

Configuration of Authoritative Nameservice

GHNOG, July 2009
Cape Coast, Ghana

(based on slides from Brian Candler for NSRC)

Recap

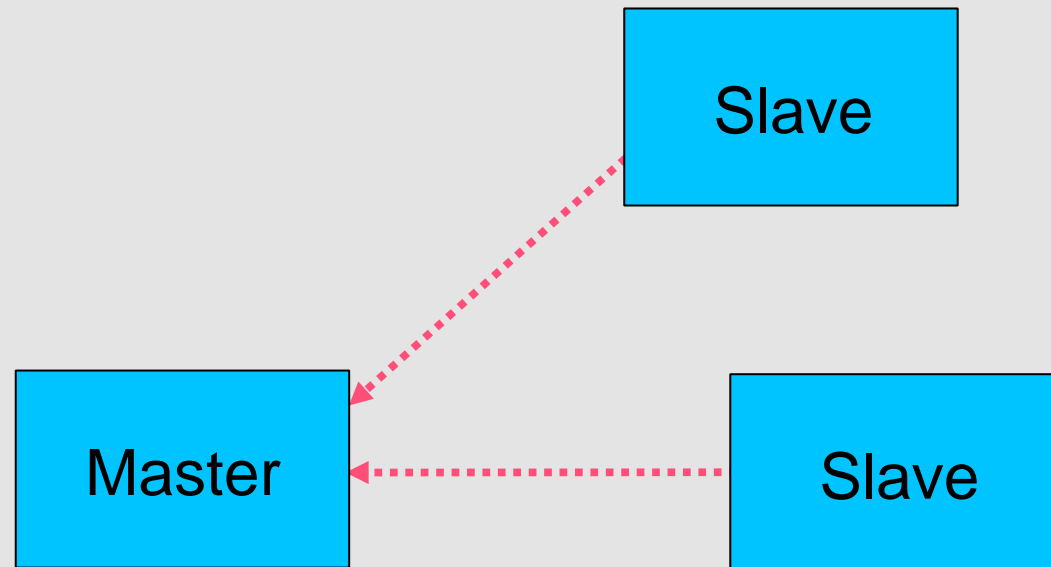
- DNS is a distributed database
- Resolver asks Cache for information
- Cache traverses the DNS delegation tree to find Authoritative nameserver which has the information requested
- Bad configuration of authoritative servers can result in broken domains

DNS Replication

- For every domain, we need more than one authoritative nameserver with the same information (RFC 2182)
- Data is entered in one server (Master) and replicated to the others (Slave(s))
- Outside world cannot tell the difference between master and slave
 - NS records are returned in random order for equal load sharing
- Used to be called "primary" and "secondary"

Slaves connect to Master to retrieve copy of zone data

- The master does not "push" data to the slaves



When does replication take place?

- Slaves poll the master periodically - called the "Refresh Interval" - to check for new data
 - Originally this was the only mechanism
- Master can also notify the slaves when the data changes
 - Results in quicker updates
- The notification is unreliable (e.g. network might lose a packet) so we still need checks at the Refresh Interval

Serial Numbers

- Every zone file has a Serial Number
- Slave will only copy data when this number *INCREASES*
 - Periodic UDP query to check Serial Number
 - If increased, TCP transfer of zone data
- It is your responsibility to increase the serial number after every change, otherwise slaves and master will be inconsistent

Recommended serial number format: YYYYMMDDNN

- YYYY = year
- MM = month (01-12)
- DD = day (01-31)
- NN = number of changes today (00-99)
 - e.g. if you change the file on 28th July 2009, the serial number will be 2009072800. If you change it again on the same day, it will be 2009072801.

Serial Numbers: Danger 1

- If you ever *decrease* the serial number, the slaves will *never update again* until the serial number goes above its previous value
- RFC1912 section 3.1 explains a method to fix this problem
- At worst, you can contact all your slaves and get them to delete their copy of the zone data

Serial Numbers: Danger 2

- Serial no. is a 32-bit unsigned number
- Range: 0 to 4,294,967,295
- Any value larger than this is silently truncated
- e.g. 20040305000 (note extra digit)
 - = 4AA7EC968 (hex)
 - = AA7EC968 (32 bits)
 - = 2860435816
- If you make this mistake, then later correct it, the serial number will have decreased

