.info

SM

Where the World Goes for Information.

SM

Rückblick
auf 3 Jahre .INFO-
Domains

Afilias

SM

GLOBAL REGISTRY SERVICES

September 27, 2004

Rückblick auf 3 Jahre .INFO

Executive Summary

Die .INFO-Domain wurde im Oktober 2001 eingeführt, um der großen Nachfrage nach neuen Domain-Namen Rechnung zu tragen, die während der Zeit des intensiven Internet-Wachstums zu ersten Engpässen vor allem bei den .com-Adressen geführt hatte. „.INFO" ist eine uneingeschränkt nutzbare, generic Top-Level-Domain (gTLD), deren Name eine gute Akzeptanz versprach, weil das Wort „INFO" in vielen Regionen der Welt verstanden wird und eine logische Assoziation zu dem Charakter des Internet als Informationsmedium bietet. Als innerhalb von drei Monaten nach dem Start bereits über 500.000 Domain-Namen registriert worden waren, zeichnete sich ab, dass .INFO zur erfolgreichsten der sieben von der ICANN im Jahr 2000 als Pilotprojekte genehmigten neuen Top-Level-Domains werden sollte. In drei Jahren hat sich .INFO nicht nur zahlenmäßig zur sechstgrößten Domain des Internet entwickelt, sondern ist auch eine besonders aktive Domain:

• .INFO ist groß und wächst weiter: Mit mehr als 1,5 Millionen registrierten Adressen ist .INFO die sechstgrößte Domain im Internet. Mehr als 54 Prozent der Anmeldungen stammen aus Europa.

• .INFO-Domains sind aktive Domains: Über 71 Prozent der .INFO-Domain-Namen werden für aktive Websites genutzt (ein ähnliches Verhältnis wie bei .com-Domains). 37 Prozent dieser Adressen stehen für dedizierte .INFO-Sites, d. h. sie können nur über .INFO aufgerufen werden. Neben den Websites sind über 45.000 weitere Domains für die Nutzung als Email-Adressen vergeben.

• .INFO-Namen werden häufig in Werbung und Marketing genutzt: Ein Beweis für die gute Akzeptanz ist die Verwendung der .INFO-Adressen in Werbe- und Marketingkampagnen. Immer häufiger werden die angemeldeten .INFO-Domains als wichtigste Marketing-Adressen genutzt, so z.B. von der MTA in New York (Dienstleistungsunternehmen für öffentlichen Verkehr) von der Franziskaner-Brauerei in Deutschland.

Overall, the .INFO domain has been a tremendous success. .INFO will continue to play a pioneering role on the Internet, supporting the rapid expansion of the most important communications and commerce medium of our time.

Background

In November of 2000, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) selected seven generic new top-level domains (gTLD) to help relieve pressure on the name space resulting from Internet growth that was accelerating rapidly. These were the first domains approved since the inception of the Internet and were viewed as "proofs of concept." Separately, ICANN also expanded the domain name distribution channel by added some 150 new "registrars" (domain name retailers/wholesalers), which broadened availability and

