

WHOIS Taxonomy

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Status

- WHOIS has been discussed for over 10 years.
- The SSAC has issued 5 advisories.
- From the AoC: ICANN commits to "enforcing its existing policy relating to WHOIS, subject to applicable laws."
- From the WHOIS Review Team:
 - Assess the extent to which WHOIS policy is effective and its implementation meets the legitimate needs of law enforcement and promotes consumer trust.

What is WHOIS?

- One term, many meanings:
 - WHOIS protocol that specifies the network exchange between a client and server.
 - A conceptual database of domain registration data that registries or registrars maintain as part of their ordinary operations.
 - The domain registration data that registrants provide and ICANN accredited registrars and registries are obliged to make accessible to the public.
- This ambiguity leads to confusion in discussions, hampers the multi-stakeholder consensus process.

GAP Analysis

- Varying implementation strategies contribute to inconsistent user experiences and prevent interoperability:
 - No standards to signal message encodings;
 - No standards for signaling errors;
 - Registration data displays vary according to service provider; and
 - No support for access control.

What is WHOIS Data?

- The Extensible Provisioning Protocol includes a definition of “WHOIS Data.”
- Both the ICANN accredited registry and registrar contracts separately include a definition of “WHOIS Data.”
- Nothing addresses the lack of support for internationalized registration data.

Uses of WHOIS Protocol

- Contact database for technical administrators:
 - Network issues; and
 - Web site issues.
- Diagnosing registration difficulties.
- Associating an identity with a domain:
 - To find organizations and individuals;
 - For ordinary business due diligence purposes; and
 - For malicious activity investigative purposes.

Findings

- WHOIS services do not meet the needs of users.
- A taxonomy of elements of a domain registration system is essential to scope discussions and facilitate consensus on the various registration data related issues facing domain registration systems.

Recommendations

- A taxonomy be developed and adopted for use in all documents, discussions, and events; the SSAC proposes a draft taxonomy:
 - 1) Data model;
 - 2) Directory Service; and
 - 3) Protocol.
- Solutions be developed separately for each element in the taxonomy, with the priority being as listed above.

References

See 9.3.1 of the Affirmation of Commitments:

<http://www.icann.org/en/documents/affirmation-of-commitments-30sep09-en.htm>

SSAC Documents

SAC 003, *WHOIS Recommendation* 7 February 2003

SAC 014, *Information Gathering Using Domain Name Registration Records* 28 September 2006

SAC 023, *Is the WHOIS Service a Source for email Addresses for Spammers?* 23 October 2007

SAC 027, *SSAC Comment to GNSO regarding WHOIS studies* 7 February 2008

SAC 033, *Domain Name Registration Records and Directory Services* 20 June 2008)

WHOIS Policy Review Team:

<https://community.icann.org/display/whoisreview/WHOIS+Policy+Review+Team>