Configuration of Master

- /etc/namedb/named.conf points to zone file (manually created) containing your RRs
- Choose a logical place to keep them
 - e.g. /etc/namedb/master/tiscali.co.uk
 - or /etc/namedb/master/uk.co.tiscali

```
zone "example.com" {  
    type master;  
    file "master/example.com";  
    allow-transfer { 192.188.58.126;  
                    192.188.58.2; };  
};
```

Configuration of Slave

- named.conf points to IP address of master and location where zone file should be created
- Slave zone files are transferred automatically
- Don't edit them!

```
zone "example.com" {  
    type slave;  
    masters { 192.188.58.126; };  
    file "slave/example.com";  
    allow-transfer { none; };  
};
```

Master and Slave

- It's perfectly OK for one server to be Master for some zones and Slave for others
- That's why we recommend keeping the files in different directories
 - /etc/namedb/master/
 - /etc/namedb/slave/
 - (also, the slave directory must have appropriate permissions so that the daemon can create files)

allow-transfer { ... }

- Remote machines can request a transfer of the entire zone contents
- You can control who is allowed to grab a copy of the zone.
- By default, only nameservers of the zone can (as declared in the zone)
- You can set a global default, and override this for each zone if required

```
options {  
    allow-transfer { 127.0.0.1; };  
};
```

Structure of a zone file

- Global options
 - \$TTL 1d
 - Sets the default TTL for all other records
- SOA RR
 - "Start Of Authority"
 - Housekeeping information for the zone
- NS RRs
 - List all the nameservers for the zone, master and slaves
- Other RRs
 - The actual data you wish to publish

Format of a Resource Record

<i>Domain</i>	<i>TTL</i>	<i>Class</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Data</i>
---------------	------------	--------------	-------------	-------------

- One per line (except SOA can extend over several lines)
- If you omit the Domain Name, it is the same as the previous line
- TTL shortcuts: e.g. 60s, 30m, 4h, 1w2d
- If you omit the TTL, uses the \$TTL default value
- If you omit the Class, it defaults to IN
- Type and Data cannot be omitted
- Comments start with SEMICOLON (;)

Shortcuts

- If the Domain Name does not end in a dot, the zone's own domain ("origin") is appended
- A Domain Name of "@" means the origin itself
- e.g. in zone file for example.com:
 - @ *means* example.com.
 - www *means* www.example.com.

If you write this...

```
$TTL 1d
@           SOA ( ... )
           NS  ns0
           NS  ns0.as9105.net.

; Main webserver
www        A   212.74.112.80
           MX  10 mail
```

... it becomes this

```
example.com. 86400 IN SOA ( ... )
example.com. 86400 IN NS  ns0.example.com.
example.com. 86400 IN NS  ns0.as9105.net.
www.example.com. 86400 IN A   212.74.112.80
www.example.com. 86400 IN MX  10 mail.example.com.
```

Format of the SOA record

```
$TTL 1d
```

```
      ; Serial  
      ; Refresh  
      ; Retry  
      ; Expire  
      ; Negative
```

```
IN  NS  ns1.example.net.  
IN  NS  ns2.example.net.  
IN  NS  ns1.othernetwork.com.
```

Format of the SOA record

- `ns1.example.net.`
 - hostname of master nameserver
- `hervey@nsrc.org.`
 - E-mail address of responsible person, with trailing dot
 - In older versions of "@" changed to dot
- Serial number
- Refresh interval
 - How often Slave checks serial number on Master
- Retry interval
 - How often Slave checks serial number if the Master did not respond

Format of the SOA record (cont)

