REPORT FROM THE 1st RSSAC WORKSHOP

7 January 2016

During September 23–24, 2015, the Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC) conducted its first workshop, graciously hosted at the University of Maryland, and equally graciously supported by ICANN.

The purpose of the workshop was to begin work on a foundation for the future evolution of the root server system (RSS). This involved identifying and expressing in clear terms the fundamental attributes for the current model of operation of the RSS.

To prepare for the workshop, the RSSAC first brainstormed a number of questions. These questions were further sorted and prioritized by a designated workshop planning subgroup, which also established ground rules and mechanics for the workshop.

In order to keep the discussions focused, the questions were divided into three areas: accountability, continuity, and evolution. For each area, two session leaders were appointed to lead the discussion, keep the discussions on topic, and record the consensus results.

By discussing the pre-considered questions and making an inventory of facts and areas to explore, the RSSAC attempted to achieve consensus from multiple opinions and standpoints. In doing so, the RSSAC identified needs for further exploring and documenting in clear terms the current structures that surround the existing root server system – its history, its operators, and its operation. The RSSAC also tried to identify some prerequisites for the future evolution of the root server system.

Accountability

Consensus was reached on the following accountability related statements:

1. The RSSAC acknowledges that the root server operators have a responsibility to the Internet for providing good overall service.
2. The RSSAC understands that in addition to the above, there exist various forms of accountability to local communities. These forms of accountability vary from operator to operator, and there is diversity among those. This diversity in accountability is an important part of the strength of the current system.
3. The RSSAC identifies that the root server operators have responsibilities towards each other.
4. The RSSAC is not aware of an existing procedure to designate a root server operator.
5. The RSSAC suggests that a process to designate a root server operator be defined, in case it is needed in the future, and the RSSAC expects to participate in the development of that process.

Continuity

Consensus was reached on the following statements related to continuity of the root server system:

1. The RSSAC should document the position, including the underlying reasons, that the demise of any single root operator letter does not pose an immediate problem for the root server system.
2. The various aspects of diversity of the root server operations are strengths of the overall system. Especially the diversity in the following areas help strengthen the system:
   a. Diversity in funding models,
   b. Diversity in operational models, and
   c. Diversity in governance structures.
3. The RSSAC recommends that the root server operators document and promote the long track record of uninterrupted operation of the RSS.

Evolution

On the topic of future evolution of the root server system, the RSSAC reached consensus on the following statements:

1. It is desirable to define the key technical elements of potential root operators that would be a critical part of a yet to be defined root server operator designation process.
2. The RSSAC recognizes that root server operators must stay ahead of capacity and performance demands.
3. The RSSAC should craft a strategy for better transparency.
4. Emerging technologies effecting the RSS should be embraced as long as the Internet globally unique public name space (as expressed in IAB statement in RFC 2826) is preserved.

The workshop was a success as it accomplished its goals of: 1) discussing the evolution of the Root Server System, and 2) coming to a common understanding about some points related to evolution, accountability and continuity. As a result of our focused deliberations, we now have a 'new and better understood spreadsheet' of issues which the RSSAC will use as essential input to its future work and for its interactions with the RSSAC Caucus.

The RSSAC would like to express its gratitude to ICANN for supporting the workshop, to University of Maryland for hosting it, and to all people involved in arranging it and making it happen.