

Report of the Email Nickname Subcommittee of ECA

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ECAT's Host-Based Service Subcommittee for FY2001 recommended the formation of a study group to work on the policy issues related to offering alternative email nicknames for ULIDs and for multiple-user-single-mailbox needs. This group was formed in Fall 2001 with both ECAT members and external members to examine both issues.

1. Email Nickname Policy

It is very important for efficient system management and clear guidelines for users that any email nicknames allowed be based upon the user's name officially on record with the University. This allows some flexibility in name but remains consistent with the ULID default email address. The rules below ensure that there will be no duplicate nicknames or a nickname that matches an official ULID. The committee, in coordination with the CISS Systems Services staff, determined that basing an nickname upon a name was the only way in which this process could be automated, which is absolutely necessary to offer such a service to 24,000+ accounts.

It is important to note that allowing users to select an email nickname does not mean that their ULID has been changed, or that they have been given an additional account. It simply means that the user can receive email to the same inbox from either their ulid@ilstu.edu address or their nickname address. In addition, the nickname will work for email only – users will still need to login to domains with their official ULID (or non-ISUNET domain login). This can cause considerable confusion for users already faced with multiple user names and passwords for different systems. Allowing email nicknames will have a support cost for the University Computer Help Desk and for local technical staff.

Guiding principles recommended for email nicknames:

- Nickname must be based on name, as currently listed with the University.
- Nicknames will be available by request for students, faculty & staff, one personal alias per ULID.
- The ulid@ilstu.edu email address will remain the official email address despite any nickname address in place and the official address will appear in the University Phone Book. The nickname address can be shown in the "People" search. *The issue of whether or not it is possible to show the nickname address in the University Phone Book will be revisited next year after the service is put in place.*
- All nicknames must remain unique (from other aliases and also from ULIDs) and are available on a first come, first served basis.
- Counters (suffix of 1, 2, 3 etc. as used to distinguish ULIDs) will not be used- either the desired nickname is available at the time of request or it is not.
- Nicknames may not be 7 characters in length to protect the pool of available ULIDs.
- Use of nickname is acceptable in reply-to and return address fields of any email client capable of allowing changes (Eudora, Outlook, Outlook Express, and WebMail2 are all capable, but not Traveler). The actual email address itself must be trackable through email headers.
- It is the user's responsibility when using an nickname email address to handle notifying correspondents of alternate address and any resulting confusion.
- Non-personalized alias for use by a group will continue to be acceptable upon request to CISS and if consistent with academic or administrative functions of the University (e.g.,

jobs@ilstu.edu, preview@ilstu.edu). Email replies must come, however, from a single personal email address, not the group alias.

This process would be automated through a web form, which would take the user's name officially on record and present 7 alias choices based on the algorithm below. Before the choices are presented to the user onscreen, a duplicate check will take place in the background. If any of the choices generated are already in use or result in a 7-character nickname, they will not be displayed. Only the available choices will be displayed, with the unavailable options grayed out. The user will select one of those choices or option #8, and will receive automated feedback as to when they can expect the nickname to be in place.

Option #8 allows for a custom name and cannot be wholly automated. The custom name is still subject to the guiding principles above, and therefore must be unique and based upon official name. This option was put into place mainly to handle legitimate name exceptions (i.e., "Bill" for "William" or "Bob" for "Robert") that cannot be handled automatically by the algorithm. CISS will continue to research the possibility of adding a "nickname dictionary" for this purpose. Option #8 could also be used in cases where a faculty or staff member joining ISU from another university desires to keep a similar email address (choice still must be based upon name and is subject to approval). Selection of option #8 will send the request electronically to CISS Administration for evaluation – this will require more time to process. The user will then be notified whether the custom name is approved.

Nickname Choices: (taking John Quincy Public as an example)

1. [finit][minit][lname] jqpublic@ilstu.edu
2. [fname].[lname] john.public@ilstu.edu
3. [mname].[lname] quincy.public@ilstu.edu
4. [finit][lname] *jpublic@ilstu.edu - "grayed" out because it results in 7 letters*
5. [minit][lname] *qpublic@ilstu.edu - "grayed" out because it results in 7 letters*
6. [lname] public@ilstu.edu
7. [fname].[minit].[lname] john.q.public@ilstu.edu

8. [custom name] must be based on 7 formats above, subject to approval- i.e., jack.public@ilstu.edu would be approved if John is actually known as Jack

finit= first initial
minit= middle initial
fname = first name
mname = middle name
lname = last name

Some of the development for this automated process depends upon the migration to iPlanet's LDAP already in progress and due to be completed in summer 2002. CISS expects to have automated email nickname creation available prior to the start of the Fall 2002 semester.

2. Single email box – multiple users

There are many situations when it is very useful to have one email address that delivers mail to multiple users. A group email alias will address this issue, but it requires some management in making sure that multiple users do not reply to the same email. There is no way to allow this on the current system, but some of this functionality has been built into the new iPlanet LDAP messaging engine, which will be implemented over the next 6 months. The committee recognizes the need for this type of access is not always met by a group alias, but would like to come back to the issue when the new LDAP is in place and a solution that satisfies the need for access and complies with the Appropriate Use Policy.

