

---

SINGAPORE - WHOIS Clarifications

Wednesday, February 11, 2015 – 17:00 to 18:15

ICANN – Singapore, Singapore

CYRUS NAMAZI: Okay, let's go ahead and begin. I'd like to welcome everyone to this face-to-face session on hopefully hashing out what are the last few remaining open interpretation issues in regards to the format of WHOIS output.

And before I hand it over to Francisco to lead the discussion, I just want to thank all of you — all the participants, contributors — over the course of what I think is now about six, seven months in working with us at the staff side to highlight your perspective and identify the issues that needed discussion. So thank you for that. Hopefully we can go into this discussion with the same open mind, and come out with a mutually acceptable resolution to it. Thanks, and Francisco, please take it away.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Thank you, Cyrus. This is our discussion about the WHOIS advisory or the WHOIS clarifications. Could you advance to the next slide?

This is the agenda that we have for today. A short introduction on what this is, and discussion of open issues, and then we open the floor for questions and answers. Next.

So the WHOIS advisory aims to clarify the requirements. This was started as soon as we started the [inaudible] lease a little bit more than a year ago. We started receiving questions on what people should do on the WHOIS output in both registries and registrars.

---

*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.*

---

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Some people cannot hear you that well. If you speak into the mic...

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Is this better? Okay, so I guess it will be like that.

So we started receiving questions from both registries and registrars. They have a similar WHOIS [aspect]. And we started compiling that, and then we thought that it may be good to compile all the different issues so that we could have a uniform output from the parties.

Then it also important to state that the advisory does not intend to create new requirements [audio break] so we need to allow for certain things to be optional. And also, for example, in the contacts there is the field name and the field organization, so if the registrant or the contact is not an organization, their organization field can be blank. So those are the things that we clarified in here. Can we go to the next slide, please?

This is the output that we have, and in discussions with – mainly registries have been the ones that have been raising this issue. It is two specific fields that have caused the difference in opinion here. Can we go to the next slide?

It's the street and the phone for registrants and contacts. Those are the ones that the feedback we have received in the discussions about the clarification is that these are optional fields in EPP; therefore there is no requirement to show them in WHOIS. However, as we said before the reading of the Spec 4, everything that is there is required, and in the very same EPP standards there's language that clarifies that things that



---

are optional in EPP can be considered required by the registry, depending on the policy. Here, policy in the IETF world means any other requirements beyond technical. So, for example, registry agreement, [inaudible] policy, etc. Could we go to the next slide, please?

The next clarification is 40. Next slide.

This is a similar issue, this time in the case of responses [registrar] object queries. In the Spec 4, the output shows the information of the registrar, two admin contacts, and one technical contact, if memory serves. We are clarifying that it's okay to have only one of each, and you can have multiple if you like. This is how the output will look like, and the feedback we received – next slide, please – is that there should be no requirement to show any contact for the registrars. So the output of [inaudible] would look like what we have there without any of the contacts for the registrar. Next slide.

And finally clarification 18 and 28. These are related. They talk about the uniformity on the output of the queries for the domain names, and particularly that the WHOIS should be a lookup, so you need to know what you're looking for in order to get it. But it's of course in the [inaudible] specific clause for searchability. So if a registry would like to offer searchability, they can do it. And the only thing is it has to be in the web-based WHOIS, not in the [inaudible] WHOIS. That's what is described there. So we can go to the next slide.

This is the prototypical example of what the output of a query for a domain name would look like. And what we have received as feedback is that the partial match should be allowed. So you would have



---

something like this in which when you query for a domain name, you don't get the information of the domain name, but you get a list of host objects, name servers, that are in the registry, and of course eventually the name of the domain name, but not the information. You will need to issue a different type of query which is not specified in registry agreement in order to get the information for that domain name. Can we go to the next slide?

Oh, that was it. Those are the four clarifications in which we are in the discussion right now, the last set of open issues. I don't know, Cyrus, if you would like to say something else, or if we're ready to open.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Thank you, Francisco. I think we should really just open it up for discussion, because that's the purpose of us being here. Perhaps the representatives from the contracted parties or anybody else, for that matter that have any feedback, input, opinions on any of these issues, starting from number one. We can start a queue and go from there.

MICHELE NEYLON:

Just in terms of timelines, assuming that we're able to finalize and clarify definitively — I think this has already been through several iterations of clarifications — what kind of timeline are we looking at so that we can then make potential changes to our WHOIS output, or whatever is required, based on these clarifications? Because for the registrar perspective, the abuse point of contact in the WHOIS output, which is one of the items on this, is something that has been a serious



---

pain point. So having some kind of timeline around that would be helpful.

CYRUS NAMAZI: Thank you, Michele. Our thinking on the staff side has been six months, which is what we had in the original advisory that we posted in September which we then subsequently put on hold in December, but let us know what you think, please.

MICHELE NEYLON: Okay. Do you mean six months from when you publish the advisory or what? He's nodding, just for the transcript.

CYRUS NAMAZI: No, I'll answer. I was going to say six months from last July. Just kidding. No, six months from the time we post it.

MICHELE NEYLON: Just in terms of timelines, it's just that in the case of some advisories and some policy changes, we can implement from the moment that you publish it, or that the policy is finalized. I just want to know that if you publish the advisory, let's just say, in two weeks' time, and we update our WHOIS output in compliance with the contract based on the clarification, that I won't have to deal with . . .

[MAGGIE WHITNALL]: Just say it.

