

Modern Tools Solve Ancient Riddle

Cindy Romaine, MLIS, Principal, Romainiacs Intelligent Research

Abstract: This paper demonstrates how to use the ‘connect, collaborate, strategize’ model to the fullest, as we describe how information professionals solved a classic information overload problem. The client, ICANN, now offers users a web portal that pulls data from nearly 100 sources, combines and filters the information, and outputs the results into logical streams. By working closely with the client, as well as the information technology professionals involved, and staying true to the client’s vision, the project was ultimately successful.

Background

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is a nonprofit formed in the late 1990s in southern California to coordinate domain naming, address block assignment, and the overall safety and security of the Internet. Using a multi-stakeholder model, ICANN has the responsibility to build consensus and promote transparency. To achieve this, they generate a vast amount of information on a daily basis using many different systems, tools, and communication platforms.

Challenge

As the amount of content and platforms at ICANN grew, it became increasingly difficult to manage and coordinate. It also became more difficult for ICANN stakeholders to keep track of the information that they needed for decision-making and issue tracking. ICANN’s platforms are rich with reports, news alerts, podcasts, correspondence, RSS feeds, videos, newsletters, blog posts, and Tweets. Without some kind of controls, newcomers and returning visitors alike have a difficult time navigating the all-too-familiar fire hose of data that is a constant challenge for information professionals at all levels.

Denise Michel, advisor to ICANN CEO Fadi Chehadé, wrote in an email that ICANN.org "holds a tremendous amount of content in multiple languages, and several groups are discussing the same or similar topics. It is not always easy or quick to find the latest report, correspondence, meeting notice, etc., on a particular topic of interest."² ICANN needed a way to allow interested parties to easily prioritize and filter the deluge of data and to personalize their view of ICANN’s activities.

Solution

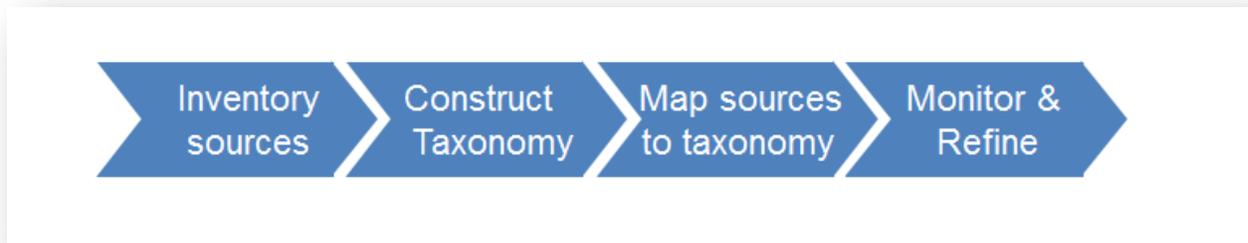
In late summer 2012, newly-appointed ICANN CEO Fadi Chehadé understood that solving these information and collaboration challenges were crucial to the entire ICANN community. He formed a small team and asked them to create a new solution that would gather, organize, and distribute information about ICANN activities. Called “myICANN,” the idea was to provide users with a central place that would easily and consistently deliver the users with news of interest to them, without sifting through the entirety of ICANN’s data deluge.

To accomplish this, ICANN needed a platform capable of aggregating and managing information from disparate sources and systems. ICANN chartered SecondRise and SecondRise worked with a content aggregation tool called Attensa, to develop a framework that streamlines information aggregation, curation, and distribution. While there are many tools available for aggregation, the Attensa product

provides the features and functionality to manage, customize, and distribute internal and external RSS news feeds and email sources and provides daily briefings. Follow this [link for a video](#) of Fadi Chehadé introducing MyICANN and explaining the strategy behind the project.

