
TORONTO – What the Journalists Think
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ICANN - Toronto, Canada

[checking microphone]

JIM TRENGROVE:

We'll get going in about two minutes, we working? Okay, I think we're going to start. Welcome to the "What Journalists Think" panel. We thought about actually naming this, "What, Journalists Think?", but we decided just leave it as it is. That's for you guys.

I'm told I'm supposed to announce the date and time for the record, so it's October 17th at 2:00 P.M. eastern time. This is going to be unlike a lot of the sessions you might have attended. This is going to be very loose. This going to be Q and A based.

What we want to do here is talk to some of the people that cover. We always talk about the ICANN community. Quote unquote. We thought it would be pretty cool to have a group of people who cover us, who are paid to be critical of us, who look at us, study us, but they're not actually part of the community.

In a previous life I spent about a quarter of a century as a journalist, so I have a healthy respect for what these guys do. I like journalists. My job is to be the point man for journalists

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when they call ICANN. I'm sure they'll have heavy words of criticism for me in a few minutes here.

But almost all journalists get their stories or derive at least parts of their stories from what these guys do, particularly these four. Let me introduce them. I'm going to start on the right.

Kevin Murphy, most of you know Kev, he's a London based journalist. Website Domain Inside is pretty much a must read. I'm sure most of you have been to Kevin's website. He's covered the domain name industry for almost twelve years.

He attended his first ICANN meeting, ICANN's second ever, in Berlin in 1999 where he claimed credit for the wall coming down. He's a former US Bureau Chief with Data Monitor. He's reported on the Internet Technology Sector for Computer Business Review, Computer Wire, and The Register.

To his right, Juliana Gruenwald who is based in Washington, D.C., covers Technology and Telecomm issues for the National Journal. She's a seasoned pro and has covered ICANN for more than a decade, right Juliana?

She helped the National Journal launch its first Tech Policy publication, Technology Daily. Prior to this stint of the National Journal, she covered International Tech and Telecomm issues for Ziff Davis Media's Interactive Week magazine.

To Juliana's right, Kieren McCarthy, let's skip him and go... Kieren is sort of legendary in the ICANN world. His .nxt website



is another widely read outlet. Kieren is very well sourced in ICANN.

He knows a lot of people on staff, in part because he's a former staff member. He was the General Manager of Public Participation. How long were you an IT journalist, at least a decade, right? He has written extensively about subjects for a wide range of magazines.

To his right, Thomas O'Toole. Tom's the Editing Manager of Bloomberg BNA's Electronic Commerce and Law Review. Do I have the name right there, Tom?

TOM O'TOOLE:

No, you don't. And I'm a little disappointed I didn't get to write my own intro. No I'm Managing Editor of Bloomberg BNA's Electronic and Commerce Law Report. I didn't write the name either. We're a cyber-law publication for attorneys.

JIM TRENGROVE:

You joined them when, 88 right? Yeah, okay. The reason we have this panel, Kevin and Kieren are both trade journalists. They know a lot about the insides of ICANN.

Juliana covers the government aspect, in particular ICANN's relationship with government. And Tom's center of focus is the intellectual property legal community. He's very interested in New gTLDs and Trademark issues.



Let me start off with you, Tom. About, when was it a year or so ago I guess. You called me up. He invited me to lunch and said, “I want to get together with you and two of my reporters. We’re going to start covering ICANN a lot more intensively than we have in the past.” Why?

TOM O’TOOLE:

Actually, just to back into that, I spent. Well, let’s see our publication started in 1995. There was a little reporting that we did when ICANN was created in 97-98.

I spent most of the 2000s telling my reporters that ICANN was not worth covering. And we weren’t going to go over there and none of our readers really cared about ICANN.

I started changing my tune on that when the New gTLD initiative came along. We stopped going to ABA meetings which had been where you usually went. We kind of went all in for ICANN.

The reason is because with these New gTLDs, it’s a lot of new work for trademark attorneys. We’re like the shark that follows a certain kind of fish and trademark attorneys are the fish that we follow. This got on INTA’s radar screen and so now we’re here. And it was a good decision.

JIM TRENGROVE:

What’s coming at you from your readership? What sort of response are you getting to the New g story?



TOM O'TOOLE:

Well, it's not a well-known fact that we do track the stories that our readers are reading. Within the last six months, ICANN stories are regularly at the top of the stories that are being read by our readers.

That is something that my boss is probably going to fire me for saying. But also, it's something that's new. When I was trying to get the ICANN coverage going at BNA, we found that a lot of attorneys were not interested.

I'm talking about 2007, 2008, 2009. It wasn't really something they were interested in. If they didn't have to do the UDRP, they pretty much didn't care. So there was a small group of ICANN experts, but it was very small back then. Now that group is growing. Did I answer that question?

JIM TRENGROVE:

You did with your typical evasive manner. But it was there.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Well, just to sum it up, not a lot of interest, now, intense interest.

JIM TRENGROVE:

But you find it's growing, in other words.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Yes, and it's going to grow more next year.



JIM TRENGROVE: And that leads me to my next question. Kevin and Kieren, I want to throw this at you guys. What's the next big New g story?

KIEREN MCCARTHY: As in this week or as in?

JIM TRENGROVE: Every time frame, the next week and the next year.

KIEREN MCCARTHY: Well, this week is going to be the fact that the governments might, probably will, recommend putting huge protections around 161 International...

MALE: Can you put your mic up a bit?

KIEREN MCCARTHY: Sure. Sorry. So it's probably going to be this week governments are probably going to advise that 161 international governmental organizations UNESCO, etc. should be protected at the top and second level, which basically shuts of 161 names from the Internet forever.

So that's a pretty big story I would say. I think it's a wrong decision. I think they got there in the wrong way. But that's how it is. In terms of what will happen in terms of a proper story that



our national newspaper may actually want to pay me for, when the gTLDs come out.

