

Privacy gaffe discovered in Internet address bids (Update)

June 15 2012, by ANICK JESDANUN

(AP) — The organization in charge of introducing new Internet addresses to rival ".com" briefly suspended access to some of the documents on its website after a privacy gaffe.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers said it had mistakenly published the postal addresses of some individuals — information that was meant to be private. The disclosure was limited to cities and countries in some cases, while full street addresses appeared in others.

The discovery came late Thursday, a day after ICANN revealed nearly 2,000 proposals for new Internet suffixes, including ".joy," ".barefoot" and ".google." It will be the largest expansion of the Internet address system since its creation in the 1980s.

ICANN posted documents with the proposals to allow the public to comment and raise objections. The documents include bidders' plans for the new names and full contact information for the businesses involved, but they were supposed to list only phone and email information belonging to individuals.

ICANN restored those documents after removing the postal addresses on individuals. It was not immediately clear how long that took; the documents appeared to be inaccessible for no more than a few hours. ICANN did not immediately respond to requests for more information Friday.

This spring, ICANN had to suspend access to its system for letting bidders submit proposals after it discovered technical glitches that exposed some private data. That took more than a month to fix and restore. ICANN also goofed during Wednesday's announcement. It displayed Arabic names left to right rather than right to left, as the language is written.

The latest gaffe provided more fodder for critics of ICANN and the name expansion. Skeptics have questioned ICANN's ability to run the program smoothly in the long run, given that technical problems have cropped up early on.

"If this weren't all so incredibly serious, one could get quite a laugh over the concept of The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight being in charge of this process," Lauren Weinstein, co-founder of People For Internet Responsibility, said on his Privacy Forum mailing list.

ICANN officials say the names expansion will permit innovation and increase choice. A new suffix could, for instance, be used to identify sites that have a certain level of security protection. It could be used to create online neighborhoods of businesses affiliated with a geographic area or an industry.

Critics say the names will create confusion among Internet users, while providing little benefit in an era where people often find websites by using a search engine rather than typing in the address.

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Privacy gaffe discovered in Internet address bids (Update) (2012, June 15) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-privacy-breach-internet.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.