Implementation

From the beginning of the project it was clear that implementing myICANN would involve some unique challenges. We had nearly 100 separate information sources and a variety of publishing platforms. The goal was to aggregate the information from each source using standard interfaces to achieve cost effective integrations in order to fit in a very tight timeline. First we had to understand the nature of each source and ICANN’s overall communication objectives. Our implementation process included these steps:



- Creating an inventory of information and publishing systems
- Assessing the topical classifications appropriate for ICANN’s communication objectives
- Mapping the information sources into the topics
- Monitoring the resulting topics and fine-tuning them as needed

A small group of information specialists, with expertise in information classification, access and retrieval, and content lifecycle management, reviewed the ICANN sites in order to understand the organization’s work products and processes better. They met frequently with key stakeholders to begin the process of collaborating and coordinating the technology solution.

During the course of the project the information professionals also worked closely with the Attensa team to understand and follow the best practices appropriate for our desired solution. A focus group of ICANN staff members offered initial insights into topic areas and corporate priorities. The initial assessment found the following issues and challenges:

Findings	Challenges
There are many links to assist users in finding content.	Organizing links so that stakeholders can easily follow issues.
RSS feeds are in place for some content.	Obtaining comprehensive content from all relevant ICANN sources.

Findings	Challenges
Certain websites contain static information which is used extensively, but which does not update dynamically.	Obtaining RSS feeds with relevant dynamic content.
Some RSS feeds produce the article title with no other content or context.	Preparing articles so they include descriptive content.
RSS feeds for newsletters read the newsletter as one unit rather than multiple individual articles.	Deconstructing the newsletters so individual articles can be directed to the correct stream.
Many sites post native file documents (.pdf, .doc, .xls, .ppt.).	Preparing articles so content in attachments is available.
There is no definitive map of wiki content and topics.	Aligning website addresses, RSS feeds and content topics.
There is no tagging or standardized metadata.	Preparing a taxonomy to organize information against ICANN content.
Newsletters contain information that may information duplicated elsewhere.	Avoiding duplicate articles.

Organization

In order to address these challenges, the team outlined the content aggregation model detailed in the chart below. Using a collaborative, consensus-building approach, information specialists organized the ICANN sources into logical groups, which were then refined by ICANN's project stakeholders. After much discussion, the team established a taxonomy that aligned content against ICANN's advisory committees, supporting organizations, and special projects for its initial launch.

The content aggregation tool enabled the information professionals to create a topical organization structure for the relatively unstructured ICANN information. The information professionals automated the process of organizing and filtering all available information, regardless of source, into topics or activity streams.

