WHOIS WEBINAR
TRANSCRIPTION
Tuesday 20 April 2010 at 14:00 UTC

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Coordinator: Thank you. I'd like to remind all participants today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time.

You may begin.

Gisella Gruber-White: Thank you. Good morning, good afternoon on today's Whois Webinar on Tuesday the 20th of April. We have Hugo Salgado, Jim Prendergast, Susan Payne, Michele Naylon, Shaundra Watson. From staff we have, Steve Sheng, Liz Gasster, Dave Piscitello, Seth Green, Julie Hedlund, and (Tom Barons).

If I could please remind everyone to press star 6 to mute and star 6 to unmute as well in order to cause as little disruption on the lines as possible, and also when you do speak to please state your names for transcript purposes.

Thank you, over to you Liz.

Liz Gasster: Thank you. Again, thanks for participating in this Webinar. This is the first of two Webinars that will be conducting on a report that Steve Sheng has just repaired - prepared that we're calling a Draft Inventory of Who is Service Requirement. The second will be on May 4 at a time that is hopefully friendlier for other parts of the world, and will contain exactly the same content.

There will be an opportunity for comments and questions at the end of the presentation, but if you have clarifying questions, you may raise your hand in the Adobe by clicking on the My Status and you'll see a little hand raising option, or you may put your question - type your question yourself into the Chat, or we will hear you if you unmute your line in the audio and just jump in with a question, but we would like those just to be clarifying question while Steve is presenting.

And I want to just very quickly set the stage with the background and the purpose of this report and why it was developed, and then Steve will go into the details of the report itself.

Basically, last year - first of all in March of last year, the GNSO Council decided that we needed to determine cost and feasibility to do a number of different studies of Whois that would look at certain factual aspects of Whois and hopefully provide a factual basis for further policy making on Whois. And then subsequently, just two months later in May of 2009, the Council requested this report as a follow-on to looking at the cost and feasibility of these other studies.

This was a report that was unique and not related to those other studies in the sense that it really asked staff to collect and organize a comprehensive set of requirements for the Whois service policy tools that would reflect not only existing requirements and known deficiencies in current Whois service, but the report should also include any possible requirements that may be needed to support various policy initiatives that have been suggested in the past.

So, these would be the technical requirements that might be needed to support these various policy initiatives. When the GNSO in May of 2009 requested this report, they also asked that staff consult with the SSAC, the ALAC, the GAC, the ccNSO, and of course the GNSO and prepare a (stramian) proposal in advance of that consultation, then take that consultation and produce a final report.

So, what you're seeing today is an overview of the initial report. We are in consultation with each of those SOs and ACs. We are asking for them to provide their feedback by the seventeenth of May, and then we'll be compiling a final report based on all of that input that we got.

So, I'm just - wanted to provide that background and turn it over to Steve Sheng now to conduct the overview. Thank you.

Steve Sheng: Thank you, Liz. As Liz just mentioned, the goal of this report is to collect and organize a set of requirements for community consideration. These features come from three areas.

The first area is the current features that are identified as needing improvement, so any potential deficiencies in the current Whois. And the second aspect is features to support various past policy proposals. And the last one is features recommended by ICANN, supporting organizations, and the advisory committees.

Okay, so moving on, just want to quickly qualify that the goal of this report is not gathering policy requirements, nor recommending policy. I just want to take the tiered access I - as an example to illustrate this point because this is an important point.

So, from a policy perspective for the tiered access, you know, we may have requirements. Say law enforcement gave access to certain Whois data. Now, that's a policy requirement, from the operational perspective, you know, it - we need to answer questions like, who is law enforcement and how to certify certain law enforcement entities, especially if they're in other countries.

Finally, from a technical perspective, the goal is to find the best technology that can support such access. So, this will include frameworks to authenticate users and to give proper access based on their roles, and these technical areas that this report is primarily concerned with.

