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LDAP: Uniform Resource Locator
<draft-ietf-ldapbis-url-02.txt>

1. Status of this Memo

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Discussion of this document should take place on the LDAP (v3) Revision (ldapbis) Working Group mailing list <ietf-ldapbis@openldap.org>.

2. Abstract

This document describes a format for an LDAP Uniform Resource Locator (URL). An LDAP URL describes an LDAP search operation that is used to retrieve information from an LDAP directory, or, in the context of an LDAPv3 referral or reference, an LDAP URL describes a service where an LDAP operation may be progressed.

3. Table of Contents

4. Introduction

LDAP is the Lightweight Directory Access Protocol, defined in [Protocol]. This document specifies the LDAP URL format for version 3 of LDAP and clarifies how LDAP URLs are resolved. This document also defines an extension mechanism for LDAP URLs, so that future documents can extend their functionality, for example, to provide access to new LDAPv3 extensions as they are defined. Note: not all of the parameters of the LDAP search operation described in [Protocol] can be expressed using the format defined in this document.

This document is an integral part of the LDAP Technical Specification [Roadmap].

This document replaces RFC 2255. See Appendix A for a list of changes relative to RFC 2255.

The key words "MUST", "MAY", and "SHOULD" used in this document are to be interpreted as described in [RFC2119].

5. URL Definition

An LDAP URL begins with the protocol prefix "ldap" and is defined by the following grammar, following the ABNF notation defined in [RFC2234].

```
       ldapurl    = scheme "://" [hostport] ["/" dn
                    ["?" [attributes] ["?" [scope]
                    ["?" [filter] ["?" extensions]]]]]
       scheme     = "ldap"
       hostport   = <hostport from Section 3.2.2 of [RFC2396]>
       dn         = <distinguishedName from Section 3 of [LDAPDN]>
       attributes = attrdesc *("," attrdesc)
       attrdesc   = <AttributeDescription from Section 4.1.4 of [Protocol]> /
"*"
       scope      = "base" / "one" / "sub"
       filter     = <filter from Section 4 of [Filters]>
       extensions = extension *("," extension)
       extension  = ["!"] extype ["=" exvalue]
       extype     = oid / oiddescr
       exvalue    = <LDAPString from section 4.1.2 of [Protocol]>
       oid        = <LDAPOID from section 4.1.2 of [Protocol]>
       oiddescr   = <name from section 3.3 of [LDAPIANA]>
```

The "ldap" prefix indicates an entry or entries residing in the LDAP server running on the given hostname at the given portnumber.

The dn is an LDAP Distinguished Name using the string format described in [LDAPDN]. It identifies the base object of the LDAP search or the target of a non-search operation.

The attributes construct is used to indicate which attributes should be returned from the entry or entries. Individual attrdesc names are as defined for AttributeDescription in [Protocol].

The scope construct is used to specify the scope of the search to perform in the given LDAP server. The allowable scopes are "base" for a base object search, "one" for a one-level search, or "sub" for a subtree search.

The filter is used to specify the search filter to apply to entries within the specified scope during the search. It has the format specified in [Filters].

The extensions construct provides the LDAP URL with an extensibility mechanism, allowing the capabilities of the URL to be extended in the future. Extensions are a simple comma-separated list of type=value pairs, where the =value portion MAY be omitted for options not requiring it. Each type=value pair is a separate extension. These LDAP URL extensions are not necessarily related to any of the LDAPv3 extension mechanisms. Extensions may be supported or unsupported by the client resolving the URL. An extension prefixed with a '!' character (ASCII 33) is critical. An extension not prefixed with a '!' character is non-critical.

If an extension is supported by the client, the client MUST obey the extension if the extension is critical. The client SHOULD obey supported extensions that are non-critical.

If an extension is unsupported by the client, the client MUST NOT process the URL if the extension is critical. If an unsupported extension is non-critical, the client MUST ignore the extension.

If a critical extension cannot be processed successfully by the client, the client MUST NOT process the URL. If a non-critical extension cannot be processed successfully by the client, the client SHOULD ignore the extension.