When Amazon says what it's going to do, when Google says what it's going to do with one of these things. When, I forget which of the huge brands have gone for gTLDs, but one of them is going to say something.

And this is what we're going to do. Or if anyone from Apple does .apple or talks about Apple that will be a big news story.

JIM TRENGROVE:

When you say this is what we're going to do, what you're talking about is what they intend to do with the gTLDs. Is that what you mean?

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

I mean in this, our little world at the moment is a bit of a thing about the fact that Amazon has applied for all these generic names and is going to run it as a closed shop.

I.E., you can't just register as average Joe has never been the way that the Internet has always worked. That's a big story in our little world. That's going to become a very big story in the wider world when these things are actually out there.

Then Google as well, people obsessively follow everything that Google does for various obvious reasons. And they've got a three tier model.



Some of it will be wide open. Some of it will be like sponsored; you have to be a certain type of person. Some are going to be closed. At some point Google is going to start talking about what its philosophy is and that's going to be a news story.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Kev?

KEVIN MURPHY:

I guess I would have to agree with Kieren on that. These closed generic streamed gTLDs is one of the big mainstream news stories that don't seem to be being picked up by the mainstream media yet.

I think I'm not quite sure why. But it seems it's something that could be understood by a wider community than just ICANN attendees.

The idea that Google might own .blog forever and it will be tied to what some people might say is an inferior blogging service. And .music might be controlled by vested interests in the music distribution industry.

That's seems like it's a story that the mainstream media and the tech press could get their teeth into. They haven't really focused on it yet. In terms of smaller stories, my readership seems to go on a week to week basis.

This week I'm guessing privacy is an ongoing story that's getting some movement because of the European Union discussion. It's



the Registrar Accreditation Agreement which is tied to that. There's the Trademark Clearinghouse implementation.

It seems like that's pretty big for the section of my readership that's from that community. We have this issue where the technical details of the Clearinghouse implementation actually have quite big repercussions about policy perspective on might.

There are some potentially unresolvable frictions there between different parts of the community. So those are the things I've been thinking about this week.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Juliana, what's the interest level at the National Journal on New gTLDs? I mean did you have to hard sell that to get your editors interested in New g stories?

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

No, because they basically leave it to my discretion so I'm lucky in that sense. But I mean on a site like National Journal, ICANN's competing with the Presidential election, with a wide range of Tech and Telecomm issues, with economics.

So our side is going to be read by obviously a broader audience. But when we say, "Hey this is something you should read about." That does get some of the lobbyists that are interested in that.

JIM TRENGROVE:

The IANA Contract has basically been renewed. What's the news for you? I mean, what's the big government ICANN story that you're? We dried up in terms of story material for you?

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well, if this thing crashes and burns this thing will go to Congress again. If Congress, if there's interest from Congress, they'll be hearing. So that will be one thing. If Mitt Romney wins the Presidential election, there'll be new people that will be in charge of ICANN at the NTIA.

Who will those people be? That will be an issue that will, you know, secondary issue as far as new people coming into a new administration. But as far as ICANN, that will be an issue.

JIM TRENGROVE:

By the way, if any of you have questions, we want to keep this as loose as possible. I'll bring the mic over to you. Just raise your hand and I'll get over to you.

We've also got remote participation so if some people, if Michele gives me a signal we'll take some questions online. Juliana, you and I were talking out front.

You were telling me stories about when you first started covering ICANN. It's changed considerably since you first began covering the beat, right?



JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Yeah, much less professional organization. If I had a question I needed answered, I called up the CEO at the time which was Mike Roberts. So this was a long time ago. Or I called Andrew McLaughlin; I called the people who were making the policies.

I don't recall there being a Press Secretary. I think they had an outside PR firm. So in one sense it was easier to get detailed questions answered than I think it is now.

You're responsive but you're not making decisions. So you have to go to somebody else. And sometimes you can't get them to tell you what I need to know in a timely fashion; especially we all know you're writing stories now.

If it's a blog post, your turnaround time is an hour. You can update it, but you'd like to get that out, have that material when you post your story.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Right, right, how much does that? The media climate has changed as much as ICANN has changed. A lot of times when I get a call from a reporter and they want a react comment on something, where we used to have a news cycle an entire day we've now got at best a couple of hours.

But you guys are under constant pressure to get it out. When do you make the decision, "Okay, we're going to wait for ICANN to give us something?" Or "We're going to go with this."



If ICANN gives us something, we'll do an ad, or whatever. How do you make those decisions? Tom?

TOM O'TOOLE: What was the question again? Are you talking about coverage questions?

JIM TRENGROVE: Yeah.

TOM O'TOOLE: As in coming to you and wanting something right at the last minute because we just have to have it. Well, since I'm the oldest person here, we used to be a sleepy legal publisher and we'd come out in print once a week.

Now we come out online pretty quickly for journalists. Circulation numbers in print don't mean that much anymore. Your attention to your beat, the quality of your story, it matters a little.

But page hits mean a lot. If you're in the news business, you know that the best way to get page hits is to be first. So it's like, "I have to have it."

I have to have some sort of a story out there. It has to look credible and that means it has to have a quote from somebody credible. So, yeah, the news business has changed.



JIM TRENGROVE:

Kev, I think you want to say something?

KEVIN MURPHY:

I guess it's a little different for me. I'm basically in a different time zone than the rest of the panelists. I was based in San Francisco at a daily which made it quite easy to get comment on ICANN's latest issues.

But now I'm based in the UK on a blog and it is an eight hour time difference. I usually just publish before I get comment because most of the time I know how long it's going to take.

I kind of know what the answer's going to be anyway, I think. On longer, bigger pieces, I'd never call ICANN for a comment on a lawsuit for example because I know exactly what the answer's going to be. "We do not comment on lawsuits."

