

*Everybody wants a piece of the pie*

## Domain Name Game Reaches Whole New Level

The number of possible website names is about to get much bigger. Applications for the next round of expansion of the **Domain Name System (DNS)** by the world authority ICANN recently ended. The 2,000 submissions listed online show a huge number of wealthy would-be domain squatters and give hints of their high ambitions. While meant to make the Internet more flexible, responsive, and to aid in finding websites, the end result could well be even more confusion that exists today.

Unlike the change in numerical addresses also going on, this part of the system has been enlarged several times already. DNS identifies websites by names, which humans find much easier to remember than the intricate strings of digits that machines rely upon. What DNS does is organize and limit those names and associate them with the numerical address.

The system itself is fairly simple and elegant. Each Domain Name consists of three parts or labels, with the biggest being the last. For example, our address `www.swcp.com` consists of "com" which indicates the site is a commercial site in the US, our domain label "swcp" designates the chunk of cyberspace that is owned by Southwest Cyberport, and finally a sub-domain label, "www" meaning it's a website.

The system is strictly hierarchical: `www` indicates the web portion of the site belonging to `swcp`, one site among millions in the `com` category. It is this last part that has been expanded. These categories are known as **Top-Level Domains (TLDs)**. The first one was `arpa`, for the ARPANET, the predecessor of the Internet, and is still being used for special purposes today. Originally, they were highly restricted to either two-letter Country Codes, such as "fr" for France, "cn" for China and so on, or as "Generic" TLDs, a few basic categories describing their nature.

Some are highly regulated: "mil" for US military, "edu" for educational institutions, "org" for non-profits, and "gov" for governmental entities. Others are open, such as "com," for commercial entities, and "net" for organizations providing networking infrastructure. However, with such severely restricted

options, the most desirable names were highly sought after, especially those ending in `com`. This led to **domain squatters** who could charge enormous amounts for names and all kinds of speculation.

ICANN first expanded the system in 2000, with adoption of `aero`, `biz`, `coop`, `info`, `museum`, `name`, and `pro`. After much discussion, `xxx` for pornography was added a decade later, but for a sufficient fee, people and institutions can have their own domains safe from sleaze merchants. More recently, internationalized country code TLDs have been added for languages that do not use the Latin alphabet, including those in Arabic, Cyrillic, and Chinese.

Still, the system is pretty limited. At the present time, there are only 22 Generic TLDs and some 280 Country Codes. In 2008, ICANN decided to open the system up "to increase competition and choice." Now, just about any string of characters can be considered.

These TLDs, though they may sound generic, are exclusive. Trademark owners can claim rights for these (only Microsoft will get to use `microsoft`), or special community relevance (like Paris owning `paris`). However, there are a surprising number of speculators out there – especially considering that it is anything but cheap. Just to register for evaluation costs \$185,000, and there are various other fees that may apply, like the "Dispute Resolution Filing Fee" (which could go to \$122,000 "or more"). The amount



*Continued on back*

*Continued from front*

of paperwork, the information that must be included to support the application, and the varied twists and turns of the process are not trivial, either.

ICANN wanted competition, and that's what they've got. Here are some cases where more than 5 parties applied for the same name: *art, baby, buy, cloud, corp, cpa, design, game, hotel, law, ltd, love, mail, movie, music, news, now, online, play, restaurant, sale, shop, store, style, tech, tickets, vip, and web.*

The most popular proved to be *app* with 14, followed by *home* and *inc* (both with 11), and *blog, book, and llc* with 9 would-be owners each. Surprisingly few went for some themes that previous disputes would indicate great interest – there is only one applicant for *adult* and two for *sex*.

Some, however, indicate high hopes. Take **Amazon**, for example. They put dibs in on 76 from *amazon* to zero, including *author, book, buy, call, game, kids, kindle, movie, music, play, shop, and video* – plus 11 more in non-Latin alphabets.

The bill just to apply for all these comes to more than \$14 million – and it could be much more if there are any disputes, which seems inevitable. **Google**, however, is even more determined, with over 100 applications. While a few of these may be to protect brands, they must also be figuring on some way of making back their substantial investment, just like the other speculators.

For there are some very rich individual players, too. One entrepreneur who bought up 320,000 domain names after the dot-com bust is betting \$60 million, while a new start up, *donuts.co*, is plunking down \$100 million for 307 TLDs.

What ICANN has done is to accept applications for just about any domain name imaginable but at such a high price that few can risk. However, unlike the generic codes, where any museum can use *museum*, these are strictly limited. After all, it makes sense that only the Ford Motor Company could use *ford*.

But should Amazon be granted the sole right to use *author* or *book, mail* or *kids*? This seems especially questionable (not to mention greedy) since the company states in its proposal that it will *not* register domains within those TLDs to anyone other than Amazon and its subsidiaries. This doesn't expand options but restricts them even further. It's difficult to see how innovation or the marketplace will be helped by such plans.

Will more name possibilities lessen competition eventually, or will the expanded horizons make getting the right domain name even more important? Will the prices for all domains drop substantially due to the glut? Or will corporate "**walled gardens**" become even more huge and isolated?

*Continued from previous column*

The winners of the scramble for TLDs, however, are not guaranteed success. Since the beginning, *com* has completely dominated the domain game. Using anything else is like swimming upstream; even the TLDs approved over a decade ago are little used. It may take millions in advertising dollars by big players to educate the public to get used to the new names.

Whatever happens, SWCP, as a webhost and registrar, is committed to providing you with the widest choices available for the lowest price, with free whois privacy as well. Most domains within generic TLDs (*com, net, org, biz, info, name, us*) can be registered or transferred to SWCP with DNS service for a mere **\$20/year**. We can also register *mobi* (for mobile), *asia*, and a host of foreign country codes. Check our website for the various terms, conditions, and prices. Whatever your web-publishing needs, your domain awaits.



## Ideas & Coffee Coworking Space Open

We're happy to announce the grand opening of **Ideas and Coffee**. This is a comfortable office environment next door to us available for meetings and work space, with Wi-fi, printers, and of course, coffee.

To celebrate, SWCP will be hosting **Code 66 Albuquerque Hackathon** there from *Friday evening, July 13 through Sunday afternoon July 15*. This is a chance for coders, app developers, designers, and builders to engage in intense, productive, cooperative brainstorming to make your great ideas come alive. Sign up at <http://code66abq2012.eventbrite.com/>.

## WordCamp Albuquerque Returns

Exploring all things related to **WordPress**, the popular and versatile open-source publishing platform, **WordCamp Albuquerque** was such a success last year that they're doing it again. If you want to market your products online, or merely do some blogging, this event is for you. Come and meet other WordPress users, from beginners to developers. There will be panels for all levels of interest and expertise. Mark your calendars *August 24-26*, and sign up soon at <http://2012.albuquerque.wordcamp.org/>.



**Southwest Cyberport**

New Mexico's Expert Internet Service Provider since 1994

505-243-SWCP (7927) • [SWCP.com](http://SWCP.com) • [Help@swcp.com](mailto:Help@swcp.com)

5021 Indian School NE, Suite 600, Albuquerque, NM 87110

Portal editor/chief writer, Jay Nelson [jnelson@swcp.com](mailto:jnelson@swcp.com)