The extension type (extype) MAY be specified using the oid form (e.g., 1.2.3.4) or the oiddesc form (e.g., myLDAPURLExtension). Use of the oiddesc form SHOULD be restricted to registered object identifier descriptive names. See [LDAPIANA] for registration details and usage guidelines for descriptive names.

No LDAP URL extensions are defined in this document. Other documents or a future version of this document MAY define other extensions.

Note that characters that are not safe (e.g., spaces) (as defined in section 2.1 of [RFC2396]), and the single Reserved character '?' occurring inside a dn, filter, or other element of an LDAP URL MUST be escaped using the % method described in section 2.4 of [RFC2396]. If a comma character ',' occurs inside an extension value, the character MUST also be escaped using the % method.

6. Defaults for Fields of the LDAP URL

Some fields of the LDAP URL are optional, as described above. In the absence of any other specification, the following general defaults SHOULD be used when a field is absent. Note: other documents MAY specify different defaulting rules; for example, section 4.1.11 of [Protocol] specifies a different rule for determining the correct DN to use when it is absent in an LDAP URL that is returned as a referral.

hostport
: The default LDAP port is TCP port 389. If no hostport is given, the client must have some apriori knowledge of an appropriate LDAP server to contact.

dn
: If no dn is given, the default is the zero-length DN, "".

attributes
If the attributes part is omitted, all user attributes of the entry or entries should be requested (e.g., by setting the attributes field AttributeDescriptionList in the LDAP search request to a NULL list, or (in LDAPv3) by requesting the special attribute name "*").

scope
If scope is omitted, a scope of "base" is assumed.

filter
If filter is omitted, a filter of "(objectClass=*)" is assumed.

extensions
If extensions is omitted, no extensions are assumed.

7. Examples

The following are some example LDAP URLs using the format defined above. The first example is an LDAP URL referring to the University of Michigan entry, available from an LDAP server of the client's choosing:

```
ldap:///o=University%20of%20Michigan,c=US
```

The next example is an LDAP URL referring to the University of Michigan entry in a particular ldap server:

```
ldap://ldap1.example.net/o=University%20of%20Michigan,c=US
```

Both of these URLs correspond to a base object search of the "o=University of Michigan,c=US" entry using a filter of "(objectclass=*)", requesting all attributes.

The next example is an LDAP URL referring to only the postalAddress attribute of the University of Michigan entry:

```
ldap://ldap1.example.net/o=University%20of%20Michigan,
       c=US?postalAddress
```

The corresponding LDAP search operation is the same as in the previous example, except that only the postalAddress attribute is requested.

The next example is an LDAP URL referring to the set of entries found by querying the given LDAP server on port 6666 and doing a subtree search of the University of Michigan for any entry with a common name

of "Babs Jensen", retrieving all attributes:

```
ldap://ldap1.example.net:6666/o=University%20of%20Michigan,
       c=US??sub?(cn=Babs%20Jensen)
```

The next example is an LDAP URL referring to all children of the c=GB entry:

```
ldap://ldap1.example.com/c=GB?objectClass?one
```

The objectClass attribute is requested to be returned along with the entries, and the default filter of "(objectclass=*)" is used.

The next example is an LDAP URL to retrieve the mail attribute for the LDAP entry named "o=Question?,c=US" is given below, illustrating the use of the escaping mechanism on the reserved character '?'.

```
ldap://ldap2.example.com/o=Question%3f,c=US?mail
```

The next example illustrates the interaction between LDAP and URL quoting mechanisms.

```
ldap://ldap3.example.com/o=Babsco,c=US???(int=%5c00%5c00%5c00%5c04)
```

The filter in this example uses the LDAP escaping mechanism of \ to encode three zero or null bytes in the value. In LDAP, the filter would be written as (int=\00\00\00\04). Because the \ character must be escaped in a URL, the \'s are escaped as %5c in the URL encoding.

The following three URLs that are equivalent, assuming that the defaulting rules specified in section 4 of this document are used:

```
ldap://ldap.example.net
ldap://ldap.example.net/
ldap://ldap.example.net/?
```

These three URLs all point to the root DSE on the ldap.example.net server.