---

MICHELE NEYLON: Okay, I'll say it. You want me to say, don't you, Maggie? I won't have to deal with Maggie beating me up over it.

[MAGGIE WHITNALL]: At least it's a smiley face.

MICHELE NEYLON: Oh, God. It's just in terms of that timeline, it would be helpful for us to know. So if you're going to say, "We'll finalize the advisory in two to three weeks' time; you can implement then, it's fine;" or, "You can't implement." I just need some kind of certainty of what we can do and what we can't do. Thank you.

CYRUS NAMAZI: Thank you. I got it. I think I said this already, but I'll say it again. From the time we post it, our thinking is six months is a reasonable length of time for implementation.

MICHELE NEYLON: Sorry, Cyrus, I'm not trying to wreck your head. I just need to know if you publish it, can I implement immediately, or do I have to wait six months?

CYRUS NAMAZI: You can implement immediately, yes. You have up to six months.

---

MICHELE NEYLON: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Sorry about that.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: On the registry side, there is a [inaudible] before time that is in –I think it's clarification 43 or something like that, regarding PDT. This is for the registries, yes. There is a request to not implement before a certain date so that the systems are ready to cope with that.

JOE WALDRON: Joe Waldron from Verisign. First, I'd like to just say that I think this is important that we're having these sessions. I think this has been a very long discussion that started almost a year ago with the implementations or discussion about what the implementation looked like. And I think that this is really a new process within the community, and I know that the implementation policy working group is working to really formalize a process for how we take policy and get the implementations coordinated.

I think it's also important – Francisco, on one of your slides you had "no new requirements," and I think some of the changes that you're asking for, from my perspective, are new requirements. So there's a dispute or difference between implementation versus policy. I think that what needs to stay out of that discussion is where it turns into interpretation of either the policy or the agreement, and I think there needs to be a mechanism for how we resolve that.



---

When I read the contract, and it says, "Here's an example output," that's an example output. It doesn't say, "Every one of these fields has to be required in this order." You're making interpretations from that document. Some of those are stated, some of those are assumptions that are made, and I think that's where we got into some of the discussion about what's different in that example that's shown in the agreement and what the actual EPP spec is, because then you're talking about new requirements levied on registries to, in some cases, change the data that they're collecting from registrars. It has wide-ranging impact. I just want to look at it from within that context.

JIM GALVIN:

Jim Galvin from Afilias. I don't know if you're going to step through these things in order, or if you're just collecting questions in any order or whatever it is that you want, but I'll jump in. I want to go back to the last item that you mentioned, Francisco, talking about clarifications 18 and 28 and the partial match issue.

I'm not aware, and I partially wanted to ask one question of you directly. Is there anyone in the community that actually wanted that particular clarification, or is that just something that you're putting forth?

As far as I know, the community is fine with things the way they are in allowing partial match, and in fact it's been a long-standing feature that many registries have offered and have, and they don't want to change it and they like doing it. So it seems odd that you would be asking to change something that people don't to change or had no inclination.





---

And I'm not aware of anyone that is in support of that particular recommendation.

And then as a sidebar comment to that, it's interesting that you highlight that part of your rationale for it is the fact that there is an optional clarification and clause elsewhere that does allow for partial matching, but says that you only want it on the web interface.

And what I find odd about that is — I mean, I know this is how we do it; I'm sure that other people do it, too — you've got one back-end, and you've got multiple kinds of front-ends on it. It's sort of odd that you're telling me that on this front-end, I can't allow partial matching, and on this one over here, I'm going to figure out how to support it here, and not there.

I only have one back-end service, and you're telling me I have to create some kind of access control for something that just doesn't seem to fit from history. It's always been done a certain way, and doesn't seem to be any clear motivation for wanting to change it. Thank you.

FRANCISCO ARIAS:

Thank you, Jim. I think the way we are looking at that issue is searchable WHOIS was clearly defined as a different service in the application stated. I wanted to offer that they will even get [inaudible] if memory serves, and there is a specific clause and specific language on how it has to be offered in a specification for. So that's a completely different section, and also states that that service is only offered in the web interface, not in Port 43.



---

Regarding registries implementing this, as far as I know there is only one registry that implements this. I'm not aware of any other registry implementing this type of partial match.

The other thing I would like to add is if you read the Specification 4, there is a clear definition that says this is a query, domain name, and this is a response and [inaudible] what you will expect. There is nowhere there that says this type of output that you will see. Can we go to a couple more slides?

There is nowhere in Specification 4 that will say this is the type of output that you will see if you are doing a partial match. There is nothing like that in Specification 4.

JIM GALVIN:

Just a real quick follow-up. Factually everything that you say is correct, and I get that, and that's sort of what your response is in the clarification spreadsheet and all this discussion. But to me it's more a case of it's an interpretation of the letter of what's in black and white versus the spirit of what people have been doing for the last 10 years, 20 years even.

It just seems odd that you fall back on that rather than inheriting what is currently available in the community, and forcing a change on people when it doesn't feel like they need to do that. It's adding something that's always been there and the community already uses and takes advantage of.



---

JOE WALDRON: I'm interested, you said there's only registry that supports partial match today?

FRANCISCO ARIAS: That I'm aware of, [inaudible].

JOE WALDRON: We do, for the record.

CYRUS NAMAZI: We have a question in Adobe Chat.

VICTOR OPPENHEIMER: Victor Oppenheimer, IBM. The question is from Elaine from Donuts and she's asking: "What is the reason for restricting the output to exact match only?"

FRANCISCO ARIAS: I think I answered that question.