Figure 1: 2003- 2004 .INFO Net Domain Creates by Registrars
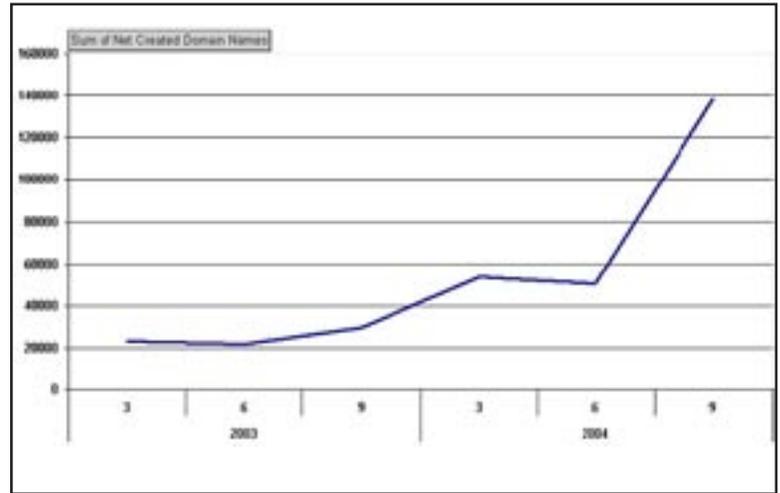
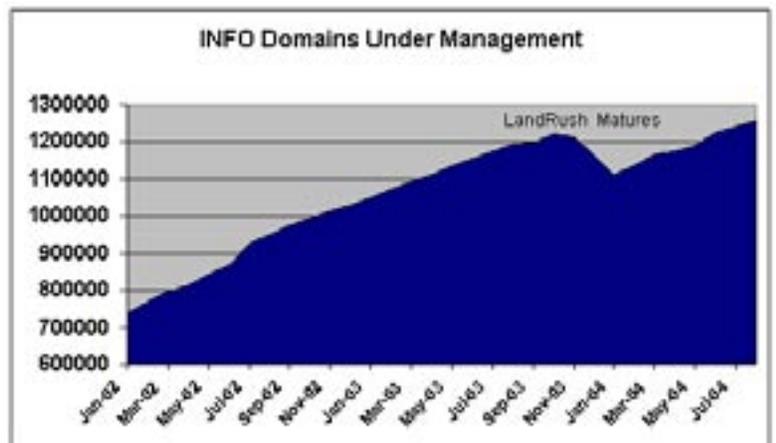*Source: Afilias .INFO proprietary data, as of September2004

stimulated competition.

In 2001, the first of the new domains was launched: .INFO, which means "information" in many languages. Supported by Afilias Limited, .INFO joined .com as the only completely unrestricted gTLD available. .INFO began trademark registrations (Sunrise) in July, and launched live, real-time registrations to the public on October 1 (the "land rush"). By the end of October, the domain reached over half a million names.

Through September, 2004, .INFO has grown steadily to its present #6 position (exceeded only by .com, .de, .net, .uk and .org) with over 1,500,000 registrations worldwide.

Registration Growth

As the first of the new gTLDs to launch, .INFO was much in demand. Fueled by a high volume of applications taken by registrars in advance of the public

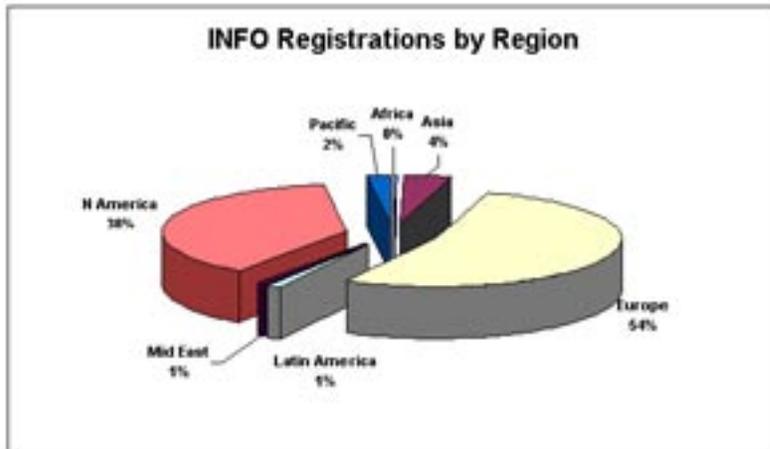## Figure 2: Total .INFO Domains Under Management – 2002 through 2004

*Source: Afilias .INFO proprietary data, as of July 2004

AFILIAS
GLOBAL REGISTRY SERVICES

launch, Afilias registered over 400,000 domains during the initial "land rush." By the end of October 2001, .INFO had already registered 500,000 domains world wide.

New registrations in the subsequent three years have grown steadily, and .INFO is now the sixth largest gTLD in the world. .INFO's growth continues to outpace the industry's quarter-to-quarter average growth of 2.5% and the year over year growth of 7% . As shown in Figure 1, the number of new .INFOs created each quarter is building, illustrating the strengthening of demand as the domain gains popularity. It is interesting to note the major gain in September, fueled by a new round of aggressive promotion by registrars.

