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.ca registration turned over to non-profit body

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A Canadian non-profit agency will pay the University of British Columbia more than \$4 million to take over the registration of all Web site addresses that end in .ca, Canada's designation on the Internet.

The Ottawa-based Canadian Internet Registration Authority, announced Monday the agreement with UBC and the Canadian government will see it become the new administrator of the .ca registry.

Since 1988, almost 90,000 Web site addresses ending in .ca have been registered by John **Demco**, computing facilities manager at UBC's computer science department, who ran the system as a volunteer.

However, what was once a spare-time task has grown into a full-time job as Canadian companies and organizations scramble to register addresses.

"The number of domain applications is up significantly, even since the beginning of this year," **Demco** said. "In April, there were about 5,000 approved."

However, for every approved registration, there are on average three messages and requests for information. That's about 500 a day to deal with, or about one a minute for a working day.

"It almost doubled from the beginning of this year," **Demco** said.

CIRA has agreed to pay UBC \$4.348 million for the transfer, a relative bargain considering that some .com addresses alone command millions. **Demco** also protected the .ca designation on his own initiative in 1987, before the World Wide Web was in existence.

Demco said he will receive some portion of the compensation, possibly one-quarter of the \$4.348 million, but that is subject to negotiation with UBC.

.ca is a country code top-level domain that, so far, can only be used by organizations and businesses incorporated or chartered in Canada. A top-level domain is the suffix attached to the end of a domain name in the Uniform Resource Locator, the address that identifies Internet sites.

In 1987, **Demco** negotiated with the U.S.-based agency responsible for granting domain names for the right to register .ca domains.

"That was in the days when the total number of domains was in the low thousands, maybe even in the high hundreds," **Demco** said. "The total Internet community was very small."

On Jan. 12, 1988, **Demco** registered the first .ca -- for the University of Prince Edward Island, which became upei.ca. The following day, UBC registered as UBC.ca.

"At the time it was almost all educational registrations and a few government," **Demco** said.

The .ca rules are now fairly restrictive, but **Demco** said that will change as CIRA starts to operate. While individuals

can register for a .com domain, in Canada, they are only able to register a municipal level domain, with a name followed by vancouver.bc.ca for example.

“In other countries things are fairly wide open and things will tend in that direction here,” said **Demco**, a member of the interim CIRA board, which also has directors from Industry Canada, CANARIE Inc. and other industry representatives.

The transfer to CIRA means:

I All existing .ca domain holders will need to register their existing names with CIRA to continue operating. UBC will notify .ca domain holders of the change.

I Companies and organizations that have provided .ca registration to clients must be registered as official registrars through CIRA to deliver the service.

I CIRA will become the official registry and begin taking new .ca registrations through registrars as of this fall, when new rules governing .ca registration will take effect.

CIRA will be responsible for setting policy, operating the .ca domain database and registering domain names. It can be reached at www.cira.ca

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