VICTOR OPPENHEIMER: Okay. I have a second question from [inaudible] – I'm sorry about your last name I'm butchering — from ARI regarding the "do not implement" time for registries. Does this apply for registries who are no longer in PDT?

FRANCISCO ARIAS: That clause is for PDT only.



---

VICTOR OPPENHEIMER:        Sorry?

FRANCISCO ARIAS:            PDT only. So those that are going to PDT, that's where they have the "not implement before."

ADRIAN KINDERIS:            Put us down as another registry that does partial matching. So that's three: Verisign, Afilias— sorry, that's four. Verisign, Afilias, Neustar, ARI, and if you count the number of TLDs, that's probably a fairly significant number of them as well.

I'm just wondering, what are we worried about? What's the harm? Who's getting hurt? What's the concern?

FRANCISCO ARIAS:            Like I said, it's just about what is there in Spec 4.

ADRIAN KINDERIS:            Yeah, which makes [inaudible] – just because it doesn't match something [inaudible].

FRANCISCO ARIAS:            Let me put it this way. If I'm a user of WHOIS and I want to get the information — let's look at the screen — and I want to get the information for the domain name [foo.example], what do I get?



---

ADRIAN KINDERIS: I think you're using an example of the behavior of one particular partial match WHOIS.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: That's the only one I know. That's what I was referring to.

ADRIAN KINDERIS: Because mine certainly wouldn't [work] like that unless you explicitly asked for a search query. It's not by default.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: That's precisely the point. If you want to offer a partial match with some other way — for example, by adding an option — that is a different thing. We're talking about when someone requests a WHOIS for that specific domain name. If you are not giving back the domain name information, that's the [inaudible] we're referring to.

ADRIAN KINDERIS: But remember that this came from the problem in the contract where the name server — and I know you've proposed to fix it in the clarifications, but where the name servers were meant to be matched without a name server qualifier, so when somebody did a WHOIS for a domain [string] and you had to deal with the scenario where that matched both a host object and a domain object.



---

FRANCISCO ARIAS: That's one of the reasons. The other is how do you query the domain name.

ADRIAN KINDERIS: Most of us, when you want to get the domain name, you would do "WHOIS domain" and the domain name, and that would give you the information for the domain. And if you wanted to clarify that you wanted the host, you would do "WHOIS host" and the name.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: I guess the issue at hand here is having a uniform way to query. If as a committee we were to agree that that's the way to go, sure.

ADRIAN KINDERIS: But we've all pretty much done it the same way, and we've been doing it for many, many, many, many years, so it's not like this is just a convention we came up with overnight. Yes, okay, nobody wrote it down in an RFC. That's the only thing that we don't have, but we can do that tomorrow if you'd like. It doesn't take that long.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: So I have Michele and then Jim.

MICHELE NEYLON: I think part of the problem is the example you're using, because you're doing a query without specifying the WHOIS server, which means that in some cases – that's what you have up on the screen.

---

FRANCISCO ARIAS: But it doesn't matter.

MICHELE NEYLON: But it does actually matter.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: I can show you right now one example.

MICHELE NEYLON: Please hold on. Because if you do a WHOIS query like "WHOIS GoDaddy.com," you will get back something like that, which is a bunch of strings and general weirdness, depending on the WHOIS client you use. But if you were to do a WHOIS directly against Verisign or directly against the registrar, you wouldn't.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: You will. That's how it works. That's the kind of behavior we're talking about. If people like, I can show it live.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It is X-rated, though.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Can someone make me presenter?



---

CYRUS NAMAZI:

I'd like all of us to somewhat focus on not the letter of the contract at the moment, but what is the right thing to do. And I hear some of you say, "Well, this is how we've done it for I don't know how many years, and what's the reason to change it?" But maybe there's an opportunity, regardless of what the contract says. And the contract did go through several rounds of public comment to become what it is, so we should keep that in mind as well. But if there is an opportunity for clarification, better output of WHOIS, I think we should be open-minded to do it and have the discussion further with that mindset. Just a thought.

JIM GALVIN:

In line with that, I think the issue here is that you have a name which ambiguously could be one or two different things, and so in that case you're going to get output which says to you, "Which one of these things did you want?" versus an explicit query for a partial match, which is typically done by putting a star in one place or another as part of the query or something like that, the asterisk.

I think that, as I understand the direction that you're going in, you're falling back and saying, "Okay, rather than the fact that we have each found a solution collectively for presenting the fact that we've been given an ambiguous query, and we need a way to tell the user that you did that so they can do something more precise to get an answer," you're falling back and you're saying, "What you should do is only give one answer."

So what that means if I get a query which is ambiguous, I have to say, "No answer." There's no way for me to respond to that kind of query. It just feels like you've gone in the wrong direction here. We're trying to





---

provide a service to the user, and you're explicitly disallowing that by deciding to fall back on doing that.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: So searchability [inaudible] studies are different [inaudible] but this is the example I was talking about. As you can see, I'm asking directly the registry WHOIS that I look up in IANA, and I put the domain name, and this is what I get. There is no data of the domain name.

CYRUS NAMAZI: Francisco, explain for everybody here who may not be as technical what you did and what we're seeing.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: What I did is I went to IANA and asked for the WHOIS server of a particular TLD .com, and I copied the server name of the WHOIS server for .com, put it in the WHOIS query which is here. This is the WHOIS server for .com, and I'm asking for Microsoft.com. And instead of getting the information for Microsoft.com, I get this, which is a list of name servers, I suppose. You can see all the interesting stuff that people put there. That's where we're saying it's probably not PG-rated.