So there's no need to wait for that. But when I need some facts confirming, you have to wait.

STEVE DELBIANCO:

Steve DelBianco with NetChoice and hi up to all of you. I've had the good and bad fortune of being targets of all of your publications at times. But I appreciate that you follow it.

Now Juliana you write for a more general interest audience than any of the other three guys. I took a quick at National Journal and since 2008 the word ICANN shows up 54 times in your stories, not just Juliana's but the Journal's.



But only about the first 20 even have the word ICANN in the headline. The rest of them have headlines that kind of draw you in by Triple X, or the word domains, or the “who,” Goodlad or Senator Rockefeller, and so on.

So when you think about it, is it ICANN that’s the story? Well, not really. For most parts it’s about who else is paying attention in Washington is paying attention to Internet governance and ICANN, well it’s only in there some of the time.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Yeah, that’s absolutely true. It’s only, of recent issues I’ve covered, the New gTLD is where ICANN has been the issue. But you’re right. I’m generally coming at it from does somebody in Washington care what you’re doing?

Also, I need to explain ICANN more. So I try to be more general. You know, the group, the non-profit group that manages the Internet’s addresses. I even have to be that more general.

Then, explain domain even further down. I have to write much more plain English.

JIM TRENGROVE:

This gentleman right here, you’ve got a mic right in front of you.

PETER KNIGHT:

Peter Knight for the record, a newbie here and sometimes journalist as well. One of the things as I look around here, at



least at the table in the name of inclusiveness, I don't see any non-English speaking journalists, on the panel or anywhere else.

There's a great deal of interest in this in the brick countries. I live in Brazil. And many other places around. I'm just curious, is there no interest to be a journalist here or is it difficult to get here? Are you sitting in the back that I can't see you?

KEVIN MURPHY:

There is actually one guy sitting behind you I think.

JIM TRENGROVE:

I might add also that a lot of journalists, we are covered around the world because I'm a recipient of a lot of calls.

The fact that like this session is being remotely participated in, it's easier; it's cheaper for a lot of reporters to cover us online than it is to actually have physical presence.

What they lose, of course, is everything that these guys will get from being here. Tom, you wanted to add something?

TOM O'TOOLE:

No, I was just going to blame it on you. While you were talking, I decided better of it.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Down here at the end sir?



STEPHANE VAN GELDER:

Yeah, thanks, Stéphane Van Gelder, just my experience with domain name journalism, rather than just ICANN because ICANN doesn't mean a whole lot to most people.

I was just very interested since we've got a panel of people covering both from the inside and the outside. A lot of the stuff that's certainly I guess two of you do insider journalism.

But how do you all think it's possible to widen the net so that we get other people interested? We heard one answer which was to try and get Washington interested in ICANN.

But I'm wondering, is you challenge really to sex up the domain name industry to the point of the man on the street actually wants to take an interest? If so, what angles can be used?

TOM O'TOOLE:

Just to jump in, I think it's a really bad idea to get Washington interested in ICANN. It's risky. Actually, I'll just follow on. What ICANN does is business regulation and most business regulation here and in Washington takes place without a lot of public involvement.

It would be radically different and more difficult to do. I'm not saying it shouldn't happen, but it would be more difficult to do if the public was closely engaged in what ICANN is doing. I'll just put that out there.



KIEREN MCCARTHY:

I think it's just the nature of it. Most people are not interested in the process. If you come to an ICANN meeting, that's all about being in the process. For my sins, I write a lot about the process which makes me massive insider because only a small number of people care.

Then they pretty much find out somewhere down the line what I'm writing anyway because it flows up in a meeting they sat in. but in terms of the bigger, wider thing, the actual journalism that's out there, if you were talking about a different industry.

If we were a pharmaceutical company or something, it's what the end point is. It is two things, either what has just been decided and the impact it will have, or the big fight that's blown up because someone is going to decide something and this is people punching one another.

But this is normal. When you're inside ICANN and you're like, "Oh, why are you taking this and extrapolating it?" but that's journalism across every single industry.

If you've actually got a newspaper and it gave you the insider scoop on every single story, describe any newspaper now. If they actually wrote what's going on in the background, you would be bored out of your mind.

It's because we're an insider industry. It's the same for every industry. I used to do broader tech journalism and I'd start getting bored when I would learn too much detail.



Because I'm just chewing up time, learning information that I'm never going to write in a story, I have to write that story and then another one.

So you'd start getting bored after learning too much about it. Of course it gets harder to write when you know too much because you think, "Well, that's not strictly accurate."

You start having a fight with yourself about trying to get it readable and accurate.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well, and I think it's up to journalists to explain to people why they should care. I mean if you're a small business man and you are wondering, "Why can't I get my domain name in .com?"

Well, it's up to us to explain maybe how the New gTLDs might benefit you. I think it is incumbent upon journalists to explain to their readers why they should care about this story. Every story should say that. Why should you care about this?

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

I think I would disagree slightly with the premise of the question. As well as writing domain insight, I freelance for The Register which is a technology tabloid. It doesn't have any shame about calling itself such.

You know, six million readers is a very broad interest. There are stories that come out of ICANN meetings that are of interest to these people. Privacy is a wedge issue.



It's the kind of thing that slash dot readers are interested in, registry readers are interested in: pornography, XXX, censorship, are part of the same story arguably. Freedom of Speech doesn't come out maybe as often, but it's in there.

WHOIS, you can put ICANN in a headline, people probably won't read it. If you put Triple X or privacy in a headline, people will read it.

So there's a lot of stuff going on here that is of interest to a general readership, but as Kieren said, I would never feel the need to write the name Stéphane Van Gelder in a register story because then I'd have to explain what you are which is head of the GNSO council.

