

navigate ICANN's policies

SAN JUAN – ICANN GDD: Registrants - Understanding the issues facing them and helping them navigate ICANN's policies

Thursday, March 15, 2018 – 09:15 to 10:15 AST

ICANN61 | San Juan, Puerto Rico

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: March 15, 2018. ICANN GDD: Registrants – Understanding the Issues. 103B. It is 9:15 in the morning.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Good morning, everyone. This is Brian Gutterman, ICANN Org for the record. Thanks for everyone joining here in San Juan. And for those listening on the audio stream, unfortunately, we don't have Adobe Connect today in this room due to some disruptions here in Puerto Rico over the last couple of days.

However, we do have a way for you to participate by e-mailing questions or comments to an e-mail address which I will read off now. It is ICANN61-103B@icann.org. That's ICANN61-103B@icann.org. You can access the presentation we'll be showing here in the room via the ICANN schedule. It will also be uploaded to the Registrant Program home page in ICANN.org which is icann.org/registrants.

So we will have a recording of this for anybody who will be accessing this later on. Thank you for listening in if that's you.

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

So today, we will be making a short presentation and then opening up the floor for questions and comments about the ICANN Org Registrant Program.

So quickly, for those who have not heard about the Registrant Program, we presented on this at ICANN60 in Abu Dhabi and that presentation is also available which gives some more background, but something that is very important to remember if you're going to take anything away from this is that ICANN, since its inception, has always supported registrants in various ways, whether that's through the compliance activities, through our 24/7 amazing Global Support Center, and in other ways.

However, this particular program was launched last year and is meant to streamline the efforts and the work across the organization to hopefully become more efficient in our servicing of registrants.

So for the purpose of this presentation this morning, we've divided our work into two general streams, the first of which is education. So what we mean by this is that we've been publishing content on ICANN.org written specifically for registrants. So we've been trying to write in a way that will resonate with registrants who might not know anything about the Domain Name System or about ICANN, which is the majority

of your everyday registrants who might just have a website, whatever it is they use their domain name for.

And the purpose of this content is to help them become more informed participants of the Domain Name System, to help them understand their rights and obligations and to help them better understand how the ICANN policies that are developed here at these meetings year round impact them and their day-to-day management of their domain names.

So the other track of work that we'll speak to is sort of more of our long-term goals for the program and this is the work being carried out across the organization towards identifying and raising awareness about some of the issues and challenges that registrants are facing.

So we'll begin with the education efforts. Again, our homepage which is this next slide can be accessed at [ICANN.org/registrar](https://icann.org/registrar) and this is a page of resources available for registrants, again, about their rights and responsibilities, information about the Domain Name System, how they can manage their domain names, meaning registration, renewals and transfers. We also have information here about where registrants can go to submit complaints or contact our global support team directly. We have links to frequently asked questions about topics and

information pertinent to registrants and the policies that impact them.

This is also where we'll be publishing new content moving forward and it's our hope that this will become a go-to resource for registrants when they have questions about managing their domain name and about ICANN and what we do.

The next slide here shows some traffic, some internal data about web traffic we get at ICANN.org. So this is just a quick snapshot of some of the top unique page views from January of 2018 of this year and what we think is that this shows at least some demand on behalf of registrants for this type of content. So they're coming and they're reading about, not only they're going to our homepage about registrants but they're reading about their rights and responsibilities, policies that impact them like the WDRP, the WHOIS data reminder policy. They're reading about the RAA, EPP status codes and more.

So what we believe and we're tracking this sort of traffic and the attention that our content is getting to make sure it's resonating and that people are finding it useful.

The next slide is just a quick snapshot of some of the key messages that we've published in our blogs and other materials. And so, if you're sort of maybe an ICANN insider or a domain

investor, some of this information might seem trivial to you. However, we believe that the vast majority of registrants who have domain names really are sometimes unaware of these sorts of things and this is also based on information we get from our internal teams, from our Global Support Center and our Compliance teams, that they are hearing these sorts of questions, sometimes very basic questions about their domain names, the registrants are confused about.