The final two examples show use of a hypothetical, experimental bind name extension (the value associated with the extension is an LDAP DN).

```
ldap:///??sub??e-bindname=cn=Manager%2cdc=example%2cdc=com
ldap:///??sub??!e-bindname=cn=Manager%2cdc=example%2cdc=com
```

The two URLs are the same, except that the second one marks the e-bindname extension as critical. Notice the use of the % encoding method to encode the commas within the distinguished name value in

the e-bindname extension.

8. Security Considerations

General URL security considerations discussed in [RFC2396] are relevant for LDAP URLs.

The use of security mechanisms when processing LDAP URLs requires particular care, since clients may encounter many different servers via URLs, and since URLs are likely to be processed automatically, without user intervention. A client SHOULD have a user-configurable policy about which servers to connect to using which security mechanisms, and SHOULD NOT make connections that are inconsistent with this policy. If a client chooses to reuse an existing connection when resolving one or more LDAP URL, it MUST ensure that the connection is compatible with the URL and that no security policies are violated.

Sending authentication information, no matter the mechanism, may violate a user's privacy requirements. In the absence of specific policy permitting authentication information to be sent to a server, a client should use an anonymous connection. (Note that clients conforming to previous LDAP URL specifications, where all connections are anonymous and unprotected, are consistent with this specification; they simply have the default security policy.) Simply opening a connection to another server may violate some users' privacy requirements, so clients should provide the user with a way to control URL processing.

Some authentication methods, in particular reusable passwords sent to the server, may reveal easily-abused information to the remote server or to eavesdroppers in transit, and should not be used in URL processing unless explicitly permitted by policy. Confirmation by the human user of the use of authentication information is appropriate in many circumstances. Use of strong authentication methods that do not reveal sensitive information is much preferred. If the URL represents a referral for an update operation, strong authentication methods SHOULD be used. Please refer to the Security Considerations section of [AuthMeth] for more information.

The LDAP URL format allows the specification of an arbitrary LDAP search operation to be performed when evaluating the LDAP URL. Following an LDAP URL may cause unexpected results, for example, the retrieval of large amounts of data, the initiation of a long-lived search, etc. The security implications of resolving an LDAP URL are the same as those of resolving an LDAP search query.

9. Acknowledgements

The LDAP URL format was originally defined at the University of Michigan. This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. NCR-9416667. The support of both the University of Michigan and the National Science Foundation is gratefully acknowledged.

This document is an update to RFC 2255 by Tim Howes and Mark Smith. Changes included in this revised specification are based upon discussions among the authors, discussions within the LDAP (v3) Revision Working Group (ldapbis), and discussions within other IETF Working Groups. The contributions of individuals in these working groups is gratefully acknowledged. Several people in particular have made valuable comments on this document; RL "Bob" Morgan, Mark Wahl, Kurt Zeilenga, and Jim Sermersheim deserve special thanks for their contributions.

10. Normative References

[LDAPDN] Zeilenga, K. (editor), "LDAP: String Representation of Distinguished Names", draft-ietf-ldapbis-dn-xx.txt, a work in progress.

[LDAPIANA] Zeilenga, K., "IANA Considerations for LDAP", draft-ietf-ldapbis-iana-xx.txt, a work in progress.

[Filters] Smith, M. and Howes, T., "LDAP: String Representation of Search Filters", draft-ietf-ldapbis-filter-xx.txt, a work in progress. [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key Words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels," RFC 2119, BCP 14, March 1997.

[Protocol] Sermersheim, J. (editor), "LDAP: The Protocol", draft-ietf-ldapbis-protocol-xx.txt, a work in progress.

[RFC2234] Crocker, D., Overell, P., "Augmented BNF for Syntax Specifications: ABNF", RFC 2234, November 1997.

[RFC2279] Yergeau, F., "UTF-8, a transformation format of ISO 10646", RFC 2279, January 1998.

[RFC2396] Berners-Lee, T., Fielding, R., and Masinter, L., "Uniform Resource Identifiers (URI): Generic Syntax", RFC 2396, August 1998.

[AuthMeth] Harrison, R. (editor), "LDAP: Authentication Methods", draft-ietf-ldapbis-authmeth-xx.txt, a work in progress. a work in progress.

[Roadmap] K. Zeilenga (editor), "LDAP: Technical Specification Road Map", draft-ietf-ldapbis-roadmap-xx.txt, a work in progress.

