Meet Peter Harrison, the Only Caribbean Candidate for ARIN Board of Trustees Elections

By **Gerard Best**

Sep 26, 2018 2:23 PM PDT | Comments: **0** | Views: 1,317   **Comment** | **Print**

Peter Harrison has been named among four finalists to contest elections for two seats on the American Registry for Internet Numbers (ARIN) board of trustees in October 2018.

ARIN is one of five Internet registries worldwide that coordinate the distribution and administration of number resources. The registry serves the United States, Canada and several territories in the Caribbean.

Harrison, who was born in Jamaica, is an executive at Silicon Valley-based colocation services provider Colovore and the founder of the registered non-profit Palisadoes Foundation, which coordinates student internships in software development for Jamaican residents. His candidacy signals an inflection point in the evolutionary path of the Caribbean Internet.

"This is an opportunity for the first person from the Caribbean region to be openly elected by the general ARIN community. This will be significant as it will undoubtedly show that ARIN's membership is ready to hear Caribbean voices," Harrison said.

ARIN's October 2018 elections come at a significant moment for the Caribbean, when the organisation has consistently shown its commitment to enhanced outreach to the region. ARIN announced in a June 2017 post that Trinidadian Bevil Wooding had been appointed as Caribbean Outreach Liaison. Within months, the registry launched its ARIN in the Caribbean initiative and has continued to strengthen its partnerships with capacity-building communities such as the Caribbean Network Operators Group and the Caribbean Peering and Interconnection Forum.

In November 2017, Barbadian-born Alicia Trotman and Jamaican-born Kerrie Ann Richards became the first women from the Caribbean to sit on the ARIN advisory council. And the more