So for example, some of the key messages, as a domain name registrant, you have certain rights and responsibilities. These rights include access to information from your registrar regarding processes for registering, managing, transferring, renewing and restoring your domain name registration. It's important to keep your registrant contact information associated with your registration up to date at all times. This is to ensure that you receive important notifications about your domain name.

While ICANN is responsible for making sure that registrars verify and validate WHOIS information which includes your contact information you provide them, ICANN itself does not and cannot verify or update WHOIS information. You must contact your registrar to do this.

Also as a domain name registrant, it is actually one of your rights to transfer your domain name to another registrar or registrant and to have access to the necessary information from your registrar regarding the process for doing so.

Here is a list of some of the content you can find, again, at [ICANN.org/registrar](https://icann.org/registrar). There will be a new blog coming next week to look out for. This is one way in which registrants can protect their domain name from unauthorized transfers which is unfortunately a recurring issue for some registrants.

I wanted to pause here to see if there was any questions about the educational effort in the room or online. Again, anybody on the audio bridge can use the e-mail address we provided at the beginning of the session to send questions and comments and I'll be happy to answer those after the fact if need be. Okay.

So the next part of this presentation is more about our longer term goals for the program, which is about identifying and raising awareness both inside and outside of the community about the issues and challenges that registrants are facing.

So what we are doing internally now is collecting and taking a closer look at data from various sources including our Compliance team, our Global Support Center, our Complaints

Office and other sources which have touch points with registrants.

So an example of this type of data here on the slide here in the room is some data from our Compliance team, which shows a breakdown of the complaints received against registrars by our Compliance team from January of this year. Of course, we know that not all complaints come from registrants. However, we do know that many of the complaints received related to issues such as WHOIS inaccuracy, domain name deletions, renewals and transfers, for example, do come from registrants.

The next slide here is a snapshot of the most recent compliance quarterly report from Q4 2017 and this takes a look at the complaint types related to transfers, the amount of complaints they received for the month and what did it mean, what about transfers are registrants having problems with? Is it something about the policy? Is there something that registrars can maybe do to improve the process of transferring domain names? So that's what this slide illustrates and it's an example of the kind of deeper analysis that we are trying to get to, to surface issues that registrants are having to try and spark some discussion about it.

To present the next couple of slides, I'd like to give the floor to my colleague, Michaela Quinzy. Thanks for joining us, Michaela.

She's the Senior Director and Head of the ICANN Global Support Center.

MICHAELA QUINZY:

Hello, everyone. So ICANN has historically fielded inquiries from registrants and other users and interested Internet individuals over time. And back in 2015, we decided to start fielding those inquiries in a standard and repeatable way through one contact center. And that gave us the ability to track and monitor and ensure consistency in the responses that we were given.

Since then, we have tended to field 700 to 800 inquiries a month with some spikes throughout the year and a lower volume during the holiday season.

Recently, with the implementation of our new portal and ticket tracking system, we've also began tracking inquiries according to region. So historically, we've been able to track who fielded an inquiry but not where the inquiry came from. And so the first chart, the larger chart, is a demonstration of the volume in six month increments since January of 2015 through December of 2017, and the smaller pie chart is a representation of where our volume is coming from.

So I don't think there are any surprises here. It lines up fairly closely with what we see in registration. But I thought it was interesting information to track and understand.

But things that typically impact our volume or drive our volume are registrants are not really aware of who they are, their role in the domain name ecosystem, how to get help, what their responsibilities are, and so we spend a good proportion of our time on education and providing them with the information that they need to either get help or fulfill their commitments.