So, continuing on Slide 5, I want to further clarify our scope. In the Whois deliberations, people could mean different things when they talk about a Whois service. So, for the technical community, they generally tend to think Whois in terms of clients and servers that implement the Whois protocol. So,

some of the clients we have, for example (unintelligible), we have a wide base of clients as well and increasingly we have automation clients. Some of them are legitimate and some not.

So, when the policy community debate about Whois they tend to view it as the data of this single database that serve the registration data. So, they will be concerned with issues such as, you know, data accuracy, malicious use. I want to clarify, since our goal is to look at the future of Whois, it's fitting for us to consider the potential improvements in all of these areas, although we'll only be focusing on - primarily on the technical - the protocol level.

I do hear some people putting - hear the conference, there are some in the chat.

Liz Gasster: Yeah, I think maybe part of the problem -- this is Liz -- is that people aren't dialing the separate number that's needed for the audio. Unless we can confirm from the operator on the audio, (Tonia), that if there are people who are still queue to get into this call?

Coordinator: Actually, all participants are dialed in and connected right now.

Liz Gasster: Okay.

Steve Sheng: Okay.

Coordinator: Okay. And there are - one more person is dialing in right now, actually. There's one person standing by. We'll place them in.

Liz Gasster: Thank you.

Steve Sheng: Cool.

Coordinator: You're welcome. Thank you.

Steve Sheng: Okay. Thank you. So, on Slide 6, here's the rough outline of my presentation. First, I'm going to talk about the need for a mechanism to find authority to - of Whois servers, and the next four points are similar in that they're all concerned with standardizations.

So, the original Whois protocol is simple and leaves most of these decisions to the servers and clients that implement the protocol. So, there are - there's quite a variability among these different implementations and such variability creates no uniform experience for the users. Those are the next four points.

Now, moving on to Slide 7, we're going to talk about the quality of the domain registration data. And primarily from a technical perspective, how they can be improved with technical means. Of course, the elephant in the room is the issues of internationalization. There is a IRD working group called Internationalized Registration Data Working Group that are actively deliberating on this issue.

So, in this presentation, I will not discuss too much. I will highlight the problem and we will defer to their recommendations. And following that, I'm going to talk about security, (unintelligible) Whois and finish with registrar abuse point of contact.

So to begin, let's start with the first point, mechanism to find authority to Whois servers. So, the problem is simple. Currently, there's not an easy way to find an updated list of the domain names and IP address of Whois servers authoritative for a given zone. There are lists - previously lists exists, for example there is the MIT list, there's some other that is compiled from third-parties. However, those lists are not updated very frequently.

I just did a test this morning and find some of those already outdated. So, as a result of this, when clients want to find the right Whois server, they often rely on a combination of (characteristics), and also hardware tables, you

know, which are not often updated and some use DNS records to find Whois servers.

This is particularly problematic for the new gTLDs as potentially the top level domains open up, the top level registries could expanded significantly, and finding all the Whois servers for these registries, and the registrars offering those could be quite a challenge. This also pose a challenge for legitimate automation clients.

So, our recommendation, not our recommendation, but recommendation from experts in the community and past reports is to provide a public accessible and (machine) possible list of domain names or IP locations for these Whois servers. We recognize that ICANNs have no contractual power for ccTLDs for R&Rs; however, we hope this could be good practice that we can also include them as well, so that's the first requirement.

On Slide 10, we're going to talk about structured queries. So, the issue here is the Whois server applications varied with the respect how they are expecting clients to submit the query. So, for example - I list two examples here. The first example to find autonomous system number in ARIN you have to query it a certain way, for example with a (preface 8), and if you want to do the same query for (right), you have to add a flag, you know, -T, autonomous number, and then the query, the (AS) number.

We have similar issues -- for example -- to control the response for the IDNs. So, the DK, the Denmark registry, you know, have a flag called character sets and you have to specify what character set. So, JP have a different kind of way to handle that, and so is .de. So, these servers have - they expect the clients to be able to accommodate this and sometimes client won't be able to accommodate for those.

