

# Universal Acceptance: Towards A Local Language-enabled Internet

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## Introduction

The Internet has emerged as one of the most important communication media in the history of mankind, and most of us use it daily for a variety of purposes that are informational, educational, recreational and transactional.

Despite its deep reach, there are some barriers that the vast majority of Indians face while using the Internet. Apart from issues of technology & access, language is one of the most important barriers that we have to get past in India. The most basic of Internet addresses—email IDs as well as domain names—are largely represented in English (Roman alphabet) and not in any of the 13 scripts of the 22 official languages of India.

There have been several efforts to introduce vernacular-friendly domain names and email addresses on the Internet for several years. The most important outcomes of these efforts are Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) that have been introduced by the Internet Corporation on Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), and the Universal Acceptance Initiative (UAI), a community-driven initiative that works with organizations such as ICANN and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) to promote Universal Acceptance of internationalized Domain names and email IDs.

## Background

Since 2006 the Domain Name System (DNS) has expanded dramatically, not only fueling competition, choice and innovation, but truly enabling a multi-lingual Internet. There are now more than a 1,500 top-level domains (TLDs), many of which are longer than the traditional two- and three-character (e.g. .com, .edu, .nz, and .org) or are in non-ASCII based scripts – such as Arabic, Cyrillic and Thai.

The expansion allows people to claim a domain name that best reflects their sense of identity. While this expansion is critical in bringing the next billion people online and growing the global Internet economy, the incorporation of these new domains across the global Internet is not an entirely automatic process. CIOs, web administrators, application developers and others have an important role to play in making sure their applications are compatible with the evolved Internet infrastructure. That's why we're reaching out to make sure you know about this change.

## The issue at hand

Many organizations and business have not updated their systems to accommodate the new domains or, in other words, become Universal Acceptance (UA)-ready. As a result, many applications and Internet-connected devices and systems are unable to accept, validate, store, process or display all domain names. This causes problems for organizations and headaches for users because if the applications do not recognize or appropriately process the new domain names or email addresses that use these extensions, it will result in lost

customers and a poor user experience.

## Resources available to assist you

To address these issues and provide support, stakeholders and industry leaders such as Apple, GoDaddy, Google, ICANN, Microsoft and Verisign, created the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG). The UASG exists to help organizations ensure their systems are UA-ready and able to accept all domain names and email addresses in any valid script.

The UASG has developed a number of helpful guides and resources which are available at <https://uasg.tech/documents>. Of particular note is the Quick Guide to Universal Acceptance (UASG005), which is available in multiple languages, as well as the Introduction to Universal Acceptance (UASG 007), a comprehensive technical document on Universal Acceptance and the key issues that developers and system architects need to know.

We encourage you to visit our website and view these useful materials, and also to get involved with the UASG (you can join the mailing list at <https://uasg.tech/subscribe>) so we can work together to fully incorporate these new domains for the benefit of the next

## About the Author



**Don Hollander** is the Secretary General of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (<http://uasg.tech/>), which is a community-driven initiative that promotes Universal Acceptance. Don is a New Zealand-based former CIO who has worked for very large domestic and international corporations. Email: [don.hollander@gmail.com](mailto:don.hollander@gmail.com)



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