We see some fluctuality in volume, as I mentioned, due to some seasonality and then recently, we've seen some spikes and some decreases. I'll talk a little bit more about it later. Decreases, I think, are somewhat from the effort of the Registrant Program. But increases that we've seen are around content and fraud-type complaints and we also recently implemented the Complaints Office. And I think that the implementation of that in providing additional entry points into the organization has affected the way the work flows, and so we're seeing that individuals that would have normally gone straight to Compliance because there's more information out there, they're making use of it and finding their way to global support as well. So next slide.

So this slide represents kind of the trends that we saw in the second half of 2017. We tend to see our largest volume of inquiries are simply questions about how to manage your domain, who do I contact, what is a registrant, what is a registrar, who is a reseller, why do I have to talk to them. WHOIS verification issues and problems with suspended domains are our second-highest volume, rights, protection and transfer issues. And this is an area where we've seen a slight increase over the second half of last year and also in content and fraud and phishing issues, have also seen a slight increase. As expected, new gTLD inquiries, while we get them, the volume of them are decreasing over time.

So we're always amazed at how resourceful registrants are in finding their way to ICANN. We find that some of them come to us because they're actually referred to us by the reseller or the registrar, either in the literature and notices that they get or sometimes directly from their contact centers. They do, through Internet searches, find the Contact Us page on ICANN.org. Sometimes they find their way to the Complaints Office and are forwarded back to Global Support. And about 70% of the inquiries that come in from registrants are via phone. The remainder are via e-mail.

Generally, we are not able to completely resolve their issues. We more serve an education role. We give them the education that they need to contact the individuals who can really help them. We explain ICANN's role which is very complicated for them to understand and occasionally, we refer them to ICANN's Compliance department if that seems like the most prudent direction for them to go.

As I mentioned before, we've seen increases in the number of fraud content abuse and phishing complaints as well as inquiries around renewals, transfers, and rights protection and ownership abuse. The area of decrease, as I mentioned before, has been in general inquiries related to registrars, and again, we think that that's partly due to the information that Brian and his team have posted in a more viewable way on ICANN.org. Thank you.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Sure. Yeah, do you have a question for Michaela?

GG LEVINE: Yes, thank you. This is GG Levine with NAPP. You mentioned that you are receiving an increasing number of complaints in regard to content and fraud and that sort of thing, and what we've heard repeatedly is that that's outside of ICANN's remit. So what

navigate ICANN's policies

do you tell them? What kind of resources can you provide for those complainants?

MICHAELA QUINZY:

It sounds like you have answered a few of those calls yourself. Yes, we tell them that those types of issues are outside of our remit. We give them information about a number of resources and generally tell them that they may need to contact local law enforcement or work with their registrar, but that ICANN is not able to assist them in those issues.

GG LEVINE:

Just a quick follow-up, if you are getting increasing numbers of complaints in that regard, would it make sense to develop some kind of resources to provide to assist those inquiries?

MICHAELA QUINZY:

I think education and awareness is always important, but I think there's a fine line and ICANN needs to work within its remit and we're very careful not to step outside of where we can actually be of assistance.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Thanks for those questions. Again, for those of you who might have joined in the last few minutes, we don't have Adobe Connect. However, there is an avenue to send questions and comments in. That's ICANN61-103B@icann.org. The session is also being recorded. There is an audio bridge, so we will have a record and we will be posting this discussion.

So this next slide here is another example of some of the deeper data analysis that we are doing our best to undertake and this slide uses Global Support Center data, so data from Michaela's team about transfer. So this looks at just 90 complaints which isn't a lot, but does show a pretty good snapshot between July and December of last year and it shows some of the reasons why registrants are having issues with transfer. So they don't have their auth info code. They are having a hard time getting a hold of their registrar for one reason or another. Sometimes there is a lock placed on their domain name, a 60-day lock due to the transfer policy.

What we're trying to understand here is why is it that there's problems. Is there something in the policy? Is there something that we can do, the community can do, the contracted parties can do, to help registrants better manage their domain names?

We have a question.

ANDEE HILL:

We have a question e-mailed. This is Andee Hill from ICANN staff.