Renewals have also been key to .INFO's success. Up through late 2003, .INFO experienced very steady growth. In the fall of 2003, however, the 400,000 initial 2-year Land Rush names

Figure 4: .INFO Registrars' Percentage of the Total Domain Marketplace (as of September 2004)
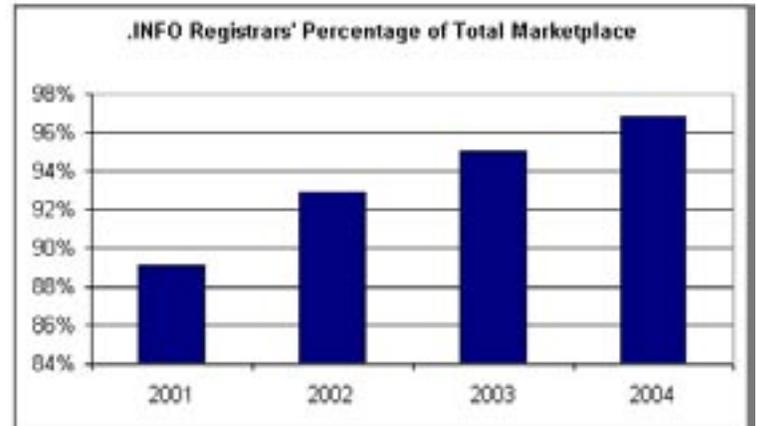
*based on September 2004 market share data by registrar from Webhosting.info

Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of .INFO Domains (as of July 2004)

*Source: Afilias .INFO proprietary data, as of July 2004

however, growth in Europe has accelerated. As shown in Figure 3, Europe's lead versus North America has widened to 54% versus North America now at 38%.

Distribution has also improved, as the domain has matured and more registrars sought accreditation in .INFO. In 2001, .INFO was available through just 88 registrars, accounting for less than 90% of all gTLD registrations. By mid-2004, this had increased to 137 registrars, accounting for about 97% of the market (see Figure 4).

.INFO Domain Usage

For a new domain, a key determinant of success is usage of the names. Afilias was the first registry to begin reporting usage numbers for a TLD. Each month, Afilias checks .INFO
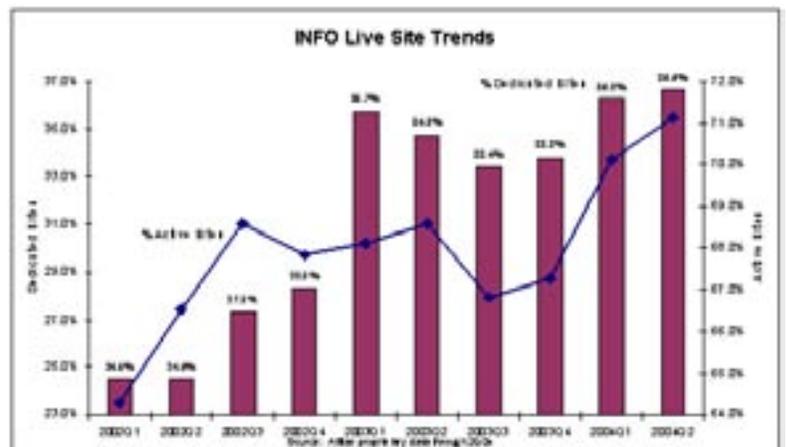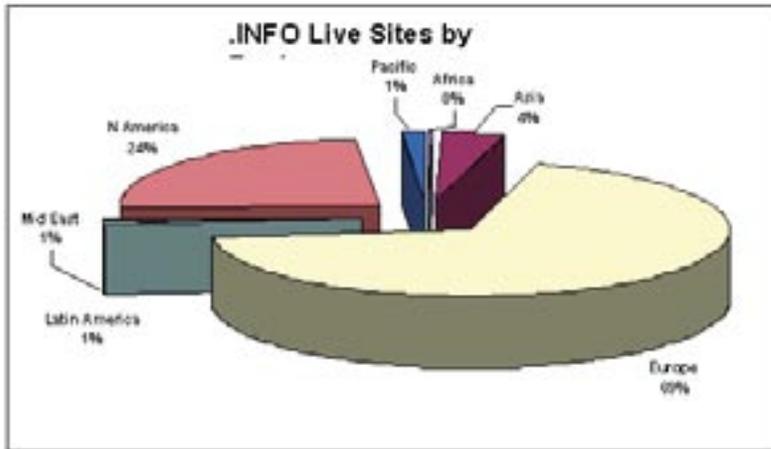
came due for their first renewal, as expected. The renewal rate was very healthy for these domains, confirming that these registrations were not just initial speculative interest. Although healthy, it was of course less than 100%, yielding the short-term reduction in overall domains under management shown below. Once these names worked through the system, growth resumed at its prior pace and continues to set new records each month.