So I have to explain that the GNSO council is the committee that runs the Generic Name Supporting Organization which is one of the SOs and ACs that contribute.

So you start getting behind all this stuff but the reader doesn't necessarily need to know it. You kind of have to, I forget who said it, but journalism is exaggerate then simplify. That's kind of, when I'm writing for The Register, that's kind of how it works.

DANIEL [SOKROLA]:

Hi. My name is Daniel [Sokrola] from the German Heads of Media Group. I wanted to get back to your question, "Are there any foreign journalists?"



Well, there's at least one. I guess there are a couple more. So it is difficult, maybe I should explain first. [Haza] is the leading German IT Publishing House.

So we have online websites, we have print magazines, we even do IT law stuff so it's quite wide. We have readers. We have the registries and the registrars who read us. We have students which is geeks who read us. We have managers from the IT industry and other things read us.

So we have a quite diverse readership and we are covering ICANN time and again. The thing is the ICANN conferences move around. Now I'm the North American correspondent, so I was sent here.

We have one journalist who does a lot of ICANN stories, Monica Emmitt; some of you might know her. But for her, it's hard just the expense to travel to these various places. I know she was in Prague. I don't know about Beijing.

So I was sent here but I've been an IT journalist for over ten years. But I have to cover everything here in North America from Mars curiosity down to Google IO.

And last week I was in Boston as a predictive analytics and tech analytics conference. Now here I am doing domain stuff. So it is a very wide field.

I come to an ICANN conference, there's a lot of interesting stuff going on. But it is really hard to filter out where the news is



because I'm not on those mailing lists. I don't have all the insider input so I have to scramble to find.

There are very few press releases. I know it's also difficult that the limited resources I can have to go to every single meeting. Would there be a press release coming out?

But maybe it would be the meetings themselves to have more let's get out and tell the story drive. I'm going to many conferences and usually you're inundated with press releases as registered journalists.

And you have to filter through a bunch of crap. Here it's a better way around so just a little feedback and explanation, how it is for foreign media to cover that, thanks.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Do we do enough press releases you guys?

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

Yeah, but they're very rarely interesting.

KEVIN MURPHY:

I like getting; I totally said that I like getting ICANN press releases because it reminds me of what I wrote last week.



JIM TRENGROVE:

I might add that I'm not a big fan of press releases. When I first came to ICANN and I thought we would issue too many news releases. For a meeting like this where every session is public.

It's on the Web. We have an online press kit for example. And I'll go, we post it several days before each meeting. And I'll go through the schedule and pick out sessions that I think will be of interest to journalists, particularly journalists who don't have a background.

Who may not be trade reporters? Just for future info, I might also add that Monica Emmitt in Europe is one of the more aggressive and better reporters that cover us. Question, you've got a mic right in front of you, just hit the button there.

MALE:

Okay, I'm happy to present this decision with you. I'm a journalist from Libya and I represent the Arab world. But I'm sorry that he only has my friend for me. This is the only English speaker, and I find all the people mainly from the United States for market.

I would like to say that journalism has a problem as a business, luckily all the domestically and locally. And it would be more efficient if we can participate by journalists from Arab world, from Africa, from China from all of the world because we can discuss a lot of problems and real problems facing journalism through the world, especially the Countries and the Continents



that has not yet enough access of Internet. So there are a lot of problems. Thank you very much.

JIM TRENGROVE:

One second.

PAUL FOOTY:

Hello gentleman, Paul Footy. Karen you mentioned that you don't think people care. And I take issue with that. I think people do care.

The trouble is that there's so much to care about that they sort of rely on you guys to pull them in the direction about issues that they should be thinking about.

You look at the story this week about the young girl in B.C who committed suicide. Why isn't there any connection between that and the WHOIS issue that's been going on for twelve years?

That has basically allowed this sort of conduct to go unchecked. To what extent is it your responsibility to put these issues before the public? And let them know what they should care about.

Because in about six months, time people surfing the Internet are going to put in one word and they're going to find



themselves going to a site that is now a new top level domain. Bloomberg has got a top level domain application in.

PBC has ITV has, Guardian, CBS, ABC. Time Warner has been here all the time that I've been coming. So this is an issue which is unknown to the major media sources.

So why has there been so much silence on it? I mean is it really, because in my opinion you've all got your snouts in the trough. Thank you.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

So the connection between who is, and the girl that committed suicide because of online bullying. That's ICANN glasses; you're out of your mind. There is no connection.

That's like saying the connection between the education systems or why aren't people writing about the education system in relation to cyber bullying? I mean it's just nonsense. It is, sorry, but that's just nonsense, there's no connection.

In terms of the bigger things people don't care about ICANN. They won't care when there's a .bbc, that long, long, long, long process that was made to get there.

In the same way though some people can look at the iPhone 5 came out, everyone's excited that it's longer. And apparently if you look at it, it looks a little bit sharper.



That’s because it is some technology that manages to shave off one layer of glass that was three now I think it’s two. I like that because I’m a tech geek. Most people go “Whoa, longer and shiny!”

And they do not want to know all the work that went into how you get that millimeter of extra glass off and ICANN is doing the millimeter of extra glass.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Let me follow up on that, Kieren for a second. You’re basically saying that you’re going to do the stories where there’s the public interest. But if the stories aren’t done, the public will never know and there will never be public interest.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

Not only that, but if someone wants to know about ICANN, they can bore themselves silly reading our stories. But they don’t.

People don’t want to know in the bigger scheme of things. I don’t want to know all of these precise details of absolutely every single thing. I’d be exhausted.



JIM TRENGROVE:

If only the stories were well written then I think more people would.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Can I say something on that please because my red light is on. There are a lot of issues in the tech space that consumers, regular people, could be interested in, and maybe should be interested in. But for some reason they're not.

So as a result of that, there's very little online privacy. Voters don't seem to be engaged in that. There's very little consumer protection.