CYRUS NAMAZI: So let me ask the question from the three, four of you who have a strong opinion that it should remain the same. Tell us why it should remain the same.



---

JOE WALDRON:

I'll start. I know Jim Gould is on the line, so I would invite him to respond as well. You're right that this is longstanding behavior that we would be removing. I'm not sure that we have a lot of data on how often this gets used or who would have a change to a longstanding behavior. So I think that that's one factor.

I think the other issue is from the query that Francisco put in, his question is ambiguous because he didn't say whether he was looking for a domain name or for a host name. And I think that was Jim's point. At that point, I'd give back a response that says nothing because I don't know whether you're asking for a host name that starts with Microsoft.com or the Microsoft.com domain name.

So I think this is not only something that is longstanding for us, but for WHOIS users. So I would ask the question of what problem are we really trying to solve? Have we gotten complaints, criticisms, security and stability advisories? What problem are we trying to solve for?

CHRIS DISSPAIN:

Just to clarify things, because we're showing .com and picking on maybe the .com functionality, but we're not talking about .com at all here. The .com registry [inaudible] actually specifies this behavior in great detail on how it works to the partial match and what codes you put in, but that's not specified. We're only talking about new TLDs here for this spec, and it doesn't have that language that's in .com. So we're not at all saying we're changing .com. I was just a little worried about confusion because we put the .com example there, too.



---

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hold on, Chris. I had Rubens in the queue, please. Thank you.

RUBENS KUHL: I think we are coming back round and round for two things in this discussion. One of them is that we are treating Specification 4 as a technical specification, but it's only a specification in legal terms, but not in technical terms. Technical specification would define behaviors, would define parameters, and we are all trying to read into Spec 4. And sometimes I can read something and say, "This is completely specified," and then we disagree. Sometimes registries [inaudible] Spec 4, say, "This is allowed because it's not written as disallowed," and we try that.

Every time we keep going in that direction of thinking that Spec 4 is written the way we would like it to be, we end up going nowhere, because it's not. So we shouldn't treat Spec 4 as a real technical specification. As a matter of fact, it's only a placeholder that's waiting for us to replace it with a real technical specification. So what you need to come about is what is the best thing for the community do, but we shouldn't try to read either way. It won't work. It's not a technical specification. It's just an example.

I had one other question, but I'll let the query run and [inaudible] myself at the end of—

CHRIS DISSPAIN: The point that was just made about how this is actually fully specified in Verisign's agreement, and that we're not talking about what Verisign do, we're also not talking about what Afiliias do with .info. We're also not



---

talking about what happens with .org. We're also not talking about what happens with .biz, who all behave like this, by the way.

Wouldn't it actually be more confusing for users to make the new TLDs work differently to the old TLDs? Wouldn't we prefer them to actually work the same? Especially if, after this clarification, we all go and disable this behavior for new TLDs but .com, .biz, and .info all maintain the old behavior. Isn't that more confusing?

CYRUS NAMAZI:

I can state my own opinion, but I'd like to ask actually other people here to perhaps attempt an answer to Chris who are not registry operators. Michele?

MICHELE NEYLON:

To be perfectly honest, I couldn't care less. I cannot get excited about this. Sorry. I can get excited about various aspects of WHOIS. This is not one of them. It really isn't.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Then why are you here?

[laughter]

MICHELE NEYLON:

[inaudible] interest to me. No, but to Chris's point, I think he's raising a very valid point. I don't often agree with him, but I agree with him now.



---

CYRUS NAMAZI:

I can tell you from my perspective [inaudible] ICANN, but I'm thinking if we were to keep everything at status quo because we've done it this way for so many years, and if we changed it, it would cause confusion, and there wouldn't actually be enhancement, improvements, a whole bunch of things. So I think we should focus the discussion on, is this going to provide value in upping the quality factor in the industry for us as a whole?

And this is the perspective from which I'm coming. It's not to impose some black-and-white letters of a contract or anything. I think the mindset should be is there a value in doing this, and collectively decide on raising the bar for ourselves without imposing undue burden, obviously, on the registry operators, who have to implement and change their systems, all of that. That's the answer at least that I personally am looking for. And again I invite all of you to also come in and provide your perspective. Jim, please.

JIM GALVIN:

But, Cyrus, with all due respect, you're asking what is upping the value, and I think that comes back to the original question of what problem are you trying to solve? I think it's also fair to assess that this is the baseline today. Is it more valuable to remove a feature? What problem is that solving? What is that making better in providing this clarification? So that's one answer to that.

Don was offering the comment about, "Let's be clear. this is what .com does. It's the old registries," and coming back to what Chris was saying about confusing between old registries and new registries. As a registry operator, as a service provider, we have dozens of TLDs, and we're



---

going to have 200 by the time this thing is over. If you're only going to apply this to new TLDs and not old ones, now you're obligating me to two different systems, and I question how that is somehow upping the value or improving things. It doesn't allow me to have any economies of scale. I can't consolidate since I have behaviors that are different.

And then the third observation that I would make is certainly changing WHOIS and directory services to be better about it is a good thing. There has been a lot of work in that area, and as Michele was pointing out, I'm sure there were lots of things that many of us can get twerked about in one way or another with respect to WHOIS.

I make the observation that there are changes coming. We have the new RDAP base system out of the WEIRDS working group, and there will be a lot of fundamental things that are going to change at that time. So then I fall back, tying back again to where's the upward value? What is the problem we're solving? Why are we making such significant changes to WHOIS? Why don't we just wait for this total wholesale replacement of WHOIS and do all of this then? Why shouldn't the baseline be where we are today? Thank you.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Thank you, Jim. We have a comment or a question online. Go ahead.