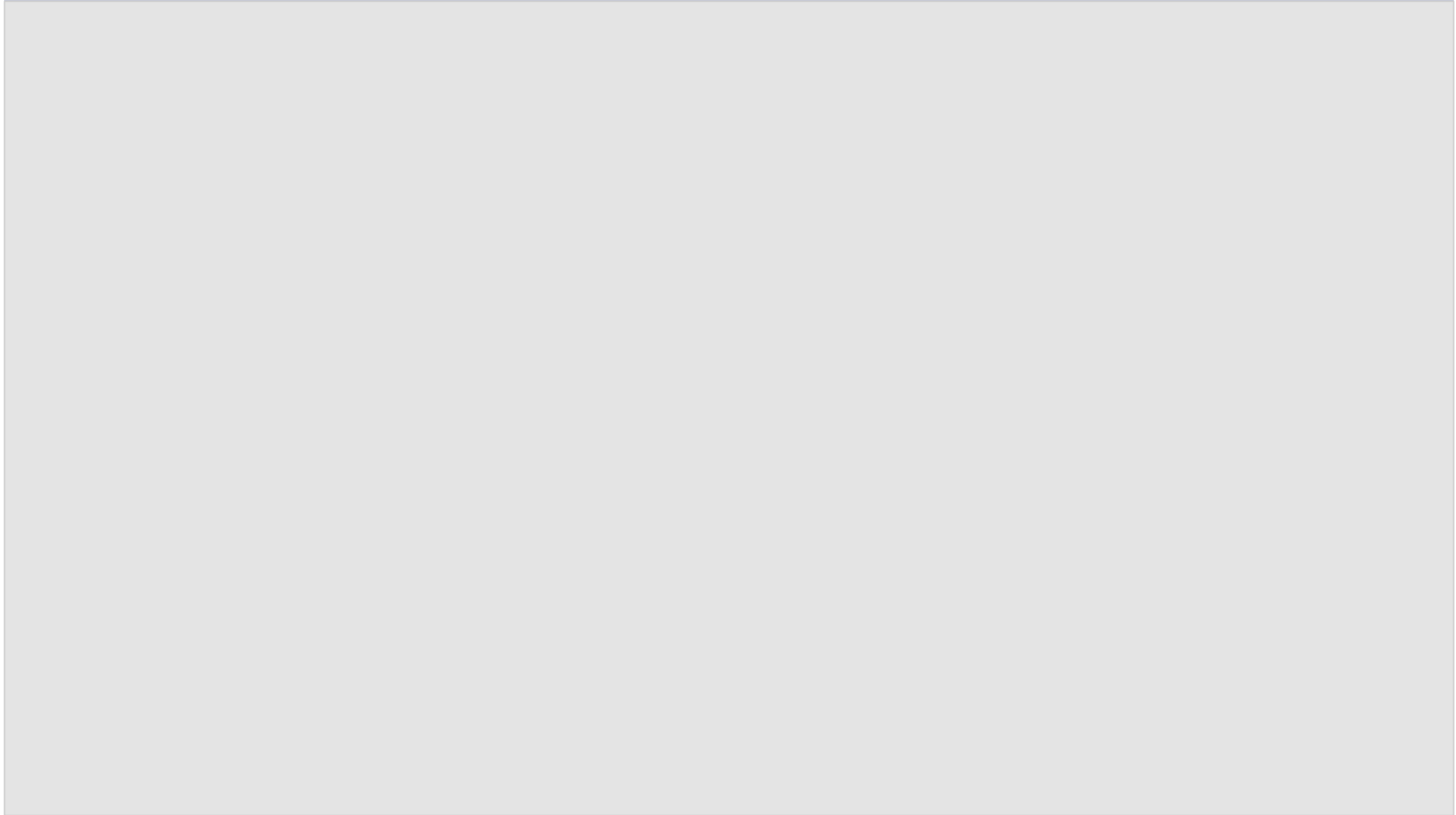
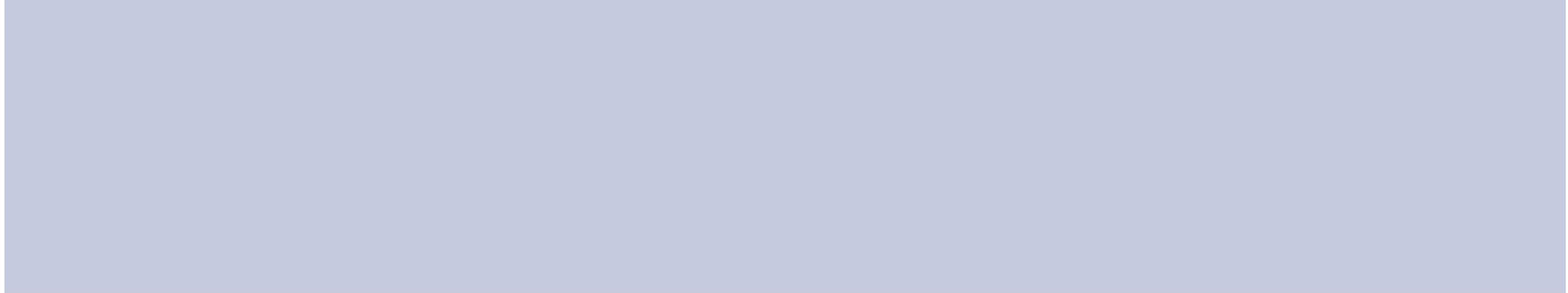
- Expiry time
 - If the slave is unable to contact the master for this period of time, it will delete its copy of the zone data
- Negative / Minimum
 - Old software used this as a minimum value of the TTL
 - Now it is used for negative caching: indicates how long a cache may store the non-existence of a RR
- RIPE-203 has recommended values
 - <http://www.ripe.net/ripe/docs/dns-soa.html>