I don't think anybody feels that they're getting a good deal from their Telecomm carrier. But, those feelings seem to be widely disbursed and it's not possible right now to translate them into political action.

That's why ICANN doesn't really feel them either. And I'm not saying that's a good thing, but that is absolutely true. Just to carry on a little bit more, what that means is when the voters are not engaged and the people are not engaged.

Then whoever is here or whoever is giving money to a particular congressman or party, they're going to win on that issue. And it's always been that way. I don't think it's journalism's fault.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Juliana?



JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well, I would say that sometimes when you're covering a beat, especially one as closely as you guys are, you get caught up in the story of the moment. I think it is important for us to stand back when we can and do those bigger picture stories.

And I think this is maybe just a problem of journalism today. We don't get a lot of time to step back and do those stories. It would be nice if we were given time to that.

It doesn't mean that we shouldn't do them, but a lot of times we're just trying to keep up with the story of the moment. I cover a wide range of issues. ICANN is just one of them.

I cover privacy. I cover piracy. I cover spectrum. I cover Internet taxes. And there's a lot going on in all of those issues. It's just trying to make sure you're not missing stuff in those areas. It takes up your whole day.

KEVIN MURPHY:

I think the question is kind of misdirected anyway. You're talking to two bloggers and a lawyer, legal publication.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Respectable journalists.

KEVIN MURPHY:

I mean, it seems that the question was probably directed as a criticism of mainstream media. You know snouts in the trough



or whatever. Where I don't think the panel really represents that side of media anyway. I just wanted to say.

MARIA FARRELL:

I'm Maria Farrell. My question is possibly more for the bloggers than for the respectable journalists. It goes like this.

Because you are so immersed in the ICANN community, do you ever find that your relationships with people might cause you to go easier on a particular story or a particular person?

Or perhaps not run a story at all? I also realize this may provide Kieren with some laughter lines, but I'm just wondering can you be too close to this.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

Yes, you need a diverse personality. It is the answer. I don't go too easy on people and it really irritates good friends of mine consistently. And so you have to.

If I hadn't been a journalist for a long time, and so brought up that sort of journalistic suit of armor, I wouldn't be able to write the stories that I write.

People get annoyed with me all the time. They love it when I'm writing what's going on with someone that isn't them. They hate it when I write what's going on when it is them. So no, I don't go easy. The pressure is there to go easy.



I actually think I get better stories because I know people. And I like to think that some of them respect me. So I will go to them and say, “Look, this is what I’m intending to write.”

And they start telling me all the reasons why I’m wrong and I will try and take from that a fair response. So I think, I’ll say no one’s mad or evil or terrible. They occasionally make mistakes or they do the wrong thing.

So I try and balance it. I put a little bit, if you can call it toning down, toning down to it. I take out the stronger words because I’ve learned a little bit of the other side.

JIM TRENGROVE:

You know, there’s an interesting story that I must say that Kieren, when he started at ICANN. A lot of people don’t know. They’re always curious about how did this journalist become part of the ICANN staff.

The guy that brought Kieren in, who has now left ICANN, was going to London to sit down and do a gab fest with various reporters.

Everybody at ICANN staff at that time said to him, “Don’t go near Kieren McCarthy. Just don’t go near him.”

We all know why now. But the guy sat down and talked to Kieren for an hour and offered you the job shortly after that, right?



KIEREN MCCARTHY:

Yes, Paul was told, so I want to find out what's going on. And they said, "Whatever you do, don't talk to Kieren." Of course Paul was a perverse character so he immediately spoke to me. And I told him exactly what was going on behind the scenes.

He said, "Oh, that doesn't ring true. That's not what I've been told." I said, "I'll see you at the next meeting. If it's true, let's talk." And he walked straight over to me at the next meeting and said, "Everything you told me was true."

Then he offered me a job and I said no way. He said come and you've been bitching about this organization for years. Why don't you put your money where your mouth is? I said no, you must be out of your mind because ICANN is dysfunctional.

And he got all upset because apparently he'd already had a fight with the chairman about whether to offer the job to me. And Chairman said, "Don't offer a job to him. He's a nightmare." And he'd already gotten permission to do it and then he was really put out when I said, "No way I'm taking it."

Then he sort of just needled me because at that stage I had just been sucked in. I think everyone in this room has been sort of sucked into ICANN, for good reasons. And I'd been sucked in at that point. And I'm still here.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Kev, I'm sorry. You wanted to say something and I took it off track.



KEVIN MURPHY:

No, I was just going to. I think any people who regularly read me and Kieren will probably say that I'm a little less about the personalities behind the stories. So I tend to focus on the ideas and the arguments.

Anybody who read me and Kieren over the last couple of years will know that Kieren was extremely hard on Rod Beckstrom and I was able to give him an easy time.

In a small community, there's no real need to go after the person. I think you can go after the idea or the argument.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

Can I respond to that? I've always had a strong belief that no matter what the story it always comes down to the person. I find business journalism quite tedious because they write as if these decisions are made by robots or by machines.

It's always a person making a call or a person leading a team. It's a difference in journalism. Kev writes it's very useful. I'm much more, that's the star that I have.

I've always written about who the people are behind the stories. Maybe I should be a profile journalist rather than sort of a tech journalist. But it's a different style.

I think you do write behind there's always people making those calls, always people making decisions.



JOHN BERARD:

Good afternoon. I'm John Berard. I'm a member of the BC and an Independent Communications Consultant in San Francisco. I don't have a question, but I want to offer two bits of sad, historical data.

The Chicago Tribune paid attention to the Internet and ICANN when Barackobama.com fell out of registration and was captured in the secondary market.

And the Washington post got tuned into ICANN when its domain fell out of registration and they wondered where the publication went online.