VICTOR OPPENHEIMER:

The comment is from Cal from ARI, and his comment is, "I agree that Spec 4 is not a genuine technical spec. We need multiple examples of data, including when data is missing."



FRANCISCO ARIAS:

Just a quick comment to what Jim said. I agree, RDAP is what is coming soon, and that's what we should be focusing our energies, so that's why we're trying to close this as soon as possible. The thinking is RDAP is going to take some time to get it out. A year or two, who knows? And then you probably need to still keep Port 43 WHOIS [inaudible] some period of time. I don't know, one year, two. Who knows? So we're talking about still a few years in which we are going to have WHOIS there. What we are trying to do here is leave WHOIS in a state that is acceptable for these few years that it is still going to be there.

The other thing that you mention in regards to RDAP that I was thinking is from this clarifications that we are showing here, these two, this one probably will not be an issue once we are in RDAP, because in RDAP it's a clear definition for lookup and searchability. There is no ambiguity there. However, if we look at the other two — I'm [inaudible] back to those — these affect what is displayed there. So these two clarifications, we need to resolve them one way or another. It doesn't matter if we have RDAP or we have Port 43 WHOIS, we need to get something. I would suggest that we perhaps focus on these two, Clarification 40 and Clarification 2, and see if we can get to something, because it will apply to both what we have now, Port 43, and what we will have in the future, RDAP.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Michele?



---

MICHELE NEYLON:

Cyrus, I appreciate what you're saying about improving things and everything else, but Francisco has just pointed out the obvious, that a lot of the stuff around WHOIS is only temporary in many respects, because everything's going to change.

So with that in mind, in order to save everybody headaches and consistency, why impose a technical burden on the registries without there being any clear scenario where the status quo is causing any harm? If you give examples of where this is causing harm, issues, headaches, or somebody else can, then that's a case for forcing a change. But if you can't, then it's addressed in the ARS and all that, so just move on – unless I'm missing something. Am I missing something?

CYRUS NAMAZI:

I don't know if you're missing something, Michele. I think this is exactly why we're having this discussion. It's emerging that Issues 18 and 28 actually could be addressed by the transition to RDAP, which I guess all of us are bound to do. Maybe that provides a different perspective into how to achieve the ultimate goal, and maybe it's the way of RDAP. I'm not opposed to it. I'm here to really help us facilitate to get to closure to something that benefits everyone in the community. So perhaps maybe we should focus the discussion on Clarifications 1 and 2 that Francisco suggested. Rubens?

RUBENS KOHL:

Towards that goal of focusing on those clarifications, let's go back to another recurring theme, which is reading Spec 4 as a data collection requirement. Spec 4 is a data output requirement. We can only output





---

data that we have, and if there is the need for the data to be present, that a data collection requirement, something that's currently not in the agreement.

Those two specifications try to read an output specification as the need to have that information, which is something that is not there. So those two would actually be the embryo of something we could write together which is a data collection requirement, a data collection specification. So that would be the right way to do it, not to force it to read an output specification as a data collection one.

FRANCISCO ARIAS:

Just so we're clear, you're saying, Rubens, in something like this it will be okay not to have these two fields, which I believe are really the only ones that are an issue in Clarification 2? So it will be okay not to have the domain name output, the phone, and the street field for registries and/or contacts?

RUBENS KOHL:

Depending on registry policy, yes. Registry policies might see that as privacy issues. Some registry policies might see the other way around, say, "We have a policy that requires registrants to have physical addresses," like banks or something like that. So this is actually a registry choice of whether it needs to be collected and displayed, so this would go more towards policy than output specification.



---

FRANCISCO ARIAS: I'm absolutely not lawyer. I'm an engineer. So what I will say here is that the way I read it is if something is telling you you have to show something, then whatever follows is what is implied. So if you have to show something, then perhaps it implies that you have to collect it.

RUBENS KOHL: Do you want blanks, say [inaudible].

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Then you're not showing it, right?

RUBENS KOHL: No, I'm showing the information that we have regardless. We don't have any, so we would only display blank lines with those headers, and this would add no value to the community, just more lines with no content to display.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: If that were what the community wanted, I guess that's the way it will be. But I just wanted to also clarify another thing that you mentioned, the privacy side of this. I think we should not confuse those things. When that privacy discussion – and again, I'm not a lawyer – but my understanding is there's another set of discussions that need to happen that are beyond those two fields. There are more things that people for some reason believe they should not be showing, and that's not what we are talking about here.



---

CYRUS NAMAZI: Jim, are you in the queue?

JIM GALVIN: I'm going to yield. Never mind.

CYRUS NAMAZI: I'd like to ask a question here. What is the pushback here? Why is there pushback? What is it that is creating pain for you in doing it this way? Rubens, and then this gentleman whose name I don't know.

RUBENS KOHL: I can say specifically for the registrar query is that it's actually conflicting with the data escrow specification. The data escrow specification had a different set of information that registries should have from registrars, and by complying with that specification, it has a different data model than Spec 4.

You either would have to have both data models to satisfy both requirements, or you could follow the one specification that is actually a technical specification, which is the data escrow, which is correctly and technically sound, and then answer that. One of the reasons of the [inaudible] is that there is incompatibility in the agreement between the data models for registry information.