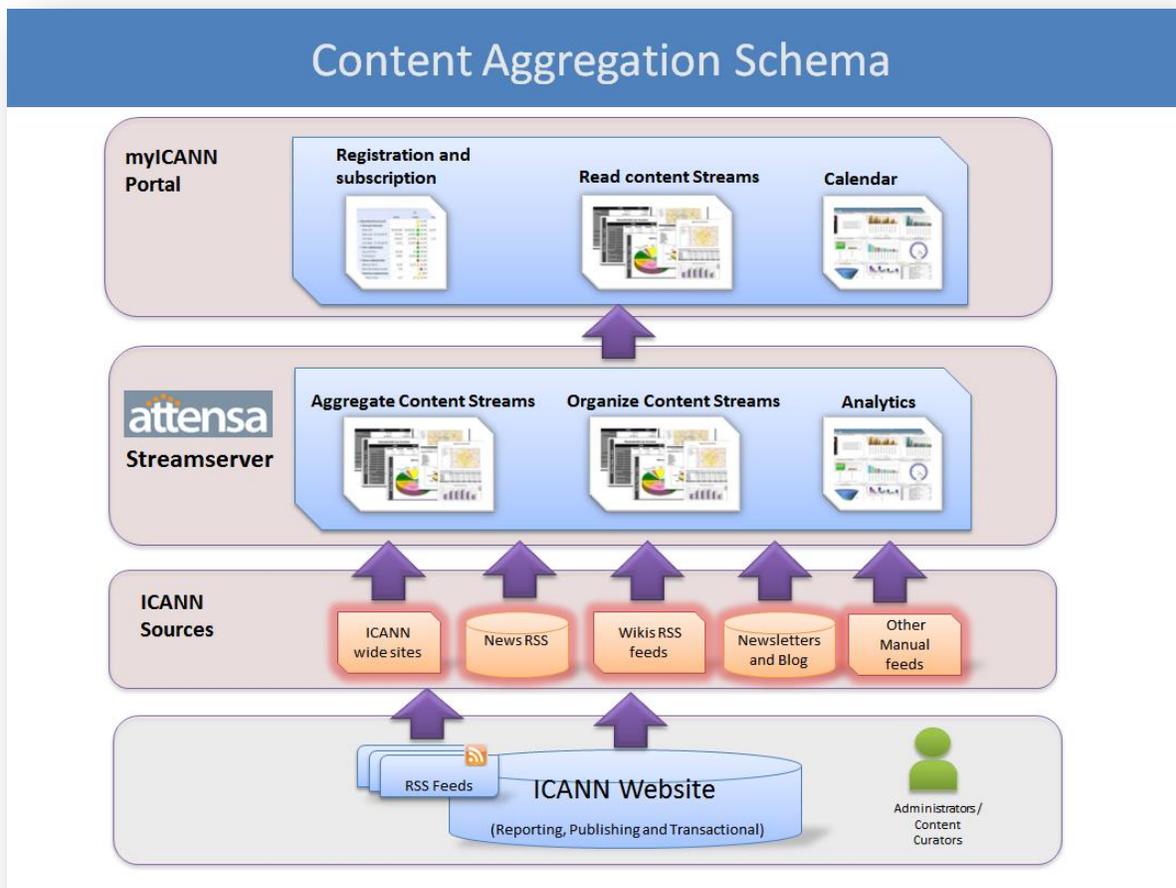


Figure 1. Content aggregation schema developed for myICANN project.

The ICANN content is now pulled in from nearly 100 sources, combined and filtered where it makes sense and output into logical streams. The myICANN portal pulls information from ICANN sites and allows content users to create their own custom views.

