APrIGF Summary Report

Track 2b: Review of the IANA function

June 17, 2011

Keith Davidson, Chair

On my panel, I had a representative from the NTIA, the US government department to contracts out the IANA function and also someone from ICANN staff in charge of the IANA function, so both contractor and contractoree as part of the panel and then representatives from each of the constituency groups that actually uses the IANA function.

For those, there may be some in the room who don't know what IANA is. So just for the purpose of clarity, this fits under the IGF umbrella issue of critical internet resources and the IANA database is the core database right at the heart of the internet. It contains all the entries for the top level domains, both gTLDs and ccTLDs and IDN TLDs. It contains the IP address allegations to various RIRs and so on. It contains a number of database entries for the internet engineering task force and others. It coordinates the activity of the DNS, so it gives you a resolvable internet.

The database itself is published on to root servers which then allow you to assimilate IP addresses to domain names or as we put it in another way, surf the internet or send email or whatever you like. The trigger for the session was probably that the US Government's NTIA issued a notice of inquiry earlier this year relating to the on-going nature of the IANA contract that ICANN administers. There were more than 80 submissions covering a pretty divergent range of views and just in the last two or three days, the US Government has followed this up with a further notice of inquiry to seek to develop a greater depth and colour and more detail around some of the aspects of the way the IANA contract may be renewed.

Consistent with the US Government's international strategy for cyber space, the NTIA is committed to the multi-stakeholder model for all of its work in internet governance. There was a general indication that the US Government will renew the contract with ICANN for in IANA function, but that there will be some changes to the form and detail and fully reflecting some of the submissions made during the process. The indication is as with the original establishment of ICANN, under a memorandum of understanding, that has transitions to less US Government role through the affirmation of commitments that applies today and the pathway is being laid to perhaps transition greater autonomy away from the US Government to ICANN and IANA.

The panellists highlighted those aspects of the IANA functions that are consistent across the IANA customer community and then some of the key differences. At one end of the spectrum, in the protocol assignments, the co-operatively developed service level agreements and reporting metrics that are working and useful to the parties to those agreements. Further along the IP addressing community has a comparatively low level of transactions with IANA and the five Regional Internet Registries who then further distribute IP address blocks have their own clear development policy processes, both within and outside of ICANN, when appropriate.

Their assertion was that they, like most of us, seek an IANA that is more exempt from government control and subject to tighter performance standards and reporting in some form. The ccTLD community should be noted as being the more disparate community that uses the IANA functions and with less than half of the total country code top level domains having any formal engagement with ICANN, and servicing their communities in diverse ways, it's more difficult to find a common theme amongst the ccTLDs, but there's a general desire for establishing performance or enhancing performance standards and reporting within IANA.

The gTLD community have more within ICANN, established policies than the ccTLDs and they did share the common view that performance standards and open transparent reporting is a requirement. The general agreement was that there has been study progress and improved processes within IANA and cooperative development will see on-going improvements. Some forthcoming issues such as DNSSEC key changing within the database will require some changes to accommodate much faster updates to this database due to some technical aspects of the way those things happen.

There is some pressure on IANA, not just with the new gTLDs, new IDNs, but also in terms of newer technologies such as DNSSEC. There was strong consensus from the panel on the need to identify what IANA, what is and also what is not under IANA control and agreed that there is a strict separation between the process that IANA undertakes and the policy document. Other issues of some note were the SIG called potential transition of the .int top level domain away from ICANN. The desire to incorporate RFC 1591 as an acknowledged source of policies affecting delegations and re-delegations of ccTLDs and the likelihood of recognising the role of government in relation to the operation of TLDs.

In summary, I think it would be fair to say that the NOI process has brought some interesting issues now receiving further consideration by this next notice of information and anyone who is particularly interested and fascinated by this topic can make submissions to the US Government through to 29 July and going forward, it seems probable that ICANN will continue to manage the IANA function under a form of increasing independent from the US Government to ICANN and there will be a requirement for greater accountability and openness and transparency for these functions, increasing objectivity and reducing subjectivity in decision making being a key component of the future IANA.

We were left with one audience member's question and what next? So I think what we have seen is probably the pathway for the next three years of improving performance and increased reporting and so on and the and what next is the unanswered question that we should probably consider at a future stage.