John [Poole] sent in a question that said, “Where’s the data showing geographical distribution by country and ICANN region of domain name registrations and domain name registrants? Without this data, we only have a partial picture, often misleading of the data you’re presenting this morning.” He repeats, “Where is the data? Are you collecting? Where are you publishing this data or are you keeping it secret?”

MICHAELA QUINZY:

I agree. The data is only a partial picture. The Global Support Center is attempting to provide assistance to the community by collecting data that might be helpful. A partial reason for me presenting the data is to understand whether or not this is information that is meaningful to the community and whether or not it is helpful for the Global Support Center to collect it.

I agree that this data needs to be compared to registration data, but it is also my belief that we’re always going to have some challenges with the data due to the scale. It’s a very small representation of the registrant community and likely compared to the number of registrations, we could potentially lose something there. So again, we’re experimenting with this data

navigate ICANN's policies

EN

and presenting it for feedback and to make a determination on whether or not it's valuable or useful.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Sure, Michele.

MICHELE NEYLON: Thanks. Just in terms of the volume of complaints around transfers, I mean, I know the data has shown repeatedly based on what we've heard from compliance over the last ten years, etc. that the volume of complaints are in transfers in general is the highest source of complaints and queries, but has there been a demonstrable increase in the number of these inquiries and complaints since the most recent transfer policy change? That's something that you haven't noticed. Thanks.

MICHAELA QUINZY: Again, our volumes are relatively low in comparison to Compliance and if you look at the entire registrant user base. We have within the last year, seen an increase in the volume of transfer-related inquiries and complaints into the Global Support Center. This data represents about 15% of what we saw in January and we've seen a trend up from about 10% year over year.

MICHELE NEYLON: Thanks, Michaela. That's actually very useful because the transfer policy, as you may or may not know, is being discussed at GNSO Council for potential review. So this kind of data is helpful. So if there are more details that you can share with us when we look to do that review, we don't need to know the people's names or anything like that, but more detail if the focus is the lock after the change of registrant, all that kind of thing, that would be helpful because fact-based policymaking is usually better than stuff based on crazy ideas. Thanks.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Absolutely. Thanks for that comment. That's really where we want to go with this, is really to surface the data that we have and if others in the community have different sort of data about transfers, for example, so I don't think it's maybe demonstrable but there has been an uptick and it's just about trying to figure out what the policy means, what are the changes, how is it different, and how are they handling it. So thanks for that comment and it is important to look at data for fact-based policymaking. I think we have another question.

navigate ICANN's policies

ANDEE HILL: We just have a request that you refer to the slide number since they can't match what you're speaking to.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Absolutely. Sorry about that. Okay, moving on and then we can get into more of a discussion, I hope. So next slide, Slide 15.

So what are we going to work on next? What are we trying to focus on?

Again, sharing more information and data with the community on these specific issues that registrants seem to be having and are experiencing, and trying to correlate those problems with ICANN policies. So, trying to get a better understanding if it's the policy or if it's something else that is leading to these problems.

We think it's maybe a lack of education, so that's another thing we're going to try and keep pushing out is educational materials, but really trying to find the intersection of the problems, the pain points that registrants are having and ICANN policies.

Another track of work that we'll be continuing to work on is trying to work with registrars, actually, to package the educational materials in such a way that it might be useful to registrars to use, their customer service teams, to be sure that

navigate ICANN's policies

we're trying to speak in one language when we explain policies to registrants.

So what we will be doing is publishing the educational content that we're producing, FAQs, online on ICANN.org.

Yeah, do you have a question?

MICHELE NEYLON:

Oh, I have many questions. I like where you're going with this. I think it's something that I'm like, "Please do tell me more." How do you plan to communicate the availability of these resources to registrars? Because saying, "It's on ICANN.org," while that might be sufficient if the ICANN.org website only had ten pages bearing in mind that it has significantly more, the likelihood of us actually finding the data is probably slim to none.