Geographically, .INFO has enjoyed the most success in Europe. Data released by Afilias in July 2002 indicated that, at that time, 52% of .INFO's total registration base was from Europe, with 40% from North America. These numbers have been consistent over the last three years. Most recently,

Figure 5: Increase in .INFO Live, Dedicated Web sites 2001-2004

*Source: Afilias .INFO proprietary data, as of July 2004

Afilias GLOBAL REGISTRY SERVICES

Figure 6: Geographic Distribution of Live Sites by Region

*Source: Afilias .INFO proprietary data, as of June 2004
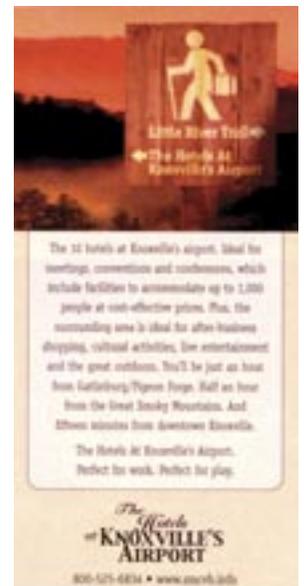
needs better than any alternatives.

While many registrants are using INFO in their marketing, three examples will illustrate the breadth of application: Franziskaner, SAP, and 1&1.

• Franziskaner: "We decided on www.franziskaner.info because we wanted a short name that was easy both to communicate and to remember," says Volkmar Goebel, brand manager for Spaten and Franziskaner with the Munich-based Spaten-Löwenbräu Group. The brewer also believed that a .info top-level domain was more international, language-neutral and therefore more likely to achieve wide acceptance among an international audience. Goebel adds: "Overall, we felt that a .info TLD was the ideal type of address to serve as an international entry point into our web offering."

SMCVB.info - print advertisement

• SAP: SAP uses a .INFO address to compliment its brand name. The company, located in Walldorf, Germany, has been publishing its "SAP INFO" customer magazine for over 10 years. SAP INFO provides relevant company information packaged in a journalistic

registrations to determine whether they are being used on the Internet, and if so, how. When we first began reporting the results of these studies in 2002, about 24% (more than 200,000 sites) were "dedicated" .INFO Web sites. Overall, 65% of .INFO domains were "active" in some way, meaning they were either a dedicated site, password protected, parked, or redirected.

Usage continues to improve. Since 2002, both the number of live sites and their percentage of total registrations have continued to increase—further evidence of the viability of the domain. As of July 2004, over 460,000 domains, or 37% of .INFO domains, were "dedicated" sites and about 71% were "active" in some way. This is comparable to .com, which has about 71% of domains active, according to VeriSign's September, 2004 report. Figure 5 shows these positive trends.

Europe has particularly strong usage. While over half of .INFO domains are registered in Europe, nearly 70% of the active sites are in Europe. This underscores the international nature of the domain, as well as its appeal among a community that is now aggressively leveraging the Internet as a way to access global markets. Figure 6 shows the distribution of live sites by region.

.INFO in advertising
As the domain has matured, more and more organizations are adopting .INFO as their official Web site. Many of these organizations were unable to get their original name in a legacy gTLD, and did not want a domain with too many characters. Others have developed whole new Internet strategies and found that .INFO is the best way to implement it.   And yet others have found that the educational/informational flavor of a .INFO name fits their

Franziskaner.info - print advertisement

format in German and English.