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Just one comment here on the comment about discrepancies between data escrow and WHOIS output. The way I see it is they are different things. Data escrow has a different purpose than WHOIS output. Data



---

escrow is for the purpose of being able to recover from catastrophic registry failure if the registry goes to [inaudible], so you need a certain set of information.

In the case of the registrars, it's perhaps less information that you need, because even if a TLD goes to [inaudible] provider has to have a direct relationship with the registrar. So basically what the [inaudible] needs to is just to know what the registrar is that it needs to have a relationship in order to manage the domain names.

In the case of the WHOIS output, the purpose, as I understand it, it will be different. It will be for a user to be able, for example, to contact the registrar, and that's where I think having the contacts for registrar come in use.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Alex?

ALEX MAYRHOFER:

Thank you. Alex Mayrhofer from nic.at, backend operator for a couple TLDs. You asked before that we should think about things that provide actual value, and specifically the contact of the registrar is, in my opinion, to no value at all, because if you look at the data structure of the registrar, the registrar is registered with ICANN. He gets assigned an IANA ID, and copying that data that is already registered with ICANN across all 2,000 TLDs creates a massive burden to each and every registry and each and every registrar, because the registry must collect data from the registrar which is already publicly available by the ICANN registrar database anyway.



---

So essentially for a registrar contact, if you look at it closely, it would be completely sufficient if there was just the IANA ID, because everybody could look up with that IANA ID or a link to the respective entry in the ICANN database of that registrar. So what we are doing here is we are copying information to 2,000 TLDs by 3,000 registrars, so we are essentially creating 6,000,000 redundant objects. I don't think it creates value, coming back to what you said before.

Regarding the concrete pain that we feel, we are one of the registry operators who didn't implement the contacts for the registrar because we felt that outputting the IANA ID and the referral URI would be good enough for anybody to find that registrar and then find contact information. So we would have to go back to all the registrars that have signed up with our registries and collect that information.

CYRUS NAMAZI: Let's go to Chris, and then Michele.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I think Mike wants [inaudible].

CYRUS NAMAZI: Mike has a direct response, and then we'll go to Chris.

MIKE ZUPKE: This is Mike Zupke, ICANN staff. Just one point of clarification, and that's the data that ICANN makes available for registrars' contacts is quite limited. One field [is] the public contact data that registrars tell us it's

---

okay to publish. Typically it's a customer service person. It's not somebody who might resolve technical issues related to the registrar or billing or other sorts of issues that might exist that are commonly populated in registries' WHOIS data for registrars.

CYRUS NAMAZI: Thanks, Mike. Chris?

CHRIS DISSPAIN: Choosing the right words. You're getting me confused about which clarifications we're talking about, and I think we're collectively talking about them all as a whole I think is what's happening. But there's a clarification that is referring to specifically displaying fields for data if the data isn't present, just to demonstrate that that data is blank effectively, which is the one I thought we were talking about. Now, that's Clarification 2, if I remember correctly, and then this Clarification 40 here is talking about requiring additional details of the registrar to be displayed in the WHOIS output.

And I think most, if not all, of these clarifications come from interpretation of what's written in Specification 4, and not all of them, but for some of these, you could find equally as many arguments as to why the implemented interpretation is correct as opposed to the interpretation that's being proposed because of the issues that people have raised, the fact that that's not an actual real, proper, technical standards document, etc.

I guess my point is why make the registries that interpreted it one particular way, which could easily be argued to be correct, go through



---

the financial burden of having to go and re-implement in a different interpretation if there's no harm?

Show me how the fact that they've interpreted it this way is causing a problem. And as registries, we don't want to cause problems, so we'll do the fixes if that's required. But if I've interpreted it and implemented it one way, and that interpretation is one that's arguably in line with that specification — everyone's going to have different opinions on that, but there are things that are going to be black or white; it's black or white that that's not what it says, or that is what it says. But most of these clarifications, which is why they even exist in the first place, are because that spec is so vague on certain things. It doesn't have a position on whether missing data should be displayed or not. It's silent on the issue. It doesn't say one way or the other.

So if someone's implemented where they display the missing data — which, by the way, I do. My view is it shows the fields when they're empty, so I'm actually not even hurt by this clarification, but that's not my point.

My point is that if the people that chose to interpret it the other way, if their implementation is not causing harm, if it's not hurting anyone, if there's no security problem, if we aren't getting complaints from end users, etc., where's the value in making anyone do this change? And that's what I don't understand.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Thanks, Chris. Michele, you were in the queue, and then I have Joe and then—



---

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We have also a question in the chat that relates [inaudible].

CYRUS NAMAZI: After Michele, we go online, and then come back here.

MICHELE NEYLON: On the thing about the registrar contact, my understanding — maybe I missed something again, but generally speaking, the registrar contact that gets output in WHOIS is possibly the name of the registrar, a link to the registrar's website, not much else. There could be another bit of a contact.

Replacing that with IANA IDs is completely unhelpful. As a user of WHOIS, I find that completely unhelpful. I'd prefer to be able to actually be able to see a registrar name, possibly adding the IANA ID as well. If, for example — I'll pick on [inaudible] because they're big enough and [ugly] enough. [inaudible] has multiple accreditations, so having the IANA ID of the specific accreditation would probably be helpful.

If I was a WHOIS user, and I had to do a lookup on every single IANA ID anytime I needed to do something, for example, as a registrar, my customer service staff regularly have to do a WHOIS lookup to see which registrar a domain name is with, to see is the domain name with us? Is it with a company that we may have had a reseller account with in the past? Is it with one of our competitors? Has the domain name ended up with a company that is known as an aftermarket sales registrar, for example?





