Liz Gasster, Senior Policy Counselor

GNSO Council Open Meeting
4 March 2009
Discussion Topics:

1) WHOIS Studies Update
2) WHOIS & Directory Services
3) WHOIS Usage & Display: Support for Local Languages & Scripts
WHOIS Studies: Background

- WHOIS is the data repository containing registered domain names, registrant contacts and other critical information.
- Questions persist concerning the use and misuse of this important resource.
- Oct. 2007: GNSO Council decided that a comprehensive, objective understanding of key facts on WHOIS will benefit future policy development and initiated steps to determine what studies should be done.
- Public input was solicited; roughly 24 proposals were received from the public.
- In April the GAC submitted roughly 15 additional study proposals
WHOIS Studies: Recent Activities

GNSO Constituencies and Council discussed which studies, if any, should be assessed for cost and feasibility. Draft motion identifies six initial study areas:

1) Extent to which WHOIS data is misused to generate spam or other illegal or undesirable activities;
2) The growing use of non-ASCII character sets in WHOIS records and whether this will detract from data accuracy and readability;
3) Extent to which proxy and privacy services are being used for abusive and/or illegal purposes, and complicate investigation into e-crimes;
4) Extent to which proxy and privacy services respond to information requests when presented with reasonable evidence of actionable harm;
5) Whether legal persons and/or those registering names for a commercial purpose are providing inaccurate WHOIS data implying they are natural persons or registering for a non-commercial purpose; and
6) Whether proxy/privacy services are used by registrants who are legal vs. natural persons and whether most information requests are directed at registrants who are natural persons
WHOIS Studies: Next Steps

The Council will vote today on a set of initial studies to evaluate:

- Council requests staff to conduct research and cost estimates and report back to the Council
- Staff is invited to develop creative ways to develop cost estimates, including reformulations of suggested hypotheses
- Staff will provide cost estimates/feasibility assessments
- Council and Staff will then consider what studies should be pursued
WHOIS & Directory Services

- SSAC issued two key reports last year:
  - SAC 027 (7 Feb 2008) SSAC Comment to GNSO regarding WHOIS studies
  - SAC 033 (20 Jun 2008) Registration Information and Directory Services
- WHOIS protocol is inadequate in areas of authentication, data accuracy, data confidentiality, and data integrity
- Limitations of WHOIS protocol and variability among WHOIS implementations contribute to the poor quality of registration data
- Recommend a combination of policy development and adoption of a uniform directory service to provide much needed security services.
- SAC033
  - Identifies features common to public/private directory services and discusses how such features could benefit the domain name community
  - Proposes a methodology: study public/private directories and use findings to identify requirements for domain name related data
WHOIS Usage & Display: Support for Local Languages & Scripts

- New SSAC document (SAC 037)
- IDN standards apply to domain name composition
- Many Internet applications support characters from local languages or scripts
- Today there is no standard that addresses how registration contact information is submitted and displayed in WHOIS
  - This is left as a local matter for registrars and registries
  - Over time, more contact information will be displayed in non US-ASCII character sets
WHOIS Usage and Display (Cont’d):
Support for Local Languages & Scripts

- Are there principles that registries and registrars could adopt to minimize potential negative impact?
- Should the ICANN community consider a new protocol that can better accommodate future needs?
- SSAC Recommendations:
  - Sydney Workshop: opportunity to engage affected communities in Asia-Pacific region; examine possible means to support local characters
  - Consider Cross-SO/AC Working Group to study with IETF
WHOIS: Links & References

- GNSO WHOIS activities: [http://gnso.icann.org/issues/whois/](http://gnso.icann.org/issues/whois/)
- GAC WHOIS study recommendations of 16 April: [http://www.icann.org/correspondence/karlins-to-thrush-16april08.pdf](http://www.icann.org/correspondence/karlins-to-thrush-16april08.pdf)
- Priority ratings of WHOIS studies from constituencies: [https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?whois_discussion](https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?whois_discussion)
- Current draft working definitions of terms for WHOIS studies: [https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?whois_references](https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?whois_references)
- Text of current WHOIS motion: [https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?whois_references](https://st.icann.org/gnso-council/index.cgi?whois_references)