

# ICANN ON: SUPPORTING A MORE MULTILINGUAL INTERNET

## Expansion of the Domain Name System

The Domain Name System (DNS) has changed dramatically over the last decade regarding the overall number of generic top-level domains (gTLDs), scripts and languages used, and character length. There are now more than 1,200 active gTLDs, as well as country code top-level domains (ccTLDs) that are available in different scripts and that may be longer than three characters. These [new TLDs](#) provide greater consumer choice and can represent cultures, brands, geographies, special interests, and more (e.g., .ไทย, .london, .sport).

To ensure that these new domain names work seamlessly throughout the Internet, it is essential for software developers, email system admins, technologists, businesses, and governments to update their Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems and ensure they can accept, validate, process, and display all domains consistently and correctly.

## What are Internationalized Domain Names?

The majority of the world does not speak English as a first language or use American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters. [Internationalized Domain Names \(IDNs\)](#) enable people around the world to use domain names in local languages and scripts such as Arabic, Chinese, Cyrillic or Devanagari. IDNs not only allow for a more multilingual Internet but allow organizations, governments, and businesses the ability to reach more citizens and consumers in their preferred language or script.

ICANN helps support the stable and secure use of IDNs through the development of [rules](#) that allow specific scripts to be used safely in the DNS. These rules provide a consistent and transparent mechanism to determine valid and unique IDN TLD labels for different scripts used by communities globally. Over the past decade, various ICANN script communities formed [Generation Panels](#) (GPs) made up of DNS and linguistic experts, who worked together to develop these rules.

There are currently [26 scripts](#) that can be supported in the root zone: Arabic, Armenian, Bangla, Chinese (Han), Cyrillic, Devanagari, Ethiopic, Georgian, Greek, Gujarati, Gurmukhi, Hebrew, Japanese (Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji [Han]), Kannada, Khmer, Korean (Hangul and Hanja [Han]), Lao, Latin, Malayalam, Myanmar, Oriya, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, and Thai. Applicants can apply for domain names in these scripts in the next round of new gTLDs.

ICANN will continue to support communities that actively use their languages/scripts for general purpose and common use and are interested in forming a Generation Panel to develop Root Zone Label Generation Rules.

## What is Universal Acceptance?

Universal Acceptance (UA) is a technical necessity that ensures all domain names and email addresses can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. While the DNS has changed in recent years, the checks used by many software applications to validate domain names and email

addresses have not been updated to accommodate these enhancements in the DNS. Many systems don't recognize or appropriately process new domain names – including new gTLDs, IDNs, and ccTLDs – and not all online portals are primed for the opening of a user account with one of these new email addresses (e.g., [电子邮件测试@普遍适用测试.我爱你](#)). That's why awareness of and support for UA is critical for a truly global, multilingual Internet.

Through UA, all those who develop, provide, or manage online websites and applications have the opportunity to allow global users to experience the social and economic power of the Internet. For more on UA, visit the [ICANN UA webpage](#).

### **Benefits of UA**

Today, the Internet population is made up of over 5 billion active users with more expected to come online. Achieving UA for all domain names and email addresses is crucial to enabling consumer choice online and achieving digital inclusivity for all users. Further, there are important economic and social benefits of supporting multilingual Internet users in their ability to access and connect to ecommerce, local communities, and governments, as well as to embrace and proliferate cultural traditions through language. More details on the benefits of UA are available [here](#).