I would hesitate to think that that would be a good strategy for ICANN to take perhaps. But it does seem to require that kind of significant event for mainstream journalism to take a bit out of ICANN.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well, I'm waiting to see if there'll be a fight. Is it Demand Media that applied for .democrat and .republican? And I'm just waiting for the RNC and the DNC to wake up to that fact.

I called them on the day that the list came out. I couldn't find anybody who had a clue what I was talking about. I tried to explain what ICANN was, no just nothing. But I'm waiting for that to get attention.



KIEREN MCCARTHY:

I want to say that as well. When the list came out, I thought we're minted for the next couple of months. We know everyone; I can just put these calls in there. Everyone's going to be all over this.

This is terrific, and nothing. How many were there? There were 1,930. How many big brands honestly sent regrets? Thanks, people didn't want stories.

That was kind of disappointing. I thought people would be all over it. They just weren't because people haven't got it yet.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Steve.

STEVE DELBIANCO:

Steve DelBianco, Kieren and Kevin, you said the number one story. And Juliana did a big one on National Journal in July. You said the number one story is the notion of generic keyword top level domains that are closed.

Sometimes most of which are controlled by American companies, several hundred of them. Some of which are going to be closed by a company with market power in the market they're in, like Priceline running a .hotels.

So if those are the number one stories, you have an opportunity, golden opportunity this week, to probe the only two ways that ICANN gets in the way of those applications.



The first is whatever members of the GAC or just across the street there and ask them whether they intend to file objections of any kind, or early warnings.

And the other is ask us at ICANN and the board whether they'll grant the exemption that those companies will have to ask for because you know they have to ask for an exemption from the code of conduct to run it closed.

At that point, ICANN is supposed to decide whether their exemption is in the public interest. You guys know a lot about what the public's interested in, but it'd be great to understand what the public interest will be in granting that exemption. So I think that story has a lot of legs.

KEVIN MURPHY:

I've actually been working on that this week. Even if you get, this is going into ICANN policy territory here rather than journalism.

But it seems that even if you don't get the exemption, if your registry services tie your TLD to a particular product and it's free, no registrar is going to want to carry it anyway.

So there's a huge loophole there to drive through. Even if you don't get your exemption from the Code of Conduct, in practice you've got it. I haven't written that yet, but I'm getting there.



KIEREN MCCARTHY:

I think with the early warning, and this may well be with the (inaudible) so far in this community that it's ridiculous. With the early warning systems I know the issues that are going on in the GAC with the discussions about the early warnings.

In terms of actually what they're going to say, they don't know yet. There are in fact a bunch of governments freaking out because they've just been told their name will be put on it. A lot of them thought, "Well, I'm going to object to .gay." and it would just be the GAC objects to .gay and they've been informed by the Chair. It's got to be your named government objects to .gay.

This has caused some reassessment which I think, I don't know if that was accidental or brilliant on the part of the GAC Chair. But it's certainly, so you don't know. You just never know what's going to happen. They've got a 16th of November date when they're going to bring out these early warnings. At that point there might be a story. So I pitched this now to a national newspaper I know pretty well, which is *The Guardian* of the UK.

I pitched this to them now and there's probably a 20% chance they'll go for it. They say "It's more of a feature." I said "Oh, do you want a feature then?" No, we don't want a feature on it. So, there's an opportunity, if there's something really spicy, like Saudi Arabia. It's likely or suggested it might object to .catholic in Arabic. That's a spicy story. And there's a couple more, which I won't tell everyone about, so I can actually get a scoop.



JIM TRENGROVE:

Sir.

PETER KNIGHT:

Peter Knight for the record again. In reaching the general public a specialized press may be very interested in dot this and names and numbers, and all of that.

But if it comes to issues like the balkanization of the Internet, then what is the IGF and the WIKIS or whatever it is, going to do? What is that mean for the average citizen in terms of access the information whether it's in Countries like ours or in China or in Iran or Syria.

I would think that be a hotter topic for reaching the broader public. And there's a paper that I'm sure you have access to so called 3R paper, but that's to me is touching on some, that interests me.

I'm a public policy economist type, come in here because I'm interested in the Internet for promoting kind of like in social development that are raising sustainability issues, things like that.

I would think those would be stories that might reach the broader public and might have more potential than rights over domain names.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well, you mentioned WICED, which is the conference that will take place, the ITU the international Telecommunication Union



Conference that will take place in Dubai in December. We've written about that a lot because there's a lot of interest about it in Washington.

There's a lot of concern. Bipartisan concern, which is rare to find an issue where there's Bipartisan support for anything. But that's one, there's a lot of Bipartisan concern about what happened at that meeting, as far as any new regulation of the Internet.

The issues there if I'm not mistaken, have been less conducive to ICANN. But they've also expressed support for the multi-stakeholder model, and that has to benefit ICANN.

JIM TRENGROVE:

That support that, the statements of support for the multi-stakeholder model only occurred after ICANN went to both the house and the center.

That's fairly recent where these officials are coming out with these very hearty sort of endorsements of our model. Did you think that was a long time that took too long for that to come forth?

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

You mean that support? I think it came out of trying to have a counter argument to take to the high CU. Look this is working. Everybody can participate. They needed people to point to.



JIM TRENGROVE: Because that seems like something that has never moved Capitol Hill, that argument.

JULIANA GRUENWALD: Well, it's a convenient argument so they're going to use it.

KIEREN MCCARTHY: With the WICED thing which I think is fascinating because that's my field. In this case it was the tail wagging the dog. The U.S. Government made a very concerted propaganda effort to get the press to write about it.

And they've really worked hard. They started off with David Gross as Ex-Ambassador, wrote in a little tech journal. Then they had really strong speeches from FTC commission I think it was...

