



Evaluation of Web Sites for Acceptance of a Variety of Email Addresses

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Introduction

Universal Acceptance is the concept that all domain names and all email addresses work in all applications.

This study looked at 1000 websites to determine if they would accept a variety of email addresses based on new Top Level Domains (TLDs), long TLDs and TLDs in non-English characters. The study also evaluated non-English mailbox names. The results show that longer top level domains don't do as well as short ones, that introducing non-English characters in the domain name markedly reduces the acceptance rate, and introducing non-English characters into the mailbox name further reduced the acceptance rate. There was little difference between a Chinese@chinese.chinese address and an Arabic.arabic@arabic address.

The Evaluation

Building on work started by Donuts, the UASG has, through ICANN's Global Support Center team, evaluated more than 1000 websites (based on Alexa ranking) to see if they allow registration with a variety of email structures:

ascii@ascii.newshort	info1@ua-test.link
ascii@ascii.newlong	info2@ua-test.technology
ascii@idn.ascii	info3@普遍接受-测试.top
ascii@ascii.idn	info4@ua-test.世界
Unicode@ascii.ascii	测试1@ua-test.link
Unicode@idn.idn	测试5@普遍接受-测试.世界
Arabic.arabic@arabic	دون@رسيل.السعودية



For each website tested, a page that allowed registration of an email address was found and attempts were made to register each of the evaluation cases.

Results

We have gone through 1262 websites.

Out of these, 749 websites are including email fields that could be tested.

7 different email addresses were tested.

54 websites accepted all 7 types of email address. (7% are UA ready)

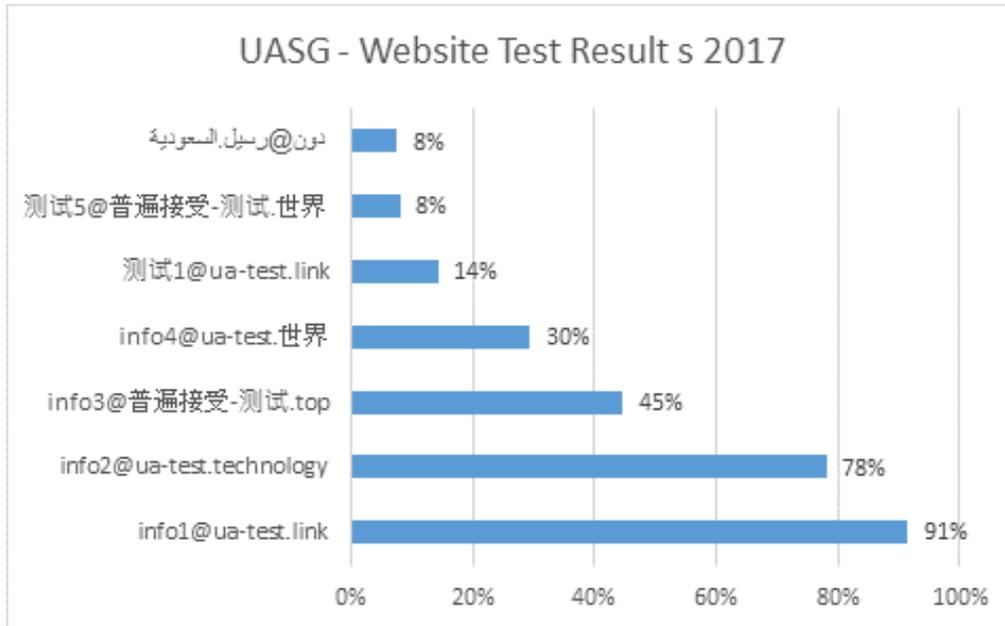
47 websites rejected all 7 types of email address. (6% are accepting neither EAI (IDNs) or New gTLDs)

This table demonstrates how many websites accepted each type of email, and in the right-most column, you can see the rate of acceptance out of all websites tested.