Before .INFO was available, SAP began an online version under the URL www.sapinfo.net. To coordinate the two, SAP then changed the name of the print version to "SAPinfo.net." But the "SAP INFO" title had already developed into a real brand name in the SAP world, and the new name of "SAPinfo.net" was not well received by the readers, explained Bernhard Hochlehnert,

"Overall, we felt that a .info TLD was the ideal type of address to serve as an international entry point into our web offering."

–Volkmar Goebel, Franziskaner

editor-in-chief of "SAP INFO" and head of Global Publications at SAP. "In the past, Internet users had to enter the correct name, sapinfo, using the correct spelling to access the magazine site; otherwise, they ended up landing on the regular SAP sites, such as sap.com or sap.de," explained Hochlehnert. "Now that the domain name is the same as the magazine name, the search engines list the SAP INFO Web site even if the user is just looking for 'Info' and 'SAP'." Today, SAP.info records some 8,000 visits a day and about 2.5 million a month.

• **1&1:** In addition, the world's largest Web hosting company by number of active sites, 1&1 Internet, will change to a .INFO domain with their German language hosting portal. "A .INFO address is much more international than the .DE address we used before, so it will play an important role in our international expansion", says Andreas Gauger, CEO of 1&1 Internet AG. "Using the .INFO adress will reduce our costs significantly, because we can adress customers in Germany and Austria with the same marketing campaign. The positive image of the .INFO domain perfectly corresponds with our innovative and competitive web hosting products."
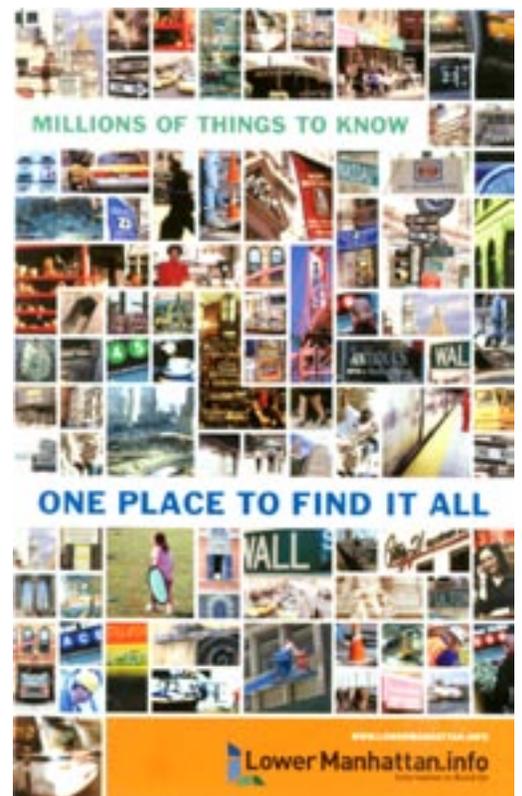
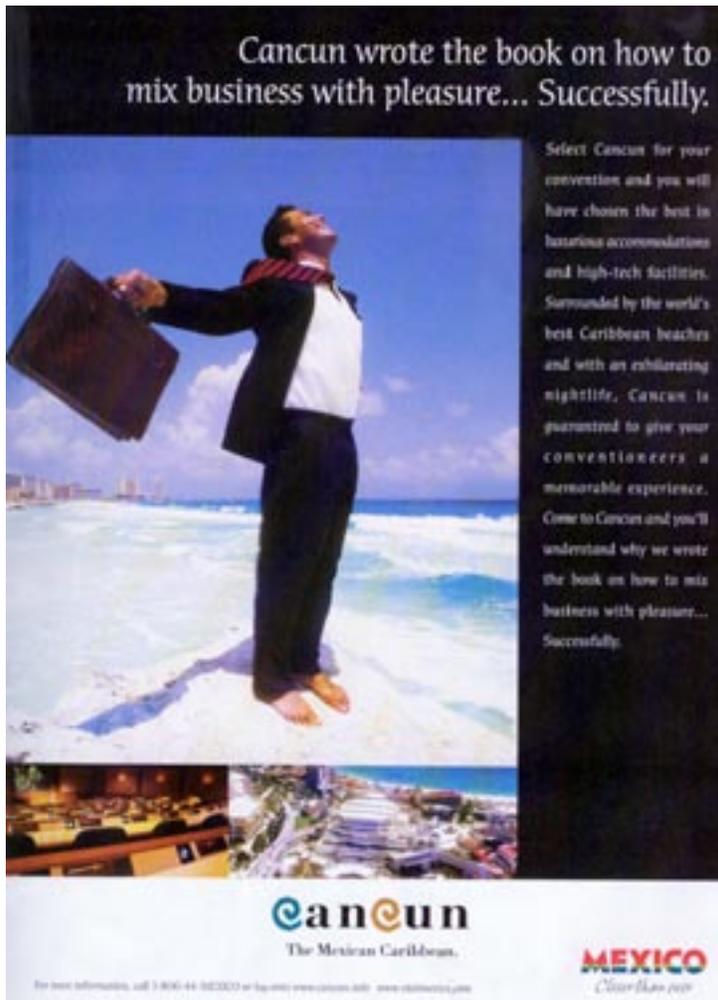MTA.info - New York City subway map
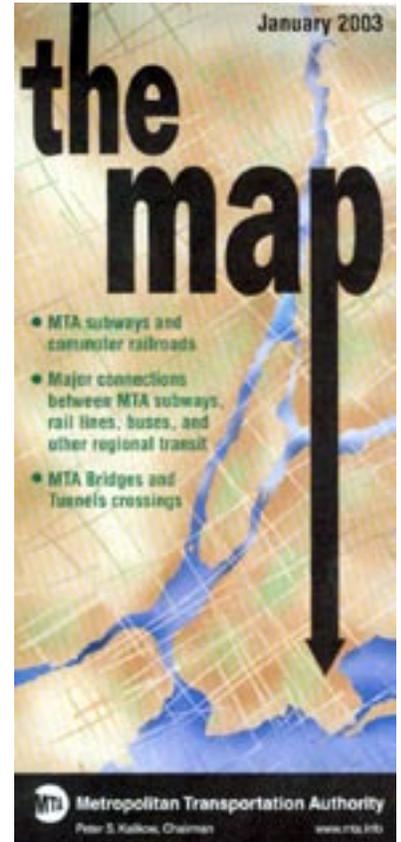
STM.info - billboard advertising in Montreal, Quebec