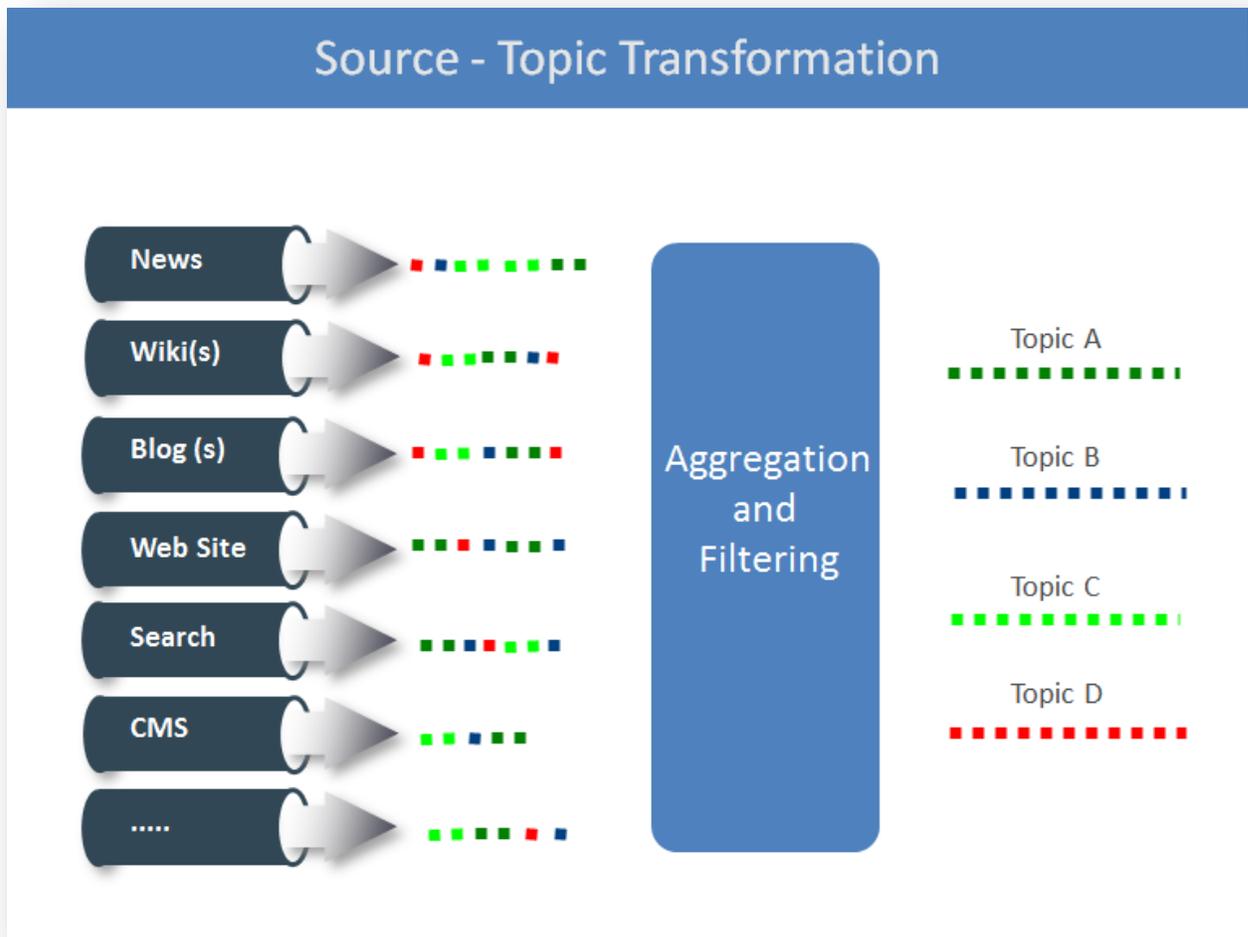


Figure 2. Source – topic Transformation. Note that aggregation and filtering allows content to be customized to the client’s specifications.

Delivery & Personalization

Since the information that ICANN produces updates constantly it is difficult for people to keep track of new information occurring in the topics that they care about. myICANN takes advantage of the aggregation tool’s ability to produce a daily briefing on the user’s choice of topics. Stakeholders can follow just the issues pertinent to them, customized to their areas of interest. The briefing arrives via email, formatted properly for laptops, smartphones and tablets.

SecondRise developed a custom portal that sits on top of Attensa. The portal includes a calendar capability that is independent of the content aggregation functions.