EMAILS TESTED		Rate of Acceptance (out of 749 websites)	
ascii@ascii.newshort	info1@ua-test.link	685	91%
ascii@ascii.newlong	info2@ua-test.technology	585	78%
ascii@idn.ascii	info3@普遍接受-测试.top	335	45%
ascii@ascii.idn	info4@ua-test.世界	221	30%
Unicode@ascii.ascii	测试1@ua-test.link	108	14%
Unicode@idn.idn	测试5@普遍接受-测试.世界	61	8%
Arabic.arabic@arabic	دون@رسيل.السعودية	57	8%

Analysis

Clearly an [ascii@ascii.ascii](#) had the highest acceptance rate and [Arabic.arabic@arabic](#) (as well as [Unicode@idn.idn](#)) the lowest.



When we looked into the source code we expected common approaches and common code. What we found when we delved deeper into the code, this was not the case at all¹. Very few called server side libraries for validation. Most used a Regular Expression (RegEx) to provide first line validation. But we did not find a consistent RegEx deployed. Instead, it appears as if developers would fetch a RegEx from GitHub or StackOverflow or some other source code repository and then spin their own version.

Conclusion

There is much work to be done to get many of the world's website UA & EAI Ready. Where we thought we could address just a few applications and code repositories, that does not appear to be the case. Instead we'll need to supplement our library evaluation and mitigation work with greater awareness raising among the developer community.

Background on the Universal Acceptance and the UASG

Universal Acceptance is a foundational requirement for a truly multilingual Internet, one in which users around the world can navigate entirely in local languages. It is also the key to unlocking the potential of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) to foster competition, consumer choice and innovation in the domain name industry. To achieve Universal Acceptance, Internet applications and systems must treat all TLDs in a consistent manner, including new gTLDs and internationalized TLDs. Specifically, they must accept, validate, store, process and display all domain names.

The Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) is a community initiative that is supported by ICANN.

¹ See Appendix A for a report on the coding behind the web pages

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■ **Appendix A**



Why do some websites reject internationalised email addresses that others accept?

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Introduction

Taking the results of the recent UA exercise Evaluation of Web Sites for Acceptance of a Variety of Email Addresses, we attempted to look a little further at why some websites reject addresses, and why some websites accept addresses others reject. The raw data is available [here](#).

We looked at 3 categories of websites:

A random subset of sites that rejected some email address to see if there was any commonality in the underlying algorithm

The set of websites that rejected all email addresses to understand the underlying cause

The set of websites that accepted all email addresses to understand if they performed any validation at all

The following sections present the results for each category. Following those, we present an analysis of the results and suggest some mitigation actions.



choicehotels.com	info4@ua-test.世界	<input type="email" aria-describedby="membershipEmailError" class="form-control ng-invalid ng-valid-minlength ng-dirty ng-touched ng-valid-email ng-valid-maxlength ng-not-empty ng-valid-required ng-invalid-pattern" id="membershipEmail" name="email" ch-focus-if="missingPartnerHubField === 'email'" ng-class="{ 'rentals-input text-left text-mondo text-bold': \$root.featureFlags.VACATION_RENTALS_NEW_INPUTS}" ng-focus="clearGuestInfoError('email', guestInfoForm.email)" ng-maxlength="60" ng-minlength="5" ng-model="guestInfo.email" ng-pattern="/^[a-z0-9-]+\.[a-z0-9-]+@[a-z0-9-]+\.[a-z0-9-]+*\.[a-z]{2,4}\$/i" ng-required="true" required="required" aria-invalid="true"> Regular expression validation on a HTML input field using Angular JS.
fodors.com	info4@ua-test.世界	var emailregex = /^[a-zA-Z0-9._%~]+@[a-zA-Z0-9-]+\.[a-zA-Z]{2,6}\b/; Regular expression check in Javascript. Checking the Javascript, we found another 2 email validation routines in the Javascript files loaded by the page, each with a different regular expression and/or other processing.
ft.com	info3@普遍接受测试.top	function(e){return/^((([^\<>()[]\.,:;@"]+(\.[^\<>()[]\.,:;@"]+)*)(["'])(\.[^\<>()[]\.,:;@"]+))*\$/i.test(e)} Regular expression check in Javascript.
sears.com	info4@ua-test.世界	reEmail = /^(([w-]+(?:\.[w-]+)*)@((?:[w-]+(\.[w-]{0,66}))\.[a-z]{2,6}(?:\.[a-z]{2})?))\$/i, reEmailUser = /^(root@ abuse@ spam@)/i, Regular expression checks in Javascript.
telegraph.co.uk	info4@ua-test.世界	email:/^[a-zA-Z0-9.!#\$%&'*=+?^_`{}~]+@[a-zA-Z0-9-]+(?:\.[a-zA-Z0-9-]+)*\$/i Regular expression check in Javascript.

