

Update report on GNSO-requested WHOIS studies



Liz Gasster
Senior Policy Counselor
1 April 2010

Goals of WHOIS studies



- WHOIS policy has been debated for many years
- Many competing interests with valid viewpoints
- GNSO Council hopes that study data will provide an objective, factual basis for future policy making
- Council identified five WHOIS study areas to test hypotheses that reflect key policy concerns
- Council asked staff to determine costs and feasibility of conducting one or more of those studies

GNSO Council-requested WHOIS studies – Cross reference to original study numbers

Study Area/Topic	X-ref to study proposals	Specific studies defined (work in progress)	Current status
1. WHOIS Misuse Studies Extent to which publicly displayed WHOIS data is misused	Study # 1, #14, #21 GAC data set 2	1. Experimental: register test domains and measure harmful messages resulting from misuse 2. Descriptive: study misuse incidents reported by registrants and researchers/law enforcement	Staff analysis provided in this report.
2. WHOIS Registrant Identification Study	GAC 5, GAC 6 #13a, #18 GAC 9, GAC 10	1. Gather info about how business/commercial domain registrants are identified. 2. Correlate such identification with use of proxy/privacy services.	Staff analysis provided in this report.
3. WHOIS Proxy and Privacy Abuse and Reveal Studies	#13b, #13c, #17 GAC 1, GAC 11 #3, #19, #20	1. Relationship between use of proxies and harmful/illegal activity, if any (“Abuse”) 2. Proxy service responsiveness to information requests (“Reveal”)	RFP terms of reference are being developed. The schedule for these has been delayed, as explained in this report.
4. Impact of non-ASCII registration information on accuracy and readability	Previously Study #11	Technical analysis of how entry of non-ASCII registration information is displayed by various client-side software. Analysis would examine and recommend methods to display WHOIS contact information.	On hold pending work of the SSAC-GNSO Internationalized Registration Data Working Group.
5. WHOIS service requirements	Separate request-7 May 2009	Compile a list of WHOIS service requirements based on current + previous policy discussions	Compilation of service requirements is underway. Targeting first draft in March-April timeframe.

Note: Study areas 1-4 reflect all the studies initially requested by the GNSO Council 4 March, 2009. Study area 5 was requested by the Council 7 May, 2009.

1. WHOIS Misuse Studies

Two possible studies to assess whether public WHOIS significantly increases harmful acts and impact of anti-harvesting measures.

1. One would survey registrants, registrars, research and law enforcement orgs about past acts.
2. Another would measure variety of acts aimed at WHOIS published vs. unpublished test addresses.

Used RFP approach, 3 responses

ToR: <http://gnso.icann.org/issues/whois/tor-whois-misuse-studies-25sep09-en.pdf>

Analysis – Misuse studies

- Estimated cost for both -- \$149,000
- Would take roughly 12 months to complete
- Study can count and categorize variety of harmful acts attributed to WHOIS misuse and show that data was probably not obtained from other sources
- Some acts might be too difficult to measure
- Cannot tie WHOIS queries directly to acts, which makes it difficult to prove that reductions in misuse were caused by specific anti-harvesting measures
- Difficult to assess whether measured misuse is “significant”

2. Registrant Identification Study



- How do registrants identify themselves in WHOIS?
- To what extent are domains registered by businesses or used for commercial purposes:
 - 1) Not clearly identified as such in WHOIS; and
 - 2) Related to use of privacy and proxy services?
- Also used RFP approach, 5 responses received
- ToR: <http://gnso.icann.org/issues/whois/tor-whois-registrant-identification-studies-23oct09-en.pdf>

Analysis – Registrant ID Study



- Estimated cost -- \$150,000
- Would take 6-12 months to complete
- Researchers can classify ownership and purpose of what appear to be commercial domains without clear registrant information, and can also measure how many were registered using a Proxy or Privacy service
- Study seems tractable, though some # of domains will be hard to classify
- Several ways results might be useful:
 - Insight on why some registrants are not clearly identified
 - Frequency of P/P service use by businesses

3. Proxy and Privacy Services Studies

- **P/P “Abuse” study** - Relationship between domains associated with illegal/harmful Internet acts and P/P abuse to obscure perpetrator identity, if any
- Would study broad sample of domains associated with many kinds of acts and compare to the overall frequency of P/P registrations
- Draft RFP is almost complete
- Target release in April 2010
- **P/P “Reveal” study** – would measure Proxy service responsiveness to registrant identity reveal requests
- Draft RFP delayed – April 2010 or later

4. Readability of non-ASCII Whois

- Study would involve a technical analysis of how various client-side software displays non-ASCII registration information
- This study is on hold pending work of the SSAC-GNSO Internationalized Registration Data Working Group.
- See https://st.icann.org/int-reg-data-wg/index.cgi?internationalized_registration_data_working_group for more information about the Working Group

5. WHOIS Service Requirements Inventory



- Council asked staff to compile a list of WHOIS service requirements based on policy discussions
- Goal -- to collect and organize a set of requirements for community consideration including
 - Current features identified as needing improvement
 - features to support various, past policy proposals
 - features recommended by ICANN SOs, ACs, community
- “Requirements” mean ***technical*** requirements
 - NOT gathering policy requirements
NOT recommending policy
 - Purpose of study is to consider the data and supporting technology needed to facilitate consideration of new policies

Compilation Includes:



- Mechanism to find authoritative Whois servers
- Structured queries
- Well-defined schema for replies
- Standardized errors
- Standardized Set of query capabilities
- Quality of domain registration data
- Internationalization
- Security (authentication, authorization, auditing)
- Thick vs. Thin Whois
- Registrar abuse point of contact

WHOIS Service Requirements Report Status and Next Steps

- Staff has just distributed an Initial Report to the Council and is soliciting SO/AC review and input
- Hoping to have comments back by 17 May to produce final report by Brussels

Timeline and Next Steps



- Proposed next steps
 - Council discussion and next steps on first two study areas and on WHOIS Services Requirements Report
 - Consideration in context of FY 2011 budget process
 - Develop/finalize RFPs on P/P Services studies
- Staff Contact: Liz Gasster
Policy-staff@icann.org

**Thank You
Questions?**