So, this have a negative impact on the user experience and the recommendation here is we think user would benefit from the standard query

structure. So, for example a user may wish to submit a list of the domains to check for the creation date of these domains. With a standard structure he or she can do so without worrying about the specific syntax to do this at each of these Whois servers, and that's why we think it's important.

So, on Slide 12, along with the lines of the standard query format, there has been past GNSO Whois working groups and (as that group reports) have called for expanded query capabilities beyond the simple domain names. And some registries have already expanded their search capability, for example the Dot Moby registry.

The recommendation here is we want to standardize that capability to permit users to submit not only domain names as arguments to search functions, but other - to search, you know, other than - other registration data elements as well. So, that's an inventory.

Moving on to structured responses, the problem today is there's no standard format for data that registrars and registries return for Whois queries. The protocol does not specify that and this - it's up to the individual servers to implement that.

So, there's quite some variability. If you have done Whois queries -- for example -- for a dot-com domain, or for a dot-org domain, you can see such a difference. You know, the data are named - data elements are named differently in different responses and they're formatted differently as well.

So, the compilation here is to define a standard data structure for these Whois responses that can uniquely identify the data and avoid the ambiguity that comes with lack of standardization with the correct syntax and correct semantics.

So, on Slide 15 we talk about standardized errors. Currently, there's no standard set of error messages defined for Whois servers and they may

handle errors differently. So for example, when a Whois client exceeded the limits some servers will not return the query at all, so you just kind of silently ignore the query, other will return an error message specific to that server provider, still other will simply close the connection.

So, this lack of standard error introduces ambiguity and somewhat confusion for the - especially for the users. And the compilation here is to define a set of standardized error messages and standard handling of error conditions. I want to call out for the - for you - just to give an analogy for other protocols, for example the HTTP protocol.

You know, the errors are very well standardized, you know, from, you know, 100 to 200, you know, 400, the usual 404 you get when there's no such page and there's, you know, 500 - there different errors are very well specified. And I think it's along the same reasoning for improvement of Whois that we are putting this compilation requirement.

So, those - I'll just finish talking about the four areas for standardization, standardized query format, standardized query capability, standard output, and standard error handling.

Next, I'm going to - moving on the data side a little bit. I mean, ultimately the usefulness of Whois really lies in the quality of its data, and there a couple of elements for the quality. Is the data accurate, so that's the accuracy; is the data useful, the relevancy, and are the collection data current? So, I'm going to go through each of these points quickly.

So, first I'm going to talk about data accuracy. There have been increasingly concerns about the accuracy of the Whois data. So, we know originally the government accounting office did the Whois accuracy study and find that there are some inaccuracies. And recently we have the NORC Report, and I think the GAO is doing the - redoing its study in 2005 again.

There are a couple of reasons for Whois data to be inaccurate. The primary one is the privacy considerations where individual users are concerned about their privacy, so they put inaccurate information into the Whois. The second reason -- I would call it -- is still - I mean it's the intentional deception from malicious users.

There other reasons - the third one is there's currently little or no collaboration of this omitted data. Our registrars or registries simply take the data given by the user and put it in the Whois system, and last but not least is the user error. So, we ask the question, from a technical perspective, point two we probably couldn't do as much to improve accuracy, but we can do something to - for point three and four, little collaboration of submitted data or user error.

So, moving on to the relevant of the Whois data, certain registration data are not as useful today as they were 20 years ago, for example, you know, the fax information, not many are using fax now. So, we think there maybe - it could - a need for a future's Whois to include other data as well. And to prepare for that, from a data model perspective, we should accommodate extensibility changeability.

So, the compilation is adopt a structured data model for Whois data that provides extensibility and changeability of properties. So, here this structured data model can also improve accuracy somewhat. For example, the structured model can say, you know, "This is the way a telephone number or an email address, or a record that needs to be input in that."

