

# Internet body to reveal claims to new online addresses

June 12 2012, by Glenn Chapman

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Participants in an Internet land rush will be revealed Wednesday when the agency in charge of website addresses discloses the list of applicants for domain names ranging from .web to .porn and beyond.

The [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#) will release details at a press conference in London about more than 1,900 applications to operate website neighborhoods breaking the .com address mold.

ICANN began taking requests in January from those interested in establishing Internet domains that replace endings such as .com or .org with nearly any acceptable word, including company, organization or city names.

The new system would allow for so-called generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) such as .Apple or .IMF or .Paris.

The California-based ICANN says the huge expansion of the Internet, with two billion users around the world, half of them in Asia, requires the new names.

"This is a truly historic moment in the Internet," said Bhavin Turakhia, chief executive of global Web hosting firm Directi, which has applied for 31 new gTLDs including .web and .music.

ICANN has promised this will not be the only chance for those

interested in staking out new Internet neighborhoods, but Turakhia is convinced prime real estate will be snapped up in the first round.

"This particular expansion of the name space is only going to take place once," he said. "Any good options will be taken in this round."

Dubai-based Directi has spent about \$30 million on gTLD applications for domains including .law, .bank and .doctor.

-- \$352 million in application fees --

ICM Registry, which runs freshly established gTLD .xxx, is out to add other online red-light districts ending in .sex, .porn or .adult

Registration costs \$185,000 and a \$25,000 annual fee and ICANN has raked in \$352 million in application fees.

"The expansion of the domain space has been a long time in the making," Turakhia said. "People need to be able to register more desirable names that better reflect their intent."

Internet security specialists at San Francisco-based Artemis have applied for a .secure domain they plan to turn into a safe zone where websites must use tools to thwart hackers, viruses, snoops and scammers.

"We are going to make it really airtight so even if you were in Syria the Syrian government couldn't hijack you," Artemis chief technical officer Alex Stamos said.

The nonprofit Public Internet Registry (PIR) behind .org has asked for the rights to .ngo and .ong.

"The 'NGO' term holds great weight globally and sets these organizations

apart from commercial or governmental entities," said PIR chief executive Brian Cute.

"We found that no matter the location, NGOs desired a definitive online presence to help manage members, strengthen fundraising campaigns and find potential partners and donors."

Revelation of gTLD requests will mark the start of a period during which formal objections will be weighed by ICANN.

This will include resolving conflicts that arise from [domain names](#) similar enough to be confusing and those requested by multiple applicants. Auctions will be held where several qualified applicants are vying for the same gTLD.

-- Hundreds of new domain names expected --

There are currently 22 gTLDs, including .com. Hundreds of new names are expected to eventually become online venues for websites.

Unchallenged gTLD names could get through the approval process in as few as nine months, while those facing opposition could be bogged down for a year or two, according to outgoing ICANN chief Rod Beckstrom.

"We will move from .com or .biz to company names, brand names, city names... that is going to give the whole domain name space a different look and feel," Beckstrom said.

"And we will, for the first time, have gTLDs in non-Latin script," he said. "I think it is a revolution."

The plan to expand the number of Internet domain names has come under fire in the US Congress and been branded a potential "disaster" by

the head of the Federal Trade Commission.

Esther Dyson, a former ICANN chairman, told a Senate Commerce Committee hearing in December the expansion of gTLDs was unnecessary and would only confuse Internet users.

"Creating a whole set of redundant names isn't useful," Dyson said. "This whole idea is fundamentally misguided."

Critics argue that organizations and businesses will be forced to spend money on domains or websites they don't want or need solely to prevent others from using their names or well-known brands.

"Companies are going to have to buy their name back to protect themselves," said Daniel Jaffe, executive vice president of the Association of National Advertisers. "Even big companies will be facing very large expenses."

Some feared that countries might block access to domains based on words deemed offensive, exacerbating a "balkanization" of the Internet.

ICANN senior vice president Kurt Pritz, testifying before the Senate committee, staunchly defended the plan, however, as "well thought out."

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