

Telecommunities Canada (TC) AGM
November 18, 2020
President's Report

Current projects:

- Continued participation in policy making at the international level through the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

This year I was elected to a second 2-year term as the North American At-Large Organization's (NARALO) representative to the ICANN At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC). Within ICANN, At-Large structures and individual members form the basis of a community representing the interests of Internet end-users worldwide. TC is one of 22 North American At-large structures. The 15 member At-Large Advisory Committee votes on the final recommendations provided by various working groups examining proposed policy from the perspective of impact on endusers.

ICANN is essential to the operation of the Internet. It is a U.S. based multistakeholder group and nonprofit organization responsible for coordinating the unique identifiers which match domain names with IP addresses and ensuring its stability and security. This is a decision making body where policies can have wide ranging impacts on the operation of the Internet. Examples of such policies would include establishing the rules around any new roll-out of top level domain names, restricting the use of geographic names at the top level, and addressing DNS abuse and privacy/security issues.

More about the role of ICANN in the operation of the Internet can be found here:

<https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/what-2012-02-25-en>

Why is this important?

Within the ICANN multistakeholder model, At-Large is the constituency that presents the perspectives of Internet endusers in policy discussions. The participation of organizations like TC are vital to the integrity of this model.

Policy discussions I have focussed on this year:

-- seeking a broadening and fine-tuning of the rules relating to the community application process for top level domains. There is a special process for communities who wish to apply for a top level domain. In the last (2012) round, various communities (e.g. .gay) were unable to access this process due to a very narrow application of the concept of community. There is also a community support program which required changes.

-- advocating a tightening of the rules regarding who gets to own a geographic domain name -- e.g. name of a city, territory or province. Although the names of capital cities are protected, other cities, large and small, are in danger of losing their name to a private concern, possibly having to buy it back in the future. At-large has been attempting to at least make sure that geographic entities should be notified before this happens.

-- participated in an enduser protest about a contractual change that would have led to the privatization of the .org domain name -- a legacy domain that was specifically set aside for the use of

non-profits and was to be owned and operated by a non-profit organization. I wrote written an article which explains this dispute and its resolution for the NB Media Coop. It can be found here: <https://nbmediacoop.org/2020/05/07/public-interest-victory-on-the-internet/>

-- At-large lead on the ICANN project to evolve their multistakeholder model over the next 5 years. The ICANN multistakeholder model is unique in the Internet ecosystem, a decision making system structured through by-laws to ensure that policy is developed through a bottom-up process which includes all constituencies. However, there is a great discrepancy in who is/can be involved. For the representatives of registrars, registries, trademark and IP communities, well-funded lobby groups and governments, ICANN is part of their job. The volunteer sector engaged at the At-Large and Non-commercial Stakeholder groups (NCSG), struggle to keep up with the continuously flowing calls for comments on technical and non-technical policy issues. The community has undergone a long process of identifying the issues that need to be addressed. These include inefficiency, siloing, distrust, burnout, and others. How these are addressed will determine the future of the model and the role of At-Large as the voice of the end-user community.

- Participation in the Canadian Internet Governance Forum (CIGF).

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) provides a multistakeholder platform to facilitate the discussion of public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. This is not a decision making body but it is still politically influential.

I am on the steering committee for the Canadian Internet Governance Forum which will be held in virtually on November 24-25 2020. Keynote speaker: Mark Surman, CEO, Mozilla. This is being co-ordinated by CIRA. Registration at: <https://canadianigf.ca/>

Why is this important?

Regional fora are held around the world with some of their conclusions then being fed into the content of the main IGF (this year being held virtually in Poland). The CIGF acts as a multistakeholder forum to gather, discuss and disseminate Internet governance issues of importance to Canadians. For a report from the 2019 CIGF held in Toronto see: <https://canadianigf.ca/reports/>

Other activities

From my home in Ottawa I attended three virtual ICANN public meetings this year -- in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Cancun, Mexico and Hamburg, Germany. So far, the ICANN policy has been to maintain the timezone of the original location. So, Malaysia and Germany both occurred at night for me. ICANN is currently reevaluating this policy. However, whatever the final decision, it will always be difficult for some part of the world.

I have been an advisor in a new educational venture called the virtual school of Internet governance (VSIG) and will be giving a lecture there on the multistakeholder system. This school offers an intensive study of technical and social internet governance issues. For more information: <https://www.virtualsig.org/>

I am regularly invited to briefings organized by the ISED team which represents Canada in ICANN's influential Government Advisory Committee. Canada is currently vice-chairing this Committee. In these briefings, various policy issues are discussed and input is sought from stakeholders.