

Policies for Implementing the Whois Referral Service within the Region Covered by LACNIC

Justification

During the LACNIC IV Public Forum the suggestion was made to analyze the feasibility of using the Whois Referral service in the region. The Public Forum approved the creation of a Work Group for analyzing the possibility that ISPs implement internal WHOIS where they can internally administer their blocks and to add a reference to the ISPs' WHOIS service in LACNIC's WHOIS (hence the name "Referral WHOIS").

Results on the Referral Whois Service Work Group

This Work Group did not reach consensus or prepare a specific proposal. The intention of this document is to summarize the opinions and discussions generated within this Group.

BACKGROUND

One of the most important services offered by LACNIC is WHOIS database query. Through these queries it is possible to verify which resources have been assigned to which organizations and the corresponding contacts, thus ensuring three important aspects.

1. The uniqueness of resources.
2. Information for contacting those responsible for the networks in case a problem should arise.
3. Justifying the use of resources at the time of applying for additional resources.

The Referral Whois (RWHOIS) system, within the region covered by LACNIC, is an option implemented only in Brazil's NIR. This service had already been implemented at the time LACNIC was created.

RWHOIS allows a member of LACNIC to implement a local WHOIS service within its network and populate this database according to its associated resources. In addition, in LACNIC's WHOIS, when a query is made in relation to a resource which has been assigned to a client that has RWHOIS service, returns a reference pointing to the client's WHOIS server where more precise information may be obtained.

Currently only ARIN has this service.

The implementation of RWHOIS may offer certain advantages and disadvantages, which are listed in the following paragraphs.

ADVANTAGES

1. It decentralizes data storage, and in theory simplifies the process of updating data by having local administration.
2. It offers the client the advantage of controlling the administration of its resources locally.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Nothing guarantees that these servers will be active at all times. This means that when the query is referred to these WHOIS servers there will be no answer, and the principle of offering network contact information at all times will fail.
2. The RWHOIS service is based on the same protocol established in RFC 2167 (<http://www.rwhois.net/docs/rfc2167.txt>). This protocol currently operates with ARIN's WHOIS database, but not with those of the other registries, RIPE and APNIC. In the case of LACNIC, important modifications would have to be introduced in order to allow communication between WHOIS servers using this protocol.
3. Under the RWHOIS system, by delegating Internet resource registration to local databases, LACNIC loses control over these resources, and there is the danger of not fulfilling the objective of offering registry information to the Internet community.

The following observations were made in relation to these issues:

- In relation to the advantage that decentralizing the information represents, this will only work if LACNIC modifies the reassignment process. Currently the ISP client that receives a reassignment must authenticate itself in LACNIC's Registry System before being able to receive the block. This means that the WHOIS registration process does not depend solely on the ISP. In addition, if this service is accepted by the community, LACNIC's WHOIS system shall have to be modified in order to adapt to RWHOIS standards.
- In relation to the problems posed by the probability that RWHOIS servers may not be operational, additional policies could be implemented in order to avoid these inconveniences.
- Likewise, another idea that was highlighted was that the spirit is that the relations between LACNIC and its clients are based on good faith, a fact that may help deploy the RWHOIS and diminish the relative importance of the disadvantage of losing the guarantee that WHOIS service information will be provided with precision and efficiency because it is delegated to third parties. In this sense, appropriate policies may help maintain these guarantees.

Additional information on the RWHOIS experience obtained at other Registries may be found at:

<http://www.apnic.net/meetings/15/sigs/db/minutes.html>

<http://www.apnic.net/meetings/15/sigs/db/docs/db-pres-ggm-rqmts-run-local-whois.ppt>

<http://www.apnic.net/meetings/15/sigs/db/docs/db-christensen-rwhois.ppt>

<http://www.apnic.net/meetings/15/sigs/db/docs/db-doc-ggm-rqmts-running-local-whois.doc>

<http://www.rwhois.net>

http://www.arin.net/policy/2003_5_orig.html

http://www.arin.net/policy/2003_5.html