---

So if I see a domain name associated with a company that specializes in premium names, I can safely say to my client, "If you want to actually get that domain name, you're going to be looking at five or six figures," whereas if it happens to be with one of my competitors who isn't in that space and go, "Well, maybe it's just expired with them," or whatever. There are a multitude of different things there.

It's also inconsistent with several of the WHOIS policies that have developed over the last few years where the WHOIS has been modified to make it more accessible in some areas. With the next evolution at a technical level, you're moving to a more XML-like, parsable, consistent, [resistant] thing. But actually putting in IDs that people have to look up is, in many respects, not helpful. That's my own personal opinion. I'm not speaking on behalf of the registrars. I'm just speaking on behalf of myself.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Thanks, Michele. I think Rubens has a direct response to that, and then we go online.

RUBENS KOHL:

Just a clarification. This clarification is about registrar query. It's about the registrar query, not the domain query. It's a query that the user already specified "registrar something," like "registrar Black Knight." So the user already specified which name of the registrar. This usually follows up a query that the registry that output that domain [registers as being] "Black Knight." And the user says, "Who the hell is Black Knight?" And then—

---

MICHELE NEYLON: Then I've misunderstood it completely. Sorry. Because that's not a query [inaudible].

RUBENS KOHL: But then I have a question for you. If a user sees something that says admin contact and technical contact, would the user be savvy enough to say, "This is an administrative matter, or a technical matter?" Or would he just e-mail all the contacts that he finds there to see if someone answers his complaint? What do you think from a customer service perspective?

CYRUS NAMAZI: Thanks, Rubens. In the interest of time, let's move on. We go online. We had a question or a comment.

VICTOR OPPENHEIMER: Yes, it might have been answered, but it's from [Carl] from ARI again. "Would a static link to an IANA registrar site be better than adding the object?"

CYRUS NAMAZI: I think it was answered already, so let's go to Joe.

JOE WALDRON: Thanks. I'm going to answer your question, or I'm going to give you at least my perspective on the question of why the pushback, and I think

---

it's a lot of the reasons that we've been discussing in terms of interpretation.

Chris interprets the agreement and the requirements differently than we do, and I think that you have to expect that within a contract there is going to be interpretation. And I think that having a clarifying document that has the weight of implementing or requiring new requirements — and these clearly are new requirements. This is expanding on the scope of what's in the agreement and removing our ability to interpret that agreement as it's written.

I think that's part of the pushback, and I know that we've even had discussions with Francisco about whether these really are new requirements or not. I think from my perspective, clearly where I've got to go back and go through yet another engineering cycle, implement changes, those are new requirements. Where you've got to go back and had changes made to pre-delegation testing before you can even start testing this, those are new requirements.

So that to me is a fundamental concern, that we have a document that is published as a clarification that has the weight of adding new requirements as burden onto the parties that signed that agreement and didn't have that agreement with those new requirements.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Thanks, Joe. Francisco, do you have a response, or should we go to Chris?



---

FRANCISCO ARIAS: Just very quickly. I will say let's differentiate between registries having to make changes to their systems in order to comply with the clarification as opposed to clarification providing new requirements. I just will say there is a difference there.

CYRUS NAMAZI: Jim?

JIM GALVIN: Thank you. Jim Galvin from Afiliat. In essence I want to agree with both Chris and Joe, and just give our own perspective on what's happening. I appreciate the goal. I think the principle of wanting to make things definite and deterministic really is the right thing to do, and really want to support that in principle. What I would add to what both Joe and Chris have said is that feels like it's something that would be most appropriate for the next version of WHOIS, which we know is coming.

So trying to create changes or suggestions, clarifications that impose obligations on standing legacy systems for something which is ultimately going to be pushed out the door anyway, that's really the burden, and that's why you're getting pushback. Suggesting that we're going to be obligated to do things a certain way as opposed to the way that we've been doing them for 10 or 15 years or whatever it's been, purely because it's a wasted effort in the sense that it's going to be thrown away. And that's really the burden here.

I appreciate that one has to do an implementation anyway to replace it, but why am I doing it twice, and why do I have to fix up the old version and fix up the new if there's no harm being done? Which gets back to



---

what Chris said. If there's no real harm, and it's just a matter of interpretation, why not just let it ride for the old versions for right now, I think is a preferred solution.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Thanks, Jim. Two questions for you, and these are naïve questions, because I'm not actually technically in tune with the details of this. To which up-and-coming WHOIS were you referring? You said it's going to replace [inaudible].

JAMES GALVIN:

The WEIRDS work, RDAP. Francisco knows.

FRANCISCO ARIAS:

Right. The differentiation is what I was saying before, that Clarifications 2 and 40 will still be needed, or some sort of data clarification will still be needed when we have RDAP. Those two are not solved by RDAP. The other two, yes, they disappear completely, but 2 and 40, they don't.

JIM GALVIN:

Yeah. So the distinction that you have to make then is ultimately the technical detail of what's implemented. I appreciate that you probably want these clarifications, and that's fine, but they should be obligated against the RDAP solution, not against the WHOIS solution. Not against the Port 43 solution is the distinction that I would make.



---

CYRUS NAMAZI: The other naïve question I wanted to ask all of you I guess who are speaking up is why do you think Specification 4 is written this way? If you wanted to keep things the way they were, I actually would have slept a lot better, because I negotiated this contract with you guys until we got the end of it. So help me understand that.