So, with that standard and some kind of (client side) checking by their registrar, we can at least make sure that user are not making - we can catch the user errors at the earlier before they propagate into the Whois system.

So, I'm going to briefly talk about internationalization on Slide 21. Currently, the problem is there's no standard exists today for handling the submission

and display of registration data from local languages and scripts. So, we have some Whois applications of services that may not support the domain names in new labels. So, a user may not be able to query the Whois with a U-label, the IDN U-label, and it may not return that result in a - in the U-label as well.

So, many applications that cannot accept or display when character sets out of a US ASCII 7. And some of these clients, the problem is they use local encodings rather Unicode. So, if I'm a terminal to use Whois client I have to set beforehand the terminal to accept the correct encodings beforehand. You know, their Unicode is one, but there are like hundreds of other local encodings and we can imagine that the problem that this could create.

So, the International Registration Data Working Group is currently considering these technical and also policy issues. And for the purpose of our document, we will defer to that for the recommendations.

And on Slide 23, next I'm going to talk about security. The problem today is currently Whois require no identity assertion, there's no credentialing or no authentication. There's no built in security at all and however, recently there's a growing need for security. For example, there's a growing need to protect the privacy of the registrants, right?

So here, we talk about, you know, early on about a quality of the Whois information and one of the primary barriers is the privacy concern. So, we want to - there are cause to mitigate that in past ASAC reports, and there's also a need called to discourage (harvesting and mining).

Currently, the registrars are doing this mostly through rate limiting of IP addresses, but there are - you know, from a security perspective, rate limiting in using IP address as the authenticator have many problems we can easily - been circumvented, so there's a need for that.

And finally, there have been past proposals to provide differentiated access. So, this a tiered access model that I mentioned very early, beginning of the presentation. And to be able to do that and do these - realize these functionalities, security is no longer a kind of a side conversation. We've kind of come to an essential part of this service.

So, there are three areas of security, or there's actually four, but name - usually named the Quad A requirements, but we only list three of them here. The first one is authenticate authentication. Basically, given - to prove that people who are using the system are the ones that they claim to be, or you have given access to.

So, the second aspect is a access control, giving the right people the right access to certain data elements. And finally, there's needs to be auditing framework to make sure when errors are down we can correct it.

This is a long slide. Slide 26 will list the compilations here. The first is define the authentication framework, and the second is to support an authorization framework that is capable of implementing granular permissions.

So, this requirement is important really for the tiered access, because we need to put granular - essentially per registration data object permission for access control.

So, if these - if any of these policies were to go through the consensus process, we have enough technical capability to implement that. And finally, as to define the framework and baseline set of metrics that can accommodate future policy development for auditing of Whois access.

I'm going to skip - I think I'm going to - for interest of time, skip the thick and thin Whois and talk about the registrar abuse point of contact. The compilation is from past ASAC report and also from the DAG-3 in the new gTLD applicants; basically asking registrars and registries provide a

published abuse point of contact information as the element of domain registration (metric).

So, the background here is increasingly the domain names is being used increasingly as one element in the global electronic crime ecosystem. And so that these crime fighters, for example law enforcement, usually need to get in touch with registrars and registries to handle these issues.

So, with a kind of abuse point of contact information published, they can find the right person to - that can speed up this process. And in the electronic crime research we know that really time is essentially the essence in stopping the crime.

So, I've just kind of gave a brief overview of these various compilations and that there are - obviously there's - for the interest of time, I've omitted many details and you can refer to them in to the paper, especially for the - for our - for the justifications and the references where these recommendations coming from.

So, the next steps for this report -- as Liz mentioned early -- we already released the draft report in March 2010. We are conducting overview Webinars. Today is one and we're doing another one on May 10, mostly for audiences in Europe and Asia and Australia. And we're now consulting with various supporting organizations and advisory committees on the report, and we plan to release a final report by the Brussels meeting incorporating the input of the feedbacks.

