) workshop in Seoul on Wednesday 28 October at 15.00
• Contribute to the SSAC-GNSO IRD Working Group just being convened
• Staff will release study information as analyses are complete – several months
• The GNSO Council and staff will then consider which studies to conduct
Additional Information

- GNSO Council Resolution in Mexico City, March 2009
  https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?04_mar_2009_motions
- GNSO Council Resolution on WHOIS Service Requirements
  https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?07_may_motions
- ICANN Board Resolution regarding display and usage of internationalized registration data, 26 June 2009
  http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-26jun09.htm#6
- Updated cross reference table for Whois studies under consideration
- Internationalized Data Registration Working Group charter
감사합니다.

Thank You

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