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12. Full Copyright Statement

13. Appendix A: Changes Since RFC 2255

13.1. Technical Changes

"URL Definition" section: added missing "*" as an alternative for the attrdesc part of the URL. It is believed that existing implementations of RFC 2255 already support this. Added angle brackets around free-form prose in the "dn", "hostport", "attrdesc", "filter", and "exvalue" rules. Changed the ABNF for ldapurl to group the dn component with the preceding slash. Changed the extype rule to be an LDAPOID from [Protocol] or an OID description from [LDAPIANA]. Changed the text about extension types so it references [LDAPIANA]. Reordered rules to more closely follow the order the elements appear in the URL.

"Bindname Extension": removed due to lack of known implementations.

13.2. Editorial Changes

"Abstract" section: separated from introductory material.

"Table of Contents" section: added.

"Introduction" section: new section; separated from the Abstract. Changed the text indicate that RFC 2255 is replaced by this document (instead of RFC 1959). Added text to indicate that LDAP URLs are used for references and referrals. Fixed typo (replaced the nonsense phrase "to perform to retrieve" with "used to retrieve"). Added a note to let the reader know that not all of the parameters of the LDAP search operation described in [Protocol] can be expressed using this format.

IESG Note: removed note about lack of satisfactory mandatory authentication mechanisms.

"URL Definition" section: removed second copy of ldapurl grammar and following two paragraphs (editorial error in RFC 2255). Fixed line break within '!' sequence. Reworded last paragraph to clarify which characters must be URL escaped. Added text to indicate that LDAP URLs are used for references and referrals. Added text that refers to the ABNF from RFC 2234.

"Defaults for Fields of the LDAP URL" section: added; formed by moving text about defaults out of the "URL Definition" section.

"URL Processing" section: clarified that connections MAY be reused only if the open connection is compatible with the URL. Added text

to indicate that use of security services is encouraged and that they SHOULD be used when updates are involved. Removed "dn" from discussion of authentication methods. Added note that the client MAY interrogate the server to determine the most appropriate method.

"Examples" section: Modified examples to use example.com and example.net hostnames. Added missing '?' to the LDAP URL example whose filter contains three null bytes. Removed space after one comma within a DN. Revised the bindname example to use e-bindname. Added some examples to show URL equivalence with respect to the dn portion of the URL.

"Security Considerations" section: Added a note about connection reuse. Added a note about using strong authentication methods for updates. Added a reference to RFC 2829. Added note that simply opening a connection may violate some users' privacy requirements.

"Acknowledgements" section: added statement about this being an update to RFC 2255. Added Kurt Zeilenga and Jim Sermersheim.

"Normative References" section: renamed from "References" per new RFC guidelines. Changed from [1] style to [Protocol] style throughout the document. Added references to RFCs 2234 and 2829. Updated RFC 1738 references to the appropriate sections within RFC 2396. Updated the references to refer to LDAPBis WG documents. Removed the reference to the LDAP Attribute Syntaxes document and added references to the LDAP IANA and Roadmap documents.

Header and "Authors' Address" sections: added "editor" next to Mark Smith's name. Updated affiliation and contact information.

Copyright: updated the year.

14. Appendix B: Changes Since Previous Document Revision

This appendix lists all changes relative to the last published revision, draft-ietf-ldapbis-url-01.txt. Note that these changes are also included in Appendix A, but are included here for those who have already reviewed draft-ietf-ldapbis-url-01.txt.

14.1. Technical Changes

None.

14.2. Editorial Changes

"Abstract" section: separated from introductory material.

"Table of Contents" section: moved to correct location (after Abstract).

"Introduction" section: new section; separated from the Abstract.

Copyright: updated the year to 2002.

"URL Definition" section: updated section references to match current LDAPBis drafts.

"Normative References" section: renamed from "References" per new RFC guidelines. Replaced [RFC2251bis] style references with textual ones like [Protocol] for LDAPBis documents and updated reference format to match that used in other LDAPBis drafts. Removed references to LDAPBis Attribute Syntaxes document and added a reference to the Roadmap document. Added "BCP 14" to the RFC 2119 reference.

"Authors' Address" section: updated Mark Smith's postal address.

This Internet Draft expires on 9 February 2003.