TOM O'TOOLE: FCC

KIEREN MCCARTHY: Or FCC commissioners, then Strickland, the Assistant, he wrote one of the really strong speeches. And they were piling it in then Vanity Fair finally bit and they've got other people.

But I mean there was a concerted effort on the part of the U.S. Government and they're playing a very smart game which is



exactly what they did in 1988. They're making it very, very big. So that when they're in the ITU, they can pressure on the government.

So it's the right strategy. But that would really, the tail wagging the dog. No one gave a damn before they started doing that and I was boring the hell out of people saying the ITU. Oh the ITU again.

No, the UN is not taking over the Internet. This is a dead story. It was only the third time that the US government got on the New York Times I think it got in the column and everyone was like "Whoa, why didn't you tell us about this WICED." Off you go so...

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

There's like a forum on that I'd say every other week in D.C on the WICED. In fact I've gotten asked to moderate one in November on it. It's like every other; it's become a huge issue.

KEVIN MURPHY:

Yeah, I agree, it was like they had a meeting on January one of this year and just wanted to talk about it. Well, it's good for ICANN, because if WICED didn't exist...

JIM TRENGROVE:

It would've been better before the hearings but. I'm sorry, go ahead, Tom. I'm just curious, you guys started talking and I want to ask this question in the context of each of your different



targeted readerships. What New g applications are you following closely? What's on your radar that you're tuned in to?

TOM O'TOOLE:

I didn't hear the question but...

JIM TRENGROVE:

What New g apps are you particularly focused on? What do you see as being potentially big stories for you guys in the context of your selected reader ships? I realize, Kevin that the bottom is process, right?

KEVIN MURPHY:

Well, I'm focusing all of them as much as that's possible. The contested ones will seem more interesting, the conflict, that equals news. The ones that the ones like .padagonia that potentially have the political implication of the geographic names.

Ones that have a specific regulatory impact like .bank, I guess you could go all the way down to .food there. Some people say that .food should only be administered by the FDA or something, I don't know.

All those kind of one, but people, suddenly you're waking up to the fact that the word that represents their interest or industry is suddenly going to fall in the hands of some startup in Vancouver or where ever. They're all interesting; they're a hell of a lot more than uninteresting.



JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well, I'd say for us, for anyone's at raise free speech issues, anything that the governments are objecting to the political ones are obviously interesting to us.

And also the ones that are going to cause industry fights, like Google and Amazon fighting over what is about a dozen names, you guys that they both filed for?

I lost count. So those are the ones that I'll be watching. But I'm sure I'll be surprised by some too that'll pop up and I'll be like "Oh."

TOM O'TOOLE:

Yeah, most of our readers are attorneys in there, intellectual property attorneys. And mostly they're interested in stopping them. So they're very interested in the process, in the objection process.

It's no secret that a lot of the business community would be happier if the Internet didn't exist and if the number of domain names could stay the same where it was manageable. So all this change by default, they're against it.

JIM TRENGROVE:

I'm just curious, and this is a question for both of you, Tom and you Juliana. Are New gTLDs understood in D.C.? I mean we, again we appear to be, before plus the House of Representatives and the setup, both sides of the hill.



And my sense in intending both of those hearings was that there wasn't a great deal of understanding about New gTLDs or the process of New gTLDs. How it came about and how it was going.

TOM O'TOOLE:

It's still a system of tubes in Washington.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Did you say you didn't think, that you did not think there was a lot of understanding?

JIM TRENGROVE:

Yes, I did.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Okay. I mean this is so far in the weeds. When they're dealing with the fiscal cliff, this is just low on the totem pole. Congress gets interested in ICANN I'd say every few years. You know, I'd say every other year or something.

A bunch of people write to them and so then they are persuaded to hold a hearing and then that's how it ends up on those radars. There are some people; there are some members that do get it.

As we say, the incoming Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Bob Goodlad , I would say is somebody who

probably understands, who would understand ICANN better than most other people.

I think Steve agrees with me on that. Somebody like Ron Wyden, he's a Senator from Oregon, who was big in the fight against SOPA and Protect IP. He probably gets it.

I'm just throwing out a couple names right there. But the vast majority, they have so many other issues to deal with.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Yeah, I just want to speak to that and Steve will tell you if I'm right on this too. When I look back on all of the hearings that Congress has had on ICANN, I think all of them were inspired by Trademark owners who were upset by what ICANN was doing.

There might have been a couple relating to competition issues with the redelegation.com or .net but back when ICANN was created in 98 or 97 and there was the Green Paper and all that.

I don't think Congress ever took a look at Internet governance or ICANN. They just could not wrap their head around it. It was good what Department of Commerce and IRA Magazine were doing.

That's good. Go ahead and do that. We don't have to deal with it. So as a country, we haven't really worked through any of these issues and they've all been thrown in ICANN's lap.

So all of this tossing about that we're doing here is because Congress didn't want to do it, that's what you guys are here for.



PAUL FOOTY:

Hello gentlemen, Paul Footy again. Just to talk about the Senate Committee hearings. There was one speaker at one of the Senate Committee hearings, Paul Stahura, whose company Donuts has applied for I think it was 300 New gTLDs.

That, and the fact that Peter Dengate Thrush now runs a company that applied for 100. Surely those are major, major stories. For the main media, please Kieren rather than those.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

No I'm all right. The Peter Dengate Thrush story was kind of frustrating for me because I actually thought it was terrible and a big story. But I've been bitten so many times like what I thought was interesting wasn't interesting to anyone else.

So I heard people complaining and bitching and I thought nothing of it. Then it took off, mostly again because the IP lawyers who were like, "We're not happy with this." And so this is corruption. So they put it up in Washington and suddenly it became a story.

Before I knew it, they're the ones who have written about it. I had the inside scoop and just thought nobody would be interested. So that was a big story. That actually was probably ICANN's biggest story in terms of organizational story rather than gTLD story.