If you're going to do that, if you haven't got a way of communicating that to us, please do reach out to myself, or Graham or any of the other regulars and we can share that information with our stakeholder group. Personally, I would love to see some of the stuff and would be happy to work with you if you need help. But this is great.

The other question is in terms of budget and resources for this, how are you fixed?

BRIAN GUTTERMAN:

There won't be any additional resources for this. What we're going to try and do is repackage the educational materials that we are writing through this registrant program for registrars. And thank you for volunteering to help with disseminating this content to registrars. What we think and what we've heard – we've had some preliminary discussions with some registrars – is that perhaps it's actually the smaller registrars which are going to need this the most or maybe find it most useful. The idea is they can use it as customer service, FAQs and Q&A, online resources.

We're going to also be working with our course registrar engagement team to help with the dissemination, but all the help we can get from registrars and we also are going to want feedback once we publish from you to see what's useful and what isn't. So yeah, we're excited about this.

Yeah, Trang.

TRANG NGUYEN:

Thanks Brian, [inaudible]. [Inaudible], I know we've chatted before around this and thank you for your continued support on this.

We've been struggling a little bit actually in terms of how to best package the content that we're publishing for the registrants, for registrar users. So yes, looking at [inaudible], I think we may want to just share with you what we currently have. It may not be in great form, but perhaps, you could provide us with some feedback in order to help us move forward.

MICHELE NEYLON:

Thanks. Well, you know how to find me. No, I mean, seriously, speaking on my own behalf, not on behalf of any larger group, based on what we see as a company, there is always a need for knowledge-based articles, FAQs, plain language explanations of how does this affect us, why do I care, what do I need to do, this kind of thing. There's an endless pit of requirement around that.

In terms of working with you guys on this, there are several of us who are more than happy to exchange e-mails, jump on a phone call. I would say jump on Adobe Connect, but that's kind of no longer allowed. But there's more than one way of doing this and don't be afraid to e-mail me. The worst thing that will happen is that I won't reply. It's not an issue.

But there are a bunch of us who are more than happy to work with you on that because realistically speaking, it's something that's in our own interest. The fewer misunderstandings that

navigate ICANN's policies

EN

there are around some of these things, the less crazy customer support queries we get because we get people coming to us and it's like, "Oh, I read on the ICANN website that I can do X," and it's like, "Well, no. That's not what it says," but I've already lost the entire margin for that interaction because one of my staff had spent 20 minutes replying to them.

MICHAELA QUINZY:

I'd like to add that the Global Support Team finds navigating the ICANN.org website challenging as well, so one of the approaches that we've taken is in our knowledge base. We list the specific question and the link back to the information on ICANN.org to the specific topic and the specific content that we want them to deliver and that's been very helpful in expediting their access to that information. So I think in our approach to disseminating to the registrar community, that we could use a similar method for ensuring that we're aligning on the information and preventing folks from having to read through the website.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN:

Yes, we have a question from ...

navigate ICANN's policies

EN

ANDEE HILL: We had the same question. John [Pool]'s requesting that I restate. His question was, "Where's the data showing geographical distribution by country and ICANN region and of a domain name registration's domain name registrants?"

MICHELE NEYLON: This is Michele speaking as a dirty, filthy registrar. Mr. [Poole]'s question to you is a very odd one considering that you don't hold that data.

TRANG NGUYEN: Thank you for the question from the e-mail. Michele is right. ICANN is not collecting the data in terms of the number of registrants across various ICANN regions. That data is available publicly and there are other sources that do compile that data and information and [until] these stats being potentially one of the resources I know there are some regional organizations that also collect and report on that kind of information, but that is not information that ICANN currently collects and reports. Thank you.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Thanks, Michele and thanks, Trang and thanks for the questions, John.

So what else are we moving on, moving forward? The registrar resources, we will continue to work on and we would love to work with active registrars to improve this content, refine it, try it out, see what's working and what's not, and what's helpful for registrants.

