

".Oops": Glitch forces extension for new suffixes

13 April 2012, By ANICK JESDANUN , AP Technology Writer

You're probably familiar with ".com" and ".org." How about ".oops"? A technical glitch forced the abrupt shutdown of a system for letting companies and organizations propose new Internet domain name suffixes. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, which is in charge of domain names, said some private data may have been exposed.

ICANN has been taking applications for new suffixes to join ".com" and others in use. Up to 1,000 [domain name suffixes](#) could be added each year in the most sweeping change to the domain name system since its creation in the 1980s.

The idea is to let Las Vegas hotels, casinos and other attractions congregate around ".Vegas," or a company such as Canon Inc. draw customers to "cameras.Canon" or "printers.Canon." The new system will also make Chinese, Japanese and Swahili versions of ".com" possible.

The application deadline had been Thursday, but ICANN decided to shut the system down early after discovering the glitch. The system will reopen Tuesday, and the deadline has been extended to next Friday.

ICANN said the [software glitch](#) "allowed a limited number of users to view some other users' file names and user names in certain scenarios." It wasn't immediately clear whether that included proprietary information on the names of the bidders and their proposed suffixes. ICANN officials did not immediately respond to emails Friday seeking clarification.

"Out of an abundance of caution, we took the system offline to protect applicant data," Chief Operating Officer Akram Atallah wrote on ICANN's website. "We are examining how this issue occurred and considering appropriate steps forward."

The glitch did not affect general availability of the Internet's [domain name system](#) - the databases that let Internet-connected computers know where to send email and locate websites. It also did not affect the ability to register new names under existing suffixes.

Rather, the glitch was with the software ICANN had set up to take applications for new suffixes.

After several years of discussion, ICANN opened a three-month application window in January. Names of bidders and proposed suffixes were to remain confidential until April 30, when ICANN had been scheduled to release the list for public comments and objections. It's not clear whether that date will be changed because of the deadline extension.

The delay shouldn't have a major effect on the availability of new suffixes, as the new names wouldn't appear in general use until at least next spring anyhow.

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