JAMES GALVIN: I think the only observation I would make is not everything can be caught the first time around. Contractual negotiations are probably handled by a slightly different set of people than the developers who are actually doing it and looking at the details. I don't think it's unusual for this kind of stuff to get missed. Let's even look at how PDT has been succeeding over time.

We've certainly been through a lot of them with a lot of registries, and let me tell you, it's been an interesting experience, ranging just from the fact the PDT testers have different ideas about what the rules are. So we'll pass with one PDT test and fail with the next one. I don't think there's anything special going on here. It's not unusual. These things happen. You just work through them.

CYRUS NAMAZI: In spite of several rounds of posting this for public comment and such? Fair enough. Joe?

JOE WALDON: I would agree with that. I think that it essentially followed the same forum and template that had been there in previous agreements. There

---

were some modifications that were made that were unique and specific to the new TLDs, but I don't think that there was that much forethought into – all of the details that we're talking about now were just not envisioned in the discussions.

And, again, I keep going back to the same point, I sound like a broken record, but when we read that agreement, the example that's used is an example. It doesn't say, "This is the definitive answer." I could take it to the extreme, I like thinking that way, so bear with me.

If you want to take it to the extreme, and that example must be exactly followed, then every WHOIS response will result in a response that says Example.TLD and will give exactly what that response is.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

We're definitely well into the happy hour.

JOE WALDON:

I just wanted to also point out, and Jim really brought this up. There are a number of WHOIS initiatives going on. I think everybody's aware of that, right? So it's not just additional work to do this. It's, one, that we've already done it. We've already had one round of advisories that we implemented, and that's already been done. This is replacing that. But we also have, at least in our case, we've got work that we're doing on thick WHOIS. There's the internationalized and translation and transliteration of WHOIS. There's all of the work going on within the GNSO on the EWG recommendations and what they're going to take up. So we have an ongoing stream of work that need to be done over many,



---

many years that is going to go on and on, and where are resources best utilized?

So for me to spend another engineering cycle, and going back and making changes that are going to have an impact downstream to people who have an expectation of how WHOIS is going to work, I don't think we get a lot of benefit from that.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Chris, and then we need to start wrapping it up. We have about three minutes. We should do a post-mortem.

CHRIS DISSPAIN:

To try and directly answer your questions as to why Spec 4 is the way that it is, I don't think any registry operator in this room thinks that they aren't compliant with Spec 4, and that's the fundamental point. We're totally actually fine with Spec 4, and we all believe we are compliant with it because of those interpretation issues. There was nothing for us to fix in it. There was nothing in it for us to fix in it, because we read it, we interpreted it the way that we interpreted it, and it suited our needs, so we didn't need anything changed. It's just now we are fundamentally having an argument over interpretation. That's really all that's happening.

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Any other questions or comments? There was one online, so this is the last one, then we'll conclude it.





---

VICTOR OPPENHEIMER: The question is from Matt [inaudible]: “When does ICANN expect to have the final version of the advisory?”

CYRUS NAMAZI: Michele?

MICHELE NEYLON: This is what I was about to ask. I am speaking with the Registrar Stakeholder Group that is firmly on. There's only one or two parts of this advisory that have a direct and tangible impact on the registrars, but it's an impact that for some of our members is huge. And the longer this delays, the more it's costing them in customer service, because it's to do with the abuse contact point.

So while I appreciate that you may wish to go backwards and forwards for several more weeks around the registries, and I understand this is an issue for them, from the registrar side, we would really, really appreciate closure on at least the aspect that impacts us directly. With all due respect, humbly bowing before you on bended knee, doing all those kinds of things that I never do for you, Cyrus.

CYRUS NAMAZI: I've never heard you say anything remotely like that to me actually.

MICHELE NEYLON: I'm supplicating you over here. It doesn't [happen often].



---

CYRUS NAMAZI:

[inaudible]. Your point is well taken, Michele. I certainly don't have any appetite for dragging this on and on and on, and the objective really is for us to come to an amicable, mutually satisfactory resolution. Because you have to keep in mind – and I mean that to our registry partner here – that ICANN's role here is to represent the entire community and of course the registrars and the consumers and such on one hand. And then on the other hand we have a contract that does have a set of somewhat black-and-white requirements in it. To Rubens' point, it's not a technical specification, but then it never envisioned having the need for a technical specification. I don't even know if the legacy TLDs are following the technical specification or not.

My intent, my hope, is that we can come up to some meeting grounds where we can say this is what makes sense in light of what's coming down the pike imminently, somewhat imminently the RDAP. I think it's in the queue to be published. There is the thick WHOIS work that's going on, there's EWG in the longer-term horizon, and come up with something that makes sense that wraps some of these requirements together in a manageable development cycle for you guys that, again, enhances our industry and does what it's supposed to do.

So my suggestion is for us perhaps — we had a very good discussion, I think — to go back and maybe take a day or two from our side and maybe your side, and see if there are things you guys would like to put on the table as reasonable, and then for us to do the same thing, and see if we can close it.



---

The last thing I want us to do is to come back and say you're staking the ground, "We think it's this," and you guys say, "No, we think it's that," because that's a lose-lose proposition. I don't want us to get there.

Any closing remarks? Jim?

JIM GALVIN:

Quick logistical question. Where's the table that will follow up on the discussion with which mailing list or whatever?

FRANCISCO ARIAS:

We can use [inaudible].

CYRUS NAMAZI:

Any other comments or questions or remarks? Very good. Thank you all very much. We can conclude the session.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]