Our engagement with the community, specifically ALAC, NCSG and others, we want to better understand what they are doing in their busy ICANN lives in support of registrants, so we want to have an improved and more active dialogue with them and we encourage these community members to be in touch with us directly about that.

We're going to be continuing to develop new educational materials as I mentioned. Next week, we'll be publishing something on how to prevent unauthorized transfers. We collaborated with our security folks on that one, but it's trying to be written in such a way that registrants can understand it, not too technical.

And finally, another question.

MICHELE NEYLON:

Sorry. Michele again driving you nuts, I know, with questions. If you're going to be putting out information such as preventing

authorized transfers, are you liaising with registrars to check that content before you put it live?

BRIAN GUTTERMAN:

We are actually publishing it without consulting the contracted parties first. We're using our sort of internal subject matter expertise to write content in such a way that is accurate and fact-based.

TRANG NGUYEN:

Thanks, Brian if I can chime in. Can I answer your question, Michele? Thank you.

Yeah, this piece of [inaudible] that Brian just mentioned is really around tips on what you can do to potentially prevent bad actors from taking action on sort of your domain name registration, things like make sure you don't use the same password in your account and in your various accounts across various domain name registrations, things like talk to your registrar about locks and those types of options. So it's about tips on what to do, general common sense tips to do in managing and protecting your domain name registration.

navigate ICANN’s policies

EN

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yeah, thanks. The reason I mention is a document was prepared by, I’m not too sure which department, reporting to cover a particular topic and it left out a fundamental piece of information and I don’t know if it’s been updated because it’s not my job to fix your content but it was like, if you had run it past us, we would have gone, “Okay, you might want to mention this key bit of information in that process because it’s not going to work without it.”

TRANG NGUYEN: Thanks, and if you could share with us what that specific piece is, we can definitely look into it. Thanks.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN: Okay, thank you, and also further disseminating the content, creating more awareness about the educational content, working with registrars and community members to really make sure that people are aware about this work, registrants around the world.

Something else we heard during our last session that we really are trying to work on is trying to understand, the best we can, the user experience of the registrant, not the registrant with hundreds of domain names who knows all the policies inside and out, but really the registrant next door who has a website

and doesn't really know anything about ICANN, really try and get in their shoes and understand what it's like to be a registrant and trying to measure the impact that the policies are having on registrants and their ability to be active members of the DNS.

So that's it. We're going to continue to work on making our services more efficient internally to best service registrants. Actually, our Complaints Officer recently published a report. I encourage everybody to read that about her experience as a Complaints Officer over the past six months, which has some useful suggestions about how we can work to better service anyone coming to ICANN.org with questions or problems.

Of course, our Information Transparency Initiative, the ITI, is a longer term project across the organization working to help folks that are coming to ICANN.org for various things, so we hope that will also improve the registrant experience.

And with that, please if you want to access this recording and this session, we'll be posting it online right after this meeting on the registrant page, ICANN.org/registrar. I guess open it up to the floor. Anybody in the audience want to say anything they are doing for registrants? Any comments? Additional questions? Now is the time.

navigate ICANN's policies

EN

Also, feel free to approach me after the session with anything you want to talk about and thank you for joining.

You have a question?

GG LEVINE:

I just wanted to point out that any of the new gTLDs have a small community of registrants that they serve and may have direct contact with those registrants, so they too would benefit from having access to resources that help registrants understand things like security, SSL, DNSSEC, technical things for the little guys that don't have a big portfolio and a staff to manage them, how to transfer a website to a new gTLD. Technical things for small-time registrants would be a beneficial resource that registry operators could provide to their registrants. Thank you.

BRIAN GUTTERMAN:

Great. Yeah, looking forward to working with you on that. That's absolutely a good idea.

Okay, thank you, everyone. Anybody who sends in additional questions via the e-mail we provided, we'll get back to you on those. And hope you have a great rest of your day here in Puerto Rico.

navigate ICANN's policies

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]