Terminology, Power, and Inclusive Language in Internet-Drafts and RFCs

draft-knodel-terminology-03

Niels ten Oever (presenter), Mallory Knodel
Main objective

Increase readability and readership of RFCs and I-Ds
Non-objectives

- Change the wording of existing RFCs and I-Ds
- Forbid the usage of words
- Do anything else then: suggest alternatives to I-D and RFC authors and the RFC editor, and provide a mechanism for the RFC editor to bring this up with draft authors.
Basic info

- RFCs should be readable, understandable, and useful for as many people as possible
- Inclusive language helps with this, because it makes text relevant for more people
- Draft is cited by Codespell, which treats exclusionary words as typos (and provides tooling!)
- Many others in our communities have come to this conclusion as well (GitHub, Linux Foundation, Django, Python, IEEE-SA 802.1 TGmd, etc)
- Many in our community have come to this conclusion as well:
  - RFC 8499 replaced Master/Slave
  - RFC8783, RFC8782 and RFC8612 use accept-list and drop-list instead of black-list
Changes in -03

• Clarification of the main goal:
  • We propose nothing more than additional care in the choice of language just as care is taken in defining standards and protocols themselves.

• Moved our own terminology thusly (the meta-meta-meta),
  • Positive framing with the primary term ”Inclusive terminology”
  • Offensive -> exclusionary

• More alternatives.

• Better recommendations informed by editor and author feedback.

• Nits:
  • Removed the bit about robot’s meaning.
  • Removed uncited implementations.
  • Whole slew of spelling mistakes.
Steps forward

• We are hoping for draft sponsorship by the gen area AD
• Potential reference to RFC7704 (diversity and professionalism)
• Addition of the following terms
  – Balkanization (fragmentation)
  – Third world countries (not a useful category)
• Subsequent clean up, tighten draft further for publication as an RFC.