So again, we value your feedback very much. I think the - particularly we value your input on, you know, whether we have, you know, adequately identified the origins of these requirements. And also, did we miss any important requirements or improvement to Whois that has been discussed to-date?

And with that note, I want to open up for questions.

Liz Gasster: Steve, thank you so much. It's Liz Gasster. I just want to encourage people who do have questions about the report, the genesis, the purpose, the goals, or any of the content to feel free to ask or to comment on the report.

We are very interested in the views of the community on this and there will be again, also for those of you who are representatives of active and supporting organizations or advisory committees, also to encourage you to encourage your organization to provide input and guidance on the utility of this, and how - and even next steps.

I see (Sebastian) has a question, so let's go to you (Sebastian). Hello.

(Sebastian): Hello, Liz. Can you hear me?

Liz Gasster: Very well, bonjour.

(Sebastian): Okay. Bonjour. Yeah, I have one question, you don't talk at all about, and first of all I need to say that I am not a specialist of (voice), but you don't talk at all about the other possibility like ARIS or IRIS. And is it on purpose or is it because it's something completely different or - because it seems to me that with this presentation we are building a new Whois and maybe like IPV 4 to IPV 6 we need not to build IPV 6, but IPV -- something else -- 8 then, 12, I don't know.

And it's the same thing for Whois; maybe we need to build a new system than trying to find a way to solve the problem of this very old voice system. But, just really a question I have no idea...

((Crosstalk))

Liz Gasster: It's - I think it's a very good question. It's Liz and I'm going to take the first swipe at answering, and then turn it to Steve.

I think that when the GNSO requested that this compilation be done they were actually very careful not to pre - they were certainly thinking about the future and, you know, the increasing -- I guess -- obsolescence of the current technical protocol on Whois. And wanting to be, you know, responsible and responsive to that evolving situation in looking at next steps.

But, they - I think they viewed this compilation as a necessary prerequisite to presupposing what, you know, replacements for Whois might be. And I think it's very important to - for the GNSO and for the other supporting organizations in ACs that have an interest (as to) provide your thoughts about how this might be useful in pursuing that question.

Is it IRIS? Is it a modification of IRIS? Is it some - are there things that can be done with the existing protocol that I think Steve even alluded to that might be helpful in the very short run? Are there other options entirely that should be looked at also? But, I think this is - that - the direction you're going in with your question is the direction the GNSO wants to go in, but with this as a preliminary step.

Steve Sheng: This is Steve. I think that's an excellent question and Liz covered it very well. So, we are not - we are only setting - compiling the requirement and it may be that the current Whois, no matter how hard we try to improve it, may not meet this requirement. And that's setting up the stage for, you know, other protocols.

Thanks.

Liz Gasster: I believe Michele has a comment/question? Go ahead Michele.

Michele Naylon: Yeah, hi. It was - it's an interesting presentation. I mean one thing I think some of it - some of the concepts that are being put out here are very, very valid. I mean things like format and other things. The one - there's a couple of questions that it does leave me with. I mean things like have you looked at things like (domain) and DAC and other systems that are being used by some of the registries?

The other thing as well is have you defined - to what purpose Whois should serve, because should - the problem is that Whois is used for a lot of things that it probably isn't really designed to do. In other words, you have people using it to check domain availability, are there - have your people looking - using it to pull out other bits of data?

And I'd also be a bit fearful about extending which objects one could query in a public Whois, because that opens up a huge can of worms in terms of privacy.

Steve Sheng: Hello, this is Steve. Yeah, again these are excellent questions. I didn't quite hear the first question, but I did - I want to comment on the second question. You mentioned about -- for example -- extending out - increasing the query capacity of Whois. And I think I would encourage you to submit those comments to us and we will include that in the report.

The issue I think you were talking, if I understand correctly, is really the function (creed) that Whois currently today is used for many of the purposes that are not originally intended, and you're calling for reexamining those purposes. We can do that. There are some past Whois policy work in those areas as well. Yeah.