Virusdunil.info - billboard advertising in Montreal, Quebec

LowerManhattan.info - post card advertising

Afilias
GLOBAL REGISTRY SERVICES

Cancun.info - print advertisement

MTA.info - print advertisement

UMTS.info - street advertising in Denmark

With some 40 % market share 1&1 is by far market leader in Germany.

In addition to these stories, a number of other organizations have adopted .INFO sites and use them in their advertising for many different purposes. These include the Montreal and New York City transit authorities, as well as countries like Spain and South Africa, or cities like Cancun who use their Web site as part of destination marketing campaigns.

New Markets

In March 2004, Afilias became the first new gTLD to launch Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). It did so with the German script, introducing three umlaut characters (ä, ö, and ü) to the .INFO domain.

To date, .INFO has over 18,000 IDN registrations. Analysis of the initial registrants showed: 1) the average number of names per IDN registrant was 3.8 domains, more than double the domains/registrant average for .INFO overall; 2) over 60% had never registered a .INFO before, illustrating the new business opportunity represented by IDNs; and 3) only 5% of the IDNs registered at during launch were for registrants who "upgraded" their existing .INFO ASCII names, further illustrating the growth potential.

Conclusion

In the three years since .INFO launched, it has built a strong, steady business and now supports more than 1,500,000 domains – about 2% of the global domain marketplace. .INFO's availability has also increased during this time as the distribution channel has expanded with new registrars.

Mantri.info - billboard advertising in India

![Afilias GLOBAL REGISTRY SERVICES]