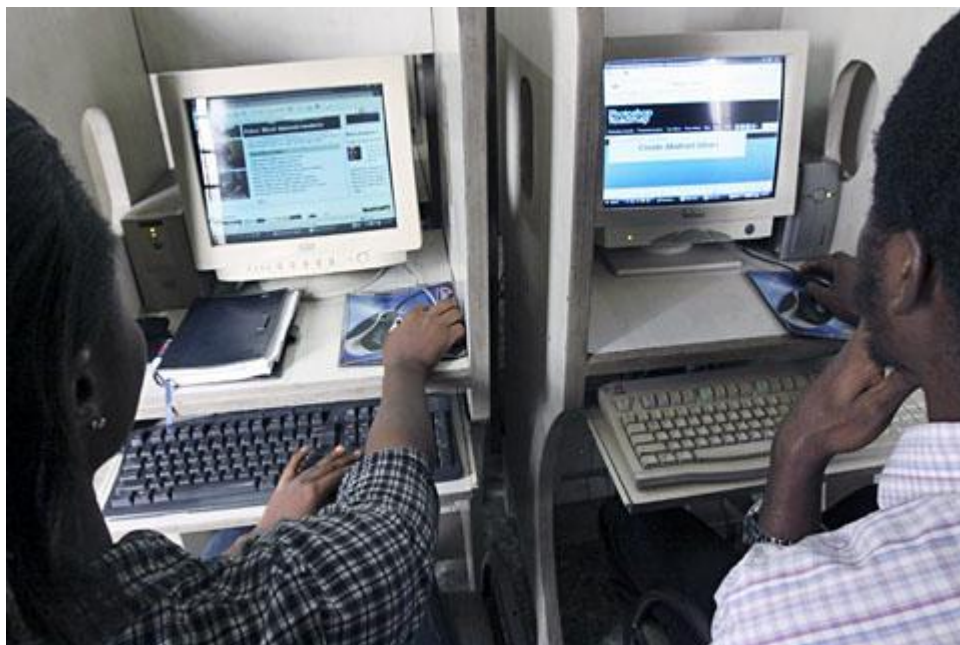


## Internet Change Makes Way for Dot-Anything



Nigerians browse the Internet at a cybercafe in Lagos

(You can download an MP3 of this story at [voaspecialenglish.com](http://voaspecialenglish.com))

This is the VOA Special English Technology Report.

A top-level domain is the part of an Internet address after the dot. The most common of what are called generic top-level domains are dot-com, dot-net and dot-org. There are twenty-two generic top-level domain names currently available. But get ready for many, many more.

The international organization that controls these names will begin accepting applications for new ones in January. This will open the door to dot-just-about-anything. Brad White is with ICANN, the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

BRAD WHITE: "What we're talking about doing with the new generic top-level domain program is blowing the lid off that ceiling of twenty two. The interest is there to expand that. We no longer have to keep this to twenty-two. It can be almost any word combination. It can be in non-Latin characters, which is extremely important if you happen to speak Russian because of the Cyrillic alphabet, or Arabic, or Chinese."

ICANN officials met last month in Dakar, Senegal. Brad White says they discussed the new program for what are known as gTLDs.

BRAD WHITE: "This marks one of the biggest changes in the Internet's domain name system, the addressing system of the Internet, that has ever occurred. We want to make sure that the process of getting these gTLDs into the Internet's root is methodical, careful and thoughtful."

Anyone can apply, including businesses, governments and individuals. The cost of a new name: one hundred eighty-five thousand dollars.

BRAD WHITE: "That's the cost that we've determined that is necessary to make sure that the applicant has the technical savvy to run an Internet registry, that there is no intellectual property or trademark problems, so on and so forth. But that hundred and eighty-five thousand is miniscule compared to the cost of actually operating an Internet registry."

In Dakar, ICANN passed a resolution to consider creating a support system to help rising economies with limited financial resources. For example, ICANN says Africa represented less than twelve percent of Internet growth worldwide in the last ten years. Mister White says that is slowly beginning to change.

BRAD WHITE: "It is a continent with many nations that are just now discovering the Internet, and what it brings to bear in terms of information flow. And we didn't want the advent of new gTLDs to in any way block that sort of entree into the Internet, and if anything to see how they might be used to facilitate those who are interested. It's another way to increase Internet penetration around the world."

ICANN will accept applications from January twelfth to April twelfth. Officials plan to publish a list of all of the proposed new names in May. Mr. White says the approval process that follows will take several months, and it could take up to a year for new names to become active.

ICANN says it will approve no more than one thousand new generic top-level domains each year.

And that's the VOA Special English Technology Report, online at [voaspecialenglish.com](http://voaspecialenglish.com) -- or maybe we should think of something new. I'm Steve Ember.