Michele Naylon: Just to clarify, my first thing was with relation to (domain) and DAC as opposed to standard Whois. I mean, it's for doing look ups, so for example, both (numinous) and URID providers, I mean it give a basic - it's much more

basic response. I mean, it's just going to go, yes, no, that type of wave, if - in terms of availability checks.

Steve Sheng: Right.

Michele Naylon: The (numinous) implementation also specifies that you have to pass certain information across the server, so that it - so that you - the client has to pass certain data across so it can track usage. Plus it also has restrictions on IPs and various other things depending on which service you're looking at.

Steve Sheng: Okay. I'm very interested in pursuing this further and if we can talk about this offline and - we can - you know we can discuss more about this. Thanks.

Michele Naylon: No problem.

Liz Gasster: So, we have a comment from (Avri). (Avri), please go ahead.

(Avri): Okay. Yes, hi and thanks for the presentation. Yeah, if I'm understanding correctly, this looks that that's being done is of what the basic technical capabilities would be and what kind of internal, let's say software architecture, software structure, database structure, what have you, that you would need in place to meet these requirements.

So, in other words when people start talking about variable access and stuff like that, those would be capabilities that you would need to sort of add to this list? Is that correct?

Steve Sheng: So, (Avri), so -- for example -- again take the tiered access -- for example -- I think it's what you're referring to. This report concern - it primarily concerned with the technical, you know, finding the - defining kind of the technical requirements to be able to realize those functionalities.

So, we talk about, you know, authentication. We talk about, you know, a per object access control need to build in. So, if those policies - you know, proposals become policy through a consensus process we are able to, you know, actually implement those and meet its policy objectives.

(Avri): Right. Okay.

Steve Sheng: Yeah.

(Avri): So, in terms of the last question you got, how I would have understood that, and I don't know if I understood it correctly, would mean that you'd even have to have a lower set of access that says, you know, the minimal answer is yes, no, and if you've got no access higher than that that would be all that one could get.

So, that would be something that would be built into your access capabilities. Is that a reasonable way of looking at it? It wouldn't just be - I mean, I guess it tiered and the tiered is basically lowest tier is nothing but yes, no.

Steve Sheng: I think not even that. I think that's not a technical question. That's more of an operational and policy question of what do you return. And you know, for us we really want to - you know, even laying out the capabilities of the technology to be - support any of those scenarios...

(Avri): Right. Okay. I...

((Crosstalk))

Steve Sheng: ...so whatever those scenarios would be given to us.

(Avri): Yeah. I...

((Crosstalk))

Steve Sheng: Does that answer your question?

(Avri): ...I think so. So...

Steve Sheng: Okay. Thanks.

(Avri): Yeah, you would have to have attributes on both the kind of thing you did...

Steve Sheng: Yes.

(Avri): ...and the kind of access that a person did, and they'd have to be fine tuned enough so that one could create any number of different operational or operational policy.

Steve Sheng: Yes.

(Avri): Thank you.

Liz Gasster: (Avri), you asked another question about it's not sufficient to submit the questions during these discussions. I want to make sure we answer that. I'm not sure I understand it, and then we'll go to (Luis) and the others in queue.

Did we answer that?

(Avri): The question there was basically at one point when there was previous questions, someone said, "Well, please send that into us." And so, my immediate question is, having brought up the question within this forum is - does one also need to write it up to make sure that it is considered later on. That's all...

Liz Gasster: Oh, I thought it was more clarification on the specifics of the question.

(Avri): Nope. It was process issue.

Liz Gasster: Yeah. Okay. But, really the questions on this call will be considered and questions on the next call that we have on the fourth will also be considered in Steve's subsequent final write-up, so thanks for everyone who's participating in this.

I believe (Luis) is next in the queue. Please go ahead.