Rejection of all email addresses

Next we looked specifically at websites that rejected all forms of email address used in the tests. There are not many of these (roughly 7% of the test samples) and usually the rejection was not, as far as we could determine, performed in the client. We found 3 sites which rejected all tested email addresses in the client; these are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2 - Sites which reject all addresses

Website	Processing: example code and means of processing



oomall.com	<pre>result=str.match(/^w+((-w+)(\w+))*@[A-Za-z0-9]+((\.) (com) (net) (cn))+\$/)</pre> <p>Regular expression check in Javascript. This rejects all email addresses with non-ASCII domains, and further rejects any TLD that is not .com, .net or .cn.</p>
cdc.gov	<pre><input autocomplete="on" class="form-control input-xxlarge input-validation-error" data-val="true" data-val-maxlength="Email address must be under 256 characters." data-val-maxlength-max="255" data-val-regex="Email does not appear to be a valid format." data-val-regex-pattern="^[w-]{1,}\@([\da-zA-Z-]{1,}){1,}[\da-zA-Z-]{2,3}\$" data-val-required="Please enter your email address." id="Email" maxlength="255" name="Email" placeholder="Enter your e-mail address" title="Please enter your e-mail address (required)" type="text" value=""></pre> <p>HTML5 input field with regular expression. This rejects non-ASCII domains, and further rejects any TLD that is not 2 or 3 characters long.</p>
ajc.com	<pre>/^[-a-z0-9~!\$%^&* _+=+]{\?}+(\.[-a-z0-9~!\$%^&* _+=+]{\?}+)*@[a-z0-9_][-a-z0-9_]*\.[a-z0-9_]*\.(aero arpa biz com coop edu gov info int mil museum name net org pro travel mobi [a-z][a-z]) ([0-9]{1,3}\.){0-9}([0-9]{1,3}\.){0-9}([0-9]{1,3})?\$/i</pre> <p>Regular expression check in Javascript. This rejects all non-ASCII addresses, and further rejects any TLD that is more than 2 characters long and which is not in a hardcoded list of TLDs. It also appears that someone has attempted to support IPv4 domain literals, though without the required enclosing [] and allowing a trailing colon and a HTTP-like port number which is not permitted by RFC5321.</p>

Accepting all email addresses

Finally, we looked specifically at websites that accepted all forms of email address used in the tests. Again, there are not many of these (as with sites that rejected all forms of address, roughly 7% of the test samples), and again there was usually no client validation performed as far as we could determine. Table 3 presents 3 sites that perform client validation and accepted all test addresses.

