

In support of new sponsored TLDs

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Preface: In the following paper I use the current ICANN terminology of sTLDs (sponsored TLDs) to differentiate their governance (with distinctive eligibility conditions, administered by the sponsoring organization) from that of other gTLDs. However my view is that the usefulness and prestige of the DNS would be improved if it reverted to the original DNS concept whereby *every* TLD had a distinctive, defined purpose – as was the case before the eligibility checking for .com, .net and .org was discarded c.1995.

1. Should new generic top level domain names be introduced?

ICANN should be congratulated for introducing sTLDs in 2000 and 2005 such as *.coop*, *.museum* and *.cat* that lend visibility and focus to globally-dispersed special interest groups whose cultural and community activities arguably add benefit to humankind.

In judging the success of these initial sTLDs, more emphasis should be assigned to assessing the *integrity* with which the sponsoring organization has enforced its eligibility conditions and promoted the charter of its sTLD than the early take-up of subdomains. After all, history shows that there was an initially slow take-up of subdomains in virtually all ccTLDs and in most gTLDs. It is the integrity of each TLD brand that will ensure its long-term future and will add to the integrity and hence value of the DNS as a whole.

2. Selection Criteria for New Top Level Domains

ICANN should as a matter of principle continue to invite and select proposals for sTLDs from sponsoring organizations demonstrating that they:

- Have large memberships already spanning organizations and/or individuals across many countries, that can be collectively characterised as a special interest group that is not well catered for by the pre-existing TLDs;

- Are comprehensively and inclusively representative of their special interest group;
- Are committed to adding to the diversity of global Internet cultural and/or community offerings, catering for - but not exclusively to - their global membership;
- Will use their sTLD to promote peaceful, open and inclusive community and/or cultural activities across national borders;
- Will use their sTLD to promote peaceful, open and inclusive activities that are largely non-commercial in character (otherwise they should use the overtly commercial gTLDs); and
- Have the expertise to manage a viable sTLD registry and to enforce a reasonable set of eligibility conditions that will maintain the integrity of the sTLD 'brand'.

3. **Allocation Methods for New Top Level Domains**

While the ICANN Board has clearly had a difficult time wrestling with the political pressures surrounding several of the candidate sTLDs in the year 2000 and 2004 selection rounds, the integrity of the selection process has been demonstrated, particularly in the objective recommendations of ICANN's independent evaluation panels in both rounds.

A problem. One ICANN policy, that potentially inhibits the use of appropriate 3-letter codes for new sTLDs, was the ICANN decision in November 2000 to reserve the use of all 3-letter ISO 3166 Country Codes, so that they cannot be used for other TLD purposes. (ccTLDs use the separate 2-letter list of ISO 3166 Country Codes.)

While most of us in the Internet community would respect the pre-emptive reservation of 3-letter country codes such as 'usa' that correspond to national states in the DNS, the pro-active reservation in the DNS of rarely used 3-letter ISO 3166 codes for the many miscellaneous islands and small territories included within ISO 3166-A3 is excessive.

For example, we have accepted the use of **.ky** as the ccTLD for the Cayman Islands, as provided for in the ISO 3166-A2 list. But why should the worldwide Welsh speaking community be deprived of the ISO 639-3 3-letter language code 'cym' for Welsh as their sTLD **.cym** simply because 'cym' appears in the ISO 3166-A3 list for the Cayman Islands? At the very least, the merits of each allocation should be assessed.

The ISO 639 standard provides both 2-letter and 3-letter codes for the world's known 7,900 languages and dialects. These codes are very useful, because most languages are known by significantly different names within their own and all other languages eg 'de' (ISO 639-2) = 'deu' or 'ger' (ISO 639-3) = deutsch in German = German in English = alemán in Spanish, etc. It would therefore very useful if the same ISO 639-3 codes could be made potentially available as s-TLDs for most single minority language global communities, as has been the case for the Catalans with **.cat**.

Recommendation: that ICANN review its policy on the reservation of all ISO 3166-A3 codes, with a view to freeing up those 3-letter codes which do not correspond to true countries (ie those eligible for UN membership), so they can be made available for future TLDs.