(Luis): Oh, hi. Yes, I have a question. Why - because in the (define a new) protocol, don't use a kind of Web serviced based on (XML)? That's my question.

Steve Sheng: Thank you, (Luis), for that question. Again, we're not limiting ourself to the kinds of solutions, so for example the one you mentioned, there is a (restful) Whois that's currently being tested by the - by ARIN, and they use the HTTP, you know, (restful) Whois protocol.

And you know, that could be a potential area, you know, to look into. I mean, the purpose of the document is set the kind of requirements, we do not preclude the kinds of technologies that would fulfill these requirements to a merely Whois.

Thank you.

Liz Gasster: I think the next question is from (Tom Sist). (Tom), please go ahead.

(Tom Sist): Hi there. Not so much a question just as a maybe an operational or even a policy suggestion, and it relates directly to the tiered access idea. Obviously I think that regardless of the entity or the level of access there'll be, you know, a certain level of participation, which will be - or should be mandatory.

And I would think that that participation - the level of participation would become much more substantial as you rise to the level of infrastructure

operators, people that actually - are operating (routing domains) or things like that.

But, within the tiers themselves, it - perhaps it might be useful to consider kind of a symmetrical access for participation policy so that the degree of participation - contribution to the (unintelligible) and accuracy of the database itself is - it basically defines your level of visibility into the rest of it. It seems to me that actually that would be a mechanism that might be useful to improve on the margin the - or reduce on the margin the risks of abusive use of Whois.

And also, might create a kind of a mild virtuous feedback loop, which would encourage people to participate more actively. Given the fact that you're facing probably - (you'll meet) quite a challenge -- shall we say -- to achieve and (sustain) substantially higher levels of accuracy, timeliness, completeness, with the Whois database in general. It's like any little mechanism like this that might help on the margin would be worth considering.

That's it. That was just a suggestion.

Liz Gasster: Thank you, (Tom).

Steve Sheng: Thank you. This is very helpful. I think we can discuss this offline through emails as probably more technically involved and will take a lot more time in the - than in here.

Liz Gasster: Right. So, if you wanted to have more of a dialogue with Steve offline that's with technical - especially technical input, you're welcome to do that. It's steve.S-H-E-N-G@icann.org and feel free to - it's not required at all. We're capturing the discussion, but if you do have my - if you do have more details on the, especially on the technical side, we welcome that.

Adam Scoville is next in queue. Adam, please go ahead.

Adam Scoville: Hi. I have what I think is just a sort of process question in terms of you sort of identified a number of some of the technical issues that need to be overcome or considered. And some of them are - seem somewhat simple, and some of them see somewhat harder.

And I guess my question is just in terms of next steps, I could see some of them saying, “Okay, we can figure out how we can do this,” and others where you might say, “Okay, this is somewhat more difficult and it might be better to decide whether we want that on a policy side or not before we go through the brain damage of figuring out the technical aspects.”

So, I guess it’s sort of a process and which comes first, the chicken or the egg sort of question in terms of developing the technical side versus determining that the technical capability is needed. That - do you understand my question?

Steve Sheng: Yes. Let me see if I can answer that and (I’ll just feel free to) chime in. I think when, you know, from a - my background is technologist and in doing - in going through this access - exercise, some of these areas -- for example -- you know, providing a (mission) possible list of Whois servers is fairly trivial to do, and others such as security will be harder, or in terms of query - different queries will be harder. However, I don’t think technical technology is the limiting factor here.

So, I think it’s more - that is more of a policy and operationally whether, you know, these policies can be - can be - can - these proposals can become consensus policy, but technology is not the (missing) factor here.

Adam Scoville: Well, I guess my question is, you know, even beyond - if you take this example you have on the screen now, the tiered access example, even below the policy and the - even the operational level, I could imagine, you know,

detailed sort of certification authorities and, you know, digital signatures and credentials that might be - might go along with implementing different levels of access.

