

# New Asia Internet domain gaining traction in B.C.

Address could help B.C. businesses strengthen ties with the Far East, but will also provide cyber-squatters with an opportunity to snap up valuable digital real estate

**CURT  
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Local Internet domain registrars are banking on a surge in demand this month from entrepreneurs wanting to secure domain names with the new .asia suffix.

The registrars can provide local companies with the suffix, which gives businesses a website identity in Asia, without having an Asian presence required to register on their own.

The .asia registry operator received 266,663 applications worldwide on the first day the domain suffix was available. The launch of this second regional domain follows the 2005 introduction of .eu.

"We didn't see as much of an interest for .eu in B.C., but certainly we're hearing a whole lot of demand from customers for .asia," said **Cybele Negris**, COO of **Webnames.ca**, one of two accredited .asia registrars in B.C.

Negris said the new domain is sparking interest in the province because of the strong business ties between B.C. and Asia.

It provides another way for B.C. businesses to connect with Asia, where one-third of all



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Internet users are.

Negris anticipates the interest in .asia to continue once the domain extension is made fully available March 26 on a first-come, first-served basis.

Using the company's Malaysian entity, **Webnames.ca's** customers can skirt the regulation that requires .asia registrants to have a legal Asian presence.

**Webnames.ca** – a **University of British Columbia** spin-off founded by the developers of Canada's .ca registry – is offering .asia domain names for US\$24.95 per year, with a maximum 10-year registration.

**Chris Bennett**, an intellectual property lawyer at **Davis LLP** in Vancouver, noted that

website owners can gain additional Internet traffic by forwarding visitors from their .asia website to sites with different extensions, such as .ca.

A new domain extension, however, also provides an opportunity for domainers, known more derogatorily as cyber-squatters, to acquire large blocks of domain names that they can sell later at inflated prices.

For example, B.C. companies that don't register their website in the new domain could find that their trademarked name, affixed with the .asia extension, is owned by a domainer and has a sizable price tag attached to it.

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that, if they don't get in there and grab these domain names, somebody else will," said Bennett.

The domain's "landrush" period ended March 12.

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At that time, domain names that had multiple applications were awarded through an auction.

In the pre-landrush sunrise period, trademark owners from around the world were

given exclusive access to the registry.

Trademarked .asia names with multiple applications – the same trademark can be assigned in various countries – were also awarded through auction.

The two highest priced domain names auctioned off were **ace.asia** (US\$20,501) and **tyco.asia** (US\$7,600).

Before the .asia registry was created, Asia Pacific website owners could only use country-code domains intended for local use or generic domains such as .com and .net, that are dominated by individuals and businesses in the United States and Europe.

**Robert Birkner**, the general manager of Vancouver's **Domain-**

**People** – the other accredited .asia registrar in B.C. – said he wouldn't be surprised if .asia is as popular as .info, which has roughly five million registered domain names.

**Birkner** estimated the number of .asia websites registered through **DomainPeople** – which uses the address of its parent, **Hostway Corp.** in Seoul, South Korea, as an Asian connection for its customers – in the "several thousands."

"Right now I believe that a lot of companies registered just to protect their trademarks [from] cyber-squatting ... [and from] other people trying to register their trademarks." ■ [cgc@biv.com](mailto:cgc@biv.com)