Table 3 - Sites which accept all addresses

Website	Processing: example code and means of processing
beenverified.com	<pre>/^((([a-z] \d [#\\$\%&'*\+\-\V=\?^_`{ \}~] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF))+\.[a-z] \d [#\\$\%&'*\+\-\V=\?^_`{ \}~] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF)+)*((\x22)((\x20 \x09)*(\x0d\x0a)?(\x20 \x09)+)?((\x01-\x08\x0b\x0c\x0e-\x1f\x7f) \x21 [\x23-\x5b] [\x5d-\x7e] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF) (\x01-\x09\x0b\x0c\x0d-\x7f) \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF)))*((\x20 \x09)*(\x0d\x0a)?(\x20 \x09)+)?(\x22))@((([a-z] \d [\u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF) ([a-z] \d [\u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF])([a-z] \d [\u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF))*([\u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF])\.)+((([a-z] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF) ([a-z] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF))\.)+((([a-z] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF) ([a-z] \u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF))*([\u00A0-\uD7FF\uF900-\uFDCF\uFDF0-\uFFEF]))\$/i</pre>



Sites that accepted all the test email addresses generally performed only minimal validation via a regular expression (with 2 of the 3 specifically accepting Unicode characters from the base multilingual plane), with further validation presumably being done server side.

Sites that rejected all the test email addresses generally did so because of a combination of a restriction on non-ASCII characters and a restriction on the accepted TLD.

Although the regular expressions used show a certain amount of common features, they are all unique. Also, there was absolutely no commonality in the way in which each site used Javascript to validate email.

None of the sites inspected directly used a library to perform client side validation.

Implementation details

- ▶ In two cases the HTML5 facility for adding a regular expression pattern to an input field was used. In all other cases, Javascript was used directly for the validation.
- ▶ Three attempt to explicitly match an IPv4 literal address domain (i.e. jim@[192.168.0.1] - nobody attempts IPv6 literals), though one messes it up by not allowing for the enclosing [].

Global vs local sites

Neither the size or technical focus of the company seem to make a difference to the implementation. We find it ironic that the Times of India will not accept a Hindi email address, and neither will IBM (for their global ID sign-up), despite, according to the comments, their code being written by IBM India. And while both of these organisations might be perceived as rather staid and not really in tune with the modern Internet zeitgeist, neither Meetup or Twitter fares any better.

■ Mitigation actions for client validation

Discussion

From the above (limited) data, it appears that any modifications to enable full UA will have to be per-site; there is no evidence in this sample of any use of common client-side libraries that might be fixed to leverage UA acceptance.

Reviewing recent developer forum and blog posts, it is depressingly clear that the vast majority of developers, when tasked with 'validate this email', ask on a forum, have another user give them a regular expression saying 'I use this' and happily plug that regular expression (or some small variant) in and mark the job done. Comments from the odd enlightened developer pointing out that the regular expression will reject valid email addresses do not seem to create much concern.

Happily, there are signs that, among thinking developers, recognition is slowly dawning. **Regular expressions cannot fully validate an email address.**

Partial mitigation

We note that in all the sites checked, the client-side validation is employed as a basic input check. The address is invariably submitted for server-side processing, for example ensuring that no account with that email address has been registered at the site. Any server-side software should be validating all data it is passed from the client.

Practically speaking, therefore, for many systems we think that amending the regular expression to check only that the address contains '@' (or possibly following the Foxnews example above and also checking for a 2 character or more TLD), and thus ensuring that UA email addresses are accepted by the user interface and passed to the server for further validation, could be a first meaningful step to UA.

Full mitigation

Searching [the NPM Javascript package repository](#) for email validation shows [jsemail](#) to be the most popular package for email address validation by a significant margin. From release 3.0.0 of 22nd June 2017, this supports UA email addresses.

Encouraging its adoption would seem, therefore, to be a promising recommendation to move towards full mitigation for client-side email address validation (note, however, that no formal evaluation of the library has been performed).

Unfortunately, it may well be the case that organisations will be reluctant to deploy more sophisticated client-side checking, as this will increase the amount of Javascript that must be downloaded before a page is ready for input. In this case, partial mitigation may be the only option.

■ **Caveat**

Both partial and full mitigation proposals above deal only with client-side validation. As noted, it is to be expected that further server-side validation is also being performed. Judging by the results of *Evaluation of Web Sites for Acceptance of a Variety of Email Addresses*, it is probable that further mitigation work will be required to ensure that valid UA addresses are not rejected by this server-side validation.