And I could just sort of see that not being a trivial sort of task and what you'd envision in terms of the order, in terms of developing that in before or after the policy requirements and so forth, because that - I can just imagine that being daunting, even just on purely technical level.

Liz Gasster: Yeah. So, it's Liz and I'm going to just jump in briefly and, Steve, please continue. But, I think you're right in - you know, what I hear you raising is kind of a chicken and egg question about the policy versus the technology. And I think that's something for the GNSO Council to consider and talk about as far as what the next steps - once this report is finalized how does this create or help the task board either, you know, on the technical or policy fronts, or both.

And I think it would be extremely helpful for you, through your, you know, GNSO representatives in particular, to encourage that dialogue in the GNSO. I think Steve and I, you know, as we just spent the time analyzing this over the last month, are also thinking about whether certain changes that might be made - technical changes might be made, which ones really require decision-making on policy in order to implement any structure, versus others that might be useful purely for what they bring to the table, technically and operationally, that may not require policy decisions to be made in advance.

But, you're raising a very complicated and valuable point that I think does need to be considered, as far as next steps by the Council. I don't think it's something that we can really answer here, other than to emphasize that what we've tried to do.

And I think that was sort of the crux of (Aubrey's) question too, is get to what the technical parameters in theory would be needed to support kind of any

and all, or you know, rough approximations of what policy recommendations would require in the way of a technical foundation in the future.

And that's - you know, that - there are vagaries there that definitely require more discussion and consideration by the community.

Adam Scoville: Thanks.

Liz Gasster: We have (Sebastian) again with another question. Thank you.

(Sebastian): Thank you, Liz. (Is that to suggest) that - I was in charge in 2003, '04 to coordinate a team for the evaluation of the gTLD and I know that one part of the technical side of the team made a quite important study on Whois to know - to compare the ways of the new gTLD and the so-called old gTLD and maybe it could be useful that we exchange with Steve on that. And (marginally) there may be a study already done.

I know some of them are public but it could be useful not so much about the result, but how they do it and what was the technical side of those - the study. If it could be useful I will be ready to discuss with you. It will be better if we can do that in Brussels, but if it's done before I will be at Pittsburgh.

Liz Gasster: Oh, and I should have mentioned early on, we are going to do a workshop on -- it's Liz again -- on this report in Brussels. We hope to have the final report done so that we can share all of what - the input that we got, in a sense. And by final, you know, it'll be a draft final for input and discussion in Brussels.

Thank you.

Steve Sheng: Thank you. I very much appreciate that effort and if you could - if you can discuss offline that would be great.

Thanks.

Liz Gasster: Do we have other questions and - or comments or thoughts? Again, I want to encourage people to read the report, to offer their thoughts about - especially to the Council. I think the Council members would appreciate thoughts from the community about next steps, especially recognizing, you know, that things need to move in a sense that maybe in parallel with talking about policy, but talking about the technical and operational too, so thank you so much.

Michele, do you have one more thought?

Michele Naylon: Yeah, is there a comments - is there a period or something open on this report at present, or how is that structured?

Liz Gasster: It's actually - there's not a comment period open, although we'd be happy to open one if the GNSO asks us to. It was really - this is being done at the request of GNSO and this resolution that they passed in May, May 7 and which is this consultation with the SOs and ACs.

We've added these Webinars because we do want to make this report - the contents of this report as accessible and make people aware as much as possible in the community about what we're doing here. And so, that's why we'll take all these comments that we get and we'll of course, take any comments directed at us to my email, to Steve's email, or to policy-staff@icann.org between now and May 17.

And if you do think that the Council should open a public comment period, feel free to urge your Council members to encourage that, which we'd welcome.

Michele Naylon: Okay. Thanks.

Liz Gasster: Any other closing comments? Thank you so much to everyone for participating. Steve, thank you so much for your presentation, and Gisella and (Scott) for your support.

Steve Sheng: Okay. Bye.

Liz Gasster: Thank you. Bye-bye.

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