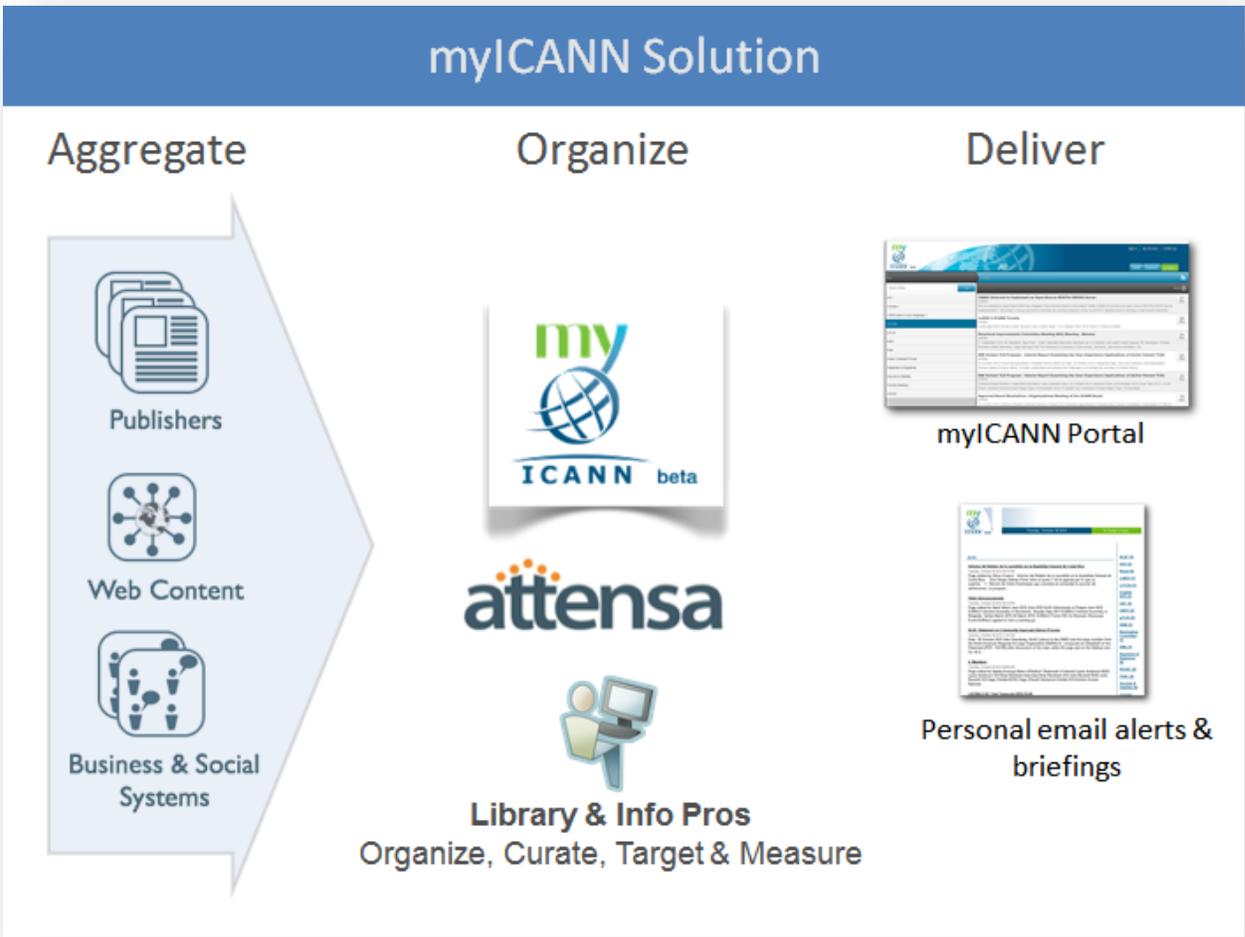


Figure 3. Workflow diagram of the myICANN solution.



Figure 4. myICANN portal home page: www.mycann.org.

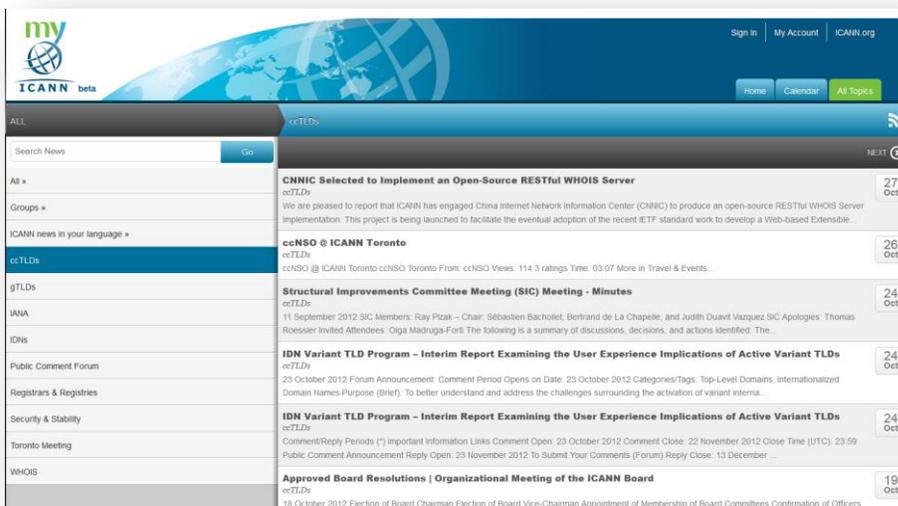


Figure 5. myICANN Topics view: www.mycann.org.

myICANN beta

Tuesday, October 30 2012 In Today's Issue:

ALAC

Informe del Relator de lo sucedido en la Asamblea General de Costa Rica
 Tuesday, October 30 2012 04:15 PM
 Page added by Silvia Vivanco Informe del Relator de lo sucedido en la Asamblea General de Costa Rica Don Sergio Salinas Porto retiro el punto 7 de la agenda por lo que se suprime 1.- Moción de Cintra Sooknanan que consistía en enmendar la sección de definiciones, La propues...