That was actually a big story in D.C. and that will be in the collective memory. That will keep coming up again and again and again, not in a good way.

JULIANA GRUENWALD:

Well and I know some of the trademark critics of the New gTLD programs. They raise that issue to me in almost every conversation I had on the New gTLDs, the Peter Dengate Thrush issue. I know I had mentioned it.

Did I do a whole story on it, probably not, probably getting down in the weeds a little bit? There was a story in the Washington Post though; I think it was last month, about Donuts. It was front page as I recall and it was a good story.

JIM TRENGROVE:

We've got time for one more question if anybody has a final question, otherwise. Oh, I'm sorry Kev. We've got time for one more question. Otherwise, we'll wrap it.

TOM O'TOOLE:

I'll ask a question. And I'll ask it to Steve and to all the other journalists here. I'm kind of a non-believer when it comes to domain names. I know that people have a First Amendment right to have any domain they want.

But I'm surprised at all this agony that ICANN is going through over these new domain names. And I wonder and it's not a rhetorical question.



Does anybody think that these new domains will be like the existing domains that we have like .jobs or .travel? I couldn't imagine two sleepier places on the Internet.

Or all of the stories we wrote about Triple X, we're all here, we've all got our clothes on. Nobody is having sex in this room. It had the same impact on pornography that .kids had on goodness in children.

And I'm wondering, have we made too big of a story about this? I really would like to hear from Kieren and everybody else.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

No, but there's going to be five years of total confusion. Then everyone will get used to the concept of an Internet domain name having a different ending and that having some value. I mean, it's not going to be huge.

It's the same way that, I'm going to use an iPhone analogy again. Before we had the iPhone, you had tiny rubbish screens and the little buttons all the time.

Then the iPhone came out, it's like, "Oh!" and everyone was very excited for a time. And now, it's just how life is. It's going to be the same with gTLDs. It's going to be how life is.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Will I be able to blog outside of .blog or read a book outside of .book, of course right?



KIEREN MCCARTHY: Yeah.

TOM O'TOOLE: Okay.

KIEREN MCCARTHY: But I think it'll be a big story for a short period of time and then part of life.

TOM O'TOOLE: Right. Okay, me too.

JULIANA GRUENWALD: I think it's definitely worth following. Look at the money that's being put into this. Any time you have that kind of money going in, as a journalist you have to follow it.

I don't think we've made too big of a deal of it right now. Where it's going to be in five years, who knows? How many people have a .info address or a .biz. I mean, there's not a lot.

KIEREN MCCARTHY: Is the question is it are we making too big of a deal out of it?

TOM O'TOOLE: I know that I've been writing about it and a lot of people have been talking about it as if there's going to be this sea change.



And Google is going to corner the market on blogs and it's going to be big. And I just wonder if it is. Maybe I'm exposing a flaw in my own thinking.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

The big difference this time is that companies like Google are involved. Prior it was the industry insiders pick and also there's a benefit this time around that everybody gets to learn from the mistakes of the last two rounds.

I mean, .travel is basically nowhere and .museum has its 400 domains I think it has. But an outfit like .jobs is doing some interesting things. We've expanded space.

We're not widely known, but the newcomers can sort of learn from the successes and failures of the previous generations and they might be bigger. There're more of them as well.

TOM O'TOOLE:

Well, how about this. Before the new gTLDs initiative, the GAC was very small and not very powerful and they had a strictly advisory role. Now, the GAC is very big and they're very much in the board's business and I'm wondering if five years from now it will have been worth it.

KIEREN MCCARTHY:

Well, I think that's a good thing that GAC's gotten more involved so I confess the whole reason I'm in this world is to stop governments from taking control of the Internet.



The GAC has been a very useful advisor and in fact they've shown their value quite significantly. They've got a scorecard which quite frankly found a lot of holes that the community hadn't found.

And they're providing these early warnings and they're being made to do work which is not something the government's all that keen on.

And made to work with one another and then give advice to the board so the governments are actually in and of themselves accepting this subservient role which if I think that's terrific if we can make it work. Because that means we're not saying we're in charge.

So I actually think, I mean there're risks, but I actually think it's a good thing because it's commercial, because people are trying to put money in it. If we were talking about Social Security at the moment, we'd be in serious trouble.

But then we're adding bits to the Internet and making money. And government can't say we must be in charge of this because they want to go nuts.

So I think we're building a system in which government has a very strong voice but won't be in charge. I think that's good.

JIM TRENGROVE:

Sir?



KEVIN MURPHY:

In this case, I think it's mainly porn that's brought them on board as well. The reason that they're getting all paranoid is because last year they didn't want .xxx to happen and it happened anyway.

Now they're thinking, "Oh, we should probably have paid more attention to this in the first place and put in earlier."

Every government has a policy on porn and .xxx is much like pornography revolutionized, popularized video cassettes in the 80s. It's kind of bringing the domain name system together now.

JIM TRENGROVE:

We've got to wrap this thing up. They need the room, last comment over here.

RAY FASSETT:

Ray Fassett, I'm with .jobs. I don't think it should be lost. There's only like 22 gTLDs now and I don't think it should be lost on the media that just with the few that are out there now.

When you talk about sea change, who knows what's really going to happen. But we have two examples in .xxx and .jobs where significant established commercial players primarily in .com have felt themselves significant threat from the new top level domains.



And .xxx and .jobs spending millions and millions of dollars on legal fees to try to stop them from exercising their business rights, I don't think that that should be lost in the media.

JIM TRENGROVE:

We've got to shut down. We have to vacate the room for the next session. Thanks to all of you folks for coming and taking part in this.

Just out of curiosity, was this a worthwhile session for you guys? Show of hands, would something like this be worth repeating? Okay, cool. Thank you very much. Thanks guys.

[End of Transcript]