Format of NS records

- List all authoritative nameservers for the zone
- master and slave(s)
- Must point to HOSTNAME not IP address

```
$TTL 1d
```

```
@ 1h IN SOA ns1.example.net. brian.nsrc.org. (  
    2004030300 ; Serial  
    8h ; Refresh  
    1h ; Retry  
    4w ; Expire  
    1h ) ; Negative
```



When you have added or changed a zone file:

- Remember to increase the serial number!
- `named-checkzone example.com \`
`/etc/namedb/master/example.com`
 - bind 9 feature
 - reports zone file syntax errors; correct them!
- `named-checkconf`
 - reports errors in `named.conf`
- `rndc reload`
 - **or:** `rndc reload example.com`
- `tail /var/log/messages`

These checks are **ESSENTIAL**

- If you have an error in `named.conf` or a zone file, `named` may continue to run but will not be authoritative for the bad zone(s)
- You will be lame for the zone without realizing it
- Slaves will not be able to contact the master
- Eventually (e.g. 4 weeks later) the slaves will expire the zone
- Your domain will stop working

Other checks you can do

- `dig +norec @x.x.x.x example.com. soa`
 - Check the AA flag
 - Repeat for the master and all the slaves
 - Check the serial numbers match
- `dig @x.x.x.x example.com. axfr`
 - "Authority Transfer"
 - Requests a full copy of the zone contents over TCP, as slaves do to master
 - This will only work from IP addresses listed in the `allow-transfer {...}` section

So now you have working authoritative nameservers!

- But none of this will work until you have delegation from the domain above
- That is, they put in NS records for your domain, pointing at your nameservers
- You have also put NS records within the zone file
- The two sets should match

Any questions?

?

TOP TEN ERRORS in authoritative nameservers

- All operators of auth nameservers should read RFC 1912
 - Common DNS Operational and Configuration Errors
- And also RFC 2182
 - Selection and Operation of Secondary DNS servers

1. Serial number errors

- Forgot to increment serial number
- Incremented serial number, then decremented it
- Used serial number greater than 2^{32}
- Impact:
 - Slaves do not update
 - Master and slaves have inconsistent data
 - Caches will sometimes get the new data and sometimes old - intermittent problem

2. Comments in zone files starting '#' instead of ';'

- Syntax error in zone file
- Master is no longer authoritative for the zone
- Slaves cannot check SOA
- Slaves eventually expire the zone, and your domain stops working entirely
- Use "named-checkzone"
- Use "tail /var/log/messages"

3. Other syntax errors in zone files

- e.g. omitting the preference value from MX records
- Same impact

4. Missing the trailing dot


```
; zone example.com.  
@ IN MX 10 mailhost.example.com
```



becomes

```
@ IN MX 10
```

```
; zone 2.0.192.in-addr.arpa.  
1 IN PTR host.example.com
```



becomes

```
1 IN PTR
```

5. NS or MX records pointing to IP addresses

- They must point to hostnames, not IP addresses
- Unfortunately, a few mail servers *do* accept IP addresses in MX records, so you may not see a problem with all remote sites

6. Slave cannot transfer zone from master

- Access restricted by allow-transfer {...} and slave not listed
- Or IP filters not configured correctly
- Slave will be lame (non-authoritative)

7. Lame delegation

- You cannot just list any nameserver in NS records for your domain
- You must get agreement from the nameserver operator, and they must configure it as a slave for your zone
- At best: slower DNS resolution and lack of resilience
- At worst: intermittent failures to resolve your domain