Older Announcements
 Tuesday, October 30 2012 02:10 PM
 Page edited by Heidi Ullrich June 2012 June 2012 ALAC Anniversary in Prague June 2012 EURALO General Assembly in Stockholm, Sweden May 2011 EURALO General Assembly in Belgrade, Serbia March 2010 24 March 2010: EURALO Forms WG for Brussels Showcase Event EURALO agreed to form a working gr...

ALAC Statement on Community Input and Advice Process
 Tuesday, October 30 2012 11:20 AM
 Date: 18 October 2012 Alan Greenberg, ALAC Liaison to the GNSO and At-Large member from the North-American Regional At-Large Organization (NARALO), composed an initialdraft of this Statement [PDF, 134 KB] after discussion of the topic within At-Large and on the Mailing Lists. On 18 O...

4. Members
 Tuesday, October 30 2012 09:05 AM
 Page edited by Marika Konings Name Affiliation* Statement of Interest Laurie Anderson RrSG Laurie Anderson SOI Brian Beckham Individual Brian Beckham SOI John Berryhill RrSG John Berryhill SOI Hago Dafalla NCSG Hago Elterafi Mohamed Dafalla SOI Kristine Dorrair National...

LACRALO AC Chat Transcript 2012-10-20

ALAC (9)
ASO (2)
Board (6)
ccNSO (7)
ccTLDs (1)
English RSS (5)
GAC (2)
GNSO (2)
gTLDs (9)
IANA (1)
Nominating Committee (1)
IDNs (1)
Registrars & Registries (6)
RSSAC (2)
SSAC (2)
Security & Stability (8)
 Toronto

Figure 6. myICANN DAILY BRIEFING: www.mvicann.org

Launch

myICANN launched its beta version on October 15, 2012 in the opening ceremony of the ICANN triennial conference in Toronto. The new CEO of ICANN announced the project with a presentation to a group of approximately 600 stakeholders that was steamed live around the world. Fadi said, “ICANN.org will continue to be a great vehicle for communications, for publication, for education. Anyone new coming to learn what is ICANN, that’s what ICANN.org is. But what we were missing is an area for stakeholder engagement, an area where people can come and get their work done. So I’m happy to announce today myICANN.org. You can go to it right now on any device, it’s completely mobile-aware and mobile-ready. Myicann.org is an addition to ICANN.org.”¹

The press and bloggers, including *PC World* magazine gave the project universally positive reviews. During the initial launch, myICANN received 700+ page views per minute. As PC World said “myICANN allows users to sign up for email alerts related to 18 topics, including security, top level domains, and the organization's WHOIS service. Users of

myICANN can also see a stream of their selected topics at myICANN.org. Critics of ICANN have long questioned the transparency of the organization. ICANN officials have defended the group's transparency, but acknowledged that all the information they release can be scattered across the website. Officials hope myICANN will increase participation in the organization, they said.”²

Conclusion

The myICANN implementation was successful because it followed a time-honored template that emphasizes the right technology, the right information professionals, and the right project management tools, all brought to bear in order to solve a customer problem. By collaborating closely with key stakeholders, understanding the nuances of the data deluge confronting ICANN stakeholders, and communicating continually about key dates and “must-have” results, information professionals showed that we can solve the information overload problem facing today’s knowledge workers and make them better informed and more productive.

Endnotes

¹Berkens, Michael “ICANN Launches MYICANN.ORG Beta” *The Domains*, October 15, 2012. <http://www.thedomains.com/2012/10/15/icann-launches-mycann-org-beta/>

² Gross, Grant, “ICANN promotes new personalized website service.” *PC World*, October 15, 2012. <http://www.pcworld.com/article/2012085/icann-promotes-new-personalized-website-service.html>

myICANN’s main page: myICANN.org

Video: [Fadi Chehadé Demonstrates MyICANN | ICANN 45 | Toronto | 16 Oct](#)