



# SiteFinder: Community Comments

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<http://alac.info/presentations/sitefinder-community.swf>



## General Overview

- Mailing list discussion around the net.
- 14 Slashdot stories between 11 September and 17 October.
- At least three lawsuits.
- Petition to ICANN: ~18,000 signatures.
  - <http://www.whois.sc/verisign-dns/>
- 220 comments to ICANN's wildcard-comments address, between 27 September and 9 October.
  - 19 October: 330 comments. This presentations is focused on comments received by 9 October.

## Trust

- Surprise v. need for consultation.
- Breach of trust: Steward acting against public benefit.
  - *“Tar & feather!”*
  - Cancel registry contracts.
  - Cancel registrar accreditation.
  - Move root servers away from VeriSign.
- Fundamental conflict between for-profit registry and working for the public benefit?
  - Find non-profit registry operator.
  - Restrict new gTLDs to non-profit operators?



# Registration

- Did they register those domain names?
  - Limitation on domain name registrations by registry, in registry agreement.
  - Others would have to pay a fee for pointing domain names to their site. Shouldn't VeriSign also be paying a fee to someone?
  - Isn't this typosquatting/cybersquatting?
  - I paid for this name, and it still shows SiteFinder!
- An ironic twist to the typosquatting theme:

*"I mistyped a URL and VeriSign's wildcard service suggested I visit a porn site with a similar name! I find this highly offensive."*



# Things Break

- Networking problems
  - Sitefinder produced timeouts.
  - E-Mail queues up; snubby is broken.
  - Bandwidth consumption.
- Deploying patches
  - Net effect: Further destabilization, fragmentation.
  - Time and effort for many operators.
- User Interfaces
  - Steps in where users were using other services before.
  - Replaces localized messages by English-language service.
  - Error messages mislead users.

## Things Break (2)

- E-Mail sender verification:
  - Spam filter on receiving end.
  - Avoid bad sender addresses on sending end.
- Link checkers get confused.
- Any configuration that relies on a certain domain name being unregistered breaks.
  - Some of the comments point to badly configured networks.
  - But: Is breaking them all at once a good idea?
- Non-HTTP/SMTP protocols.



## But I didn't even ask for it!

- Terms of Service, Privacy Policy
  - “If you don't like these terms, don't use the service.”
  - But: Most users didn't even intend to use the service – no conscious decision to mistype domain name.
  - But (2): Can't opt out of using SiteFinder.
- Do it in the browser?
  - MSN search can be turned off in Internet Explorer.
  - Browser plugin instead?



# ALAC: User Choice and Competition

- Wildcard affects many protocols, but SiteFinder is specific to HTTP.
- Wildcard moves choice from the edge to the center.
  - Wildcard situation: No error diagnostic, central service.
  - Pre-wildcard situation: Error handled by web browser.
  - Users have choice what browsers to use.
  - Choice of product implies competition on that market.
- Wildcard in dominant TLD heavily reduces that competition.