8. No delegation at all

- You can configure "example.com" on your nameservers but the outside world will not send requests to them until you have delegation
- The problem is hidden if your nameserver is acting both as your cache and as authoritative nameserver
- Your own clients can resolve `www.example.com`, but the rest of the world cannot

9. Out-of-date glue records

- See later

10. Not managing TTL correctly during changes

- e.g. if you have a 24 hour TTL, and you swing `www.example.com` to point to a new server, then there will be an extended period when some users hit one machine and some hit the other
- Follow the procedure:
 - Reduce TTL to 10 minutes
 - Wait at least 24 hours
 - Make the change
 - Put the TTL back to 24 hours

Practical

- Create a new domain
- Set up master and slave nameservice
- Obtain delegation from the domain above
- Test it

Part II – advanced delegation

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Summary: How do you delegate a subdomain?

- In principle straightforward: just insert NS records for the subdomain, pointing at someone else's servers
- If you are being careful, you should first *check* that those servers are authoritative for the subdomain
 - by using "dig +nored" on all the servers
- If the subdomain is managed badly, it reflects badly on you!
 - and you don't want to be fielding problem reports when the problem is somewhere else

Zone file for "example.com"

```
$TTL 1d
@ 1h IN SOA ns1.example.net. hervey@nsrc.org. (
        2007112601      ; Serial
        8h              ; Refresh
        1h              ; Retry
        4w              ; Expire
        1h )           ; Negative

        IN NS ns1.example.net.
        IN NS ns2.example.net.
        IN NS ns1.othernetwork.com.

; My own zone data
        IN MX 10 mailhost.example.net.
www    IN A   212.74.112.80

; A delegated subdomain
```

There is one problem here:

- NS records point to names, not IPs
- What if zone "example.com" is delegated to "ns.example.com"?
- Someone who is in the process of resolving (say) `www.example.com` first has to resolve `ns.example.com`
- But in order to resolve `ns.example.com` they must first resolve `ns.example.com` !

In this case you need "glue"

- A "glue record" is an A record for the nameserver, held higher in the tree
- Example: consider the .com nameservers, and a delegation for example.com

```
; this is the com. zone
```

```
example
```

```
NS ns.othernet.net.
```

Don't put in glue records except where necessary

- In the previous example, "ns.othernet.net" is not a subdomain of "example.com".
 - Therefore no glue is needed.
- Out-of-date glue records are a big source of problems
 - e.g. after renumbering a nameserver
 - Results in intermittent problems, difficult to debug

Example where a glue record IS needed


```
; My own zone data
                IN  MX  10  mailhost.example.net.
www             IN  A   212.74.112.80

; A delegated subdomain
```

Checking for glue records

- `dig +norec ...` and repeat several times
- Look for A records in the "Additional" section whose TTL does not count down

```
$  
...  
;; flags: qr; QUERY: 1, ANSWER: 0, AUTHORITY: 2, ADDITIONAL: 1  
;; QUERY SECTION:  
;;      www.as9105.net, type = A, class = IN  
  
;; AUTHORITY SECTION:  
as9105.net.          172800  IN      NS      ns0.as9105.com.  
as9105.net.          172800  IN      NS      ns0.tiscali.co.uk.
```



Practical

- Delegating a subdomain

DNS: Summary

- Distributed database of Resource Records
 - e.g. A, MX, PTR, ...
- Three roles: resolver, cache, authoritative
- Resolver statically configured with nearest caches
 - e.g. /etc/resolv.conf
- Caches are seeded with a list of root servers
 - zone type "hint", /etc/namedb/named.root
- Authoritative servers contain RRs for certain zones (part of the DNS tree)
 - replicated for resilience and load-sharing

DNS: Summary (cont)

- Root nameservers contain delegations (NS records) to gTLD or country-level servers (com, uk etc)
- These contain further delegations to subdomains
- Cache finally locates an authoritative server containing the RRs requested
- Errors in delegation or in configuration of authoritative servers result in no answer or inconsistent answers

Further reading

- "DNS and BIND" (O'Reilly)
- BIND 9 Administrator Reference Manual
 - </usr/share/doc/bind9/arm/Bv9ARM.html>
- <http://www.isc.org/sw/bind/>
 - includes FAQ, security alerts
- RFC 1912, RFC 2182
 - <http://www.rfc-editor.org/>