

Memo on accreditation models

What is the purpose of accreditation?

There are (at least) two radically different notions of “accreditation” implicit in our discussions so far. I have tried to differentiate them here:

- Proposed Purpose 1: Accreditation is an agreement that provides parties requesting disclosure with ongoing permission to use the SSAD while binding them to a code of conduct governing their access to and use of the disclosed data. It also provides the administrators of the SSAD a means of enforcing that code of conduct through withdrawal/limitation of accreditation.
- Proposed Purpose 2: Accreditation is a way of certifying that parties requesting disclosure are legitimate members of a recognized “user group.”

Who performs accreditation?

The answer to this question hinges on which of the two proposed purposes

- For purpose 1: Accreditation would be performed by whatever entity administers and operates the SSAD, assuming that there is a centralized SSAD. Alternatively, it could be done by ICANN, making ICANN responsible for approving or withdrawing accred.
- For purpose 2: Accreditation would be performed by external groups that are designated as legitimate and representative of some sector; e.g., “cyber security researchers” or “trademark holders”

Consequences of the two models

- Purpose 1:
 - Ties accreditation directly to the administration of the SSAD, thereby linking administration and the granting, withdrawal and enforcement of SSAD use rights
 - Requires one accrediting agency, i.e. work concentrated on a single party
 - Could be standardized agreement for all parties
 - Abuses and enforcements would have to be linked (via policy) to certain levels of punishment; i.e., temporary limitations on access, full withdrawal of access, etc.
- Purpose 2:
 - Seems to require some kind of formal designation and listing of user groups in policy
 - What happens to requests that come from people/organizations who do not fit into the categories represented by user groups?
 - If accrediting groups are self-nominating:
 - Someone, probably the entity responsible for administering the SSAD, must serve as the point of application for requests to represent and accredit specific user groups
 - Would external accreditors be exclusive for each user group category? What if multiple parties applied to become accreditors of a single category?

- How would we handle accrediting agencies that were clearly biased; i.e. they were set up to facilitate indiscriminate access to Whois data and accredit anyone who asks?
- Would someone would have formally recognize – i.e., accredit – the accreditors?
- Could accreditors representing user groups with an interest in access to data be relied upon to take enforcement actions against those members who abuse their access to data?
- If (as principle 8 in the policy draft says) “being identified as part of a particular user group does not create an automatic right of disclosure,” what role does accreditation play in the evaluation of requests?
- If Purpose 2 form of accreditation exists, wouldn’t there still need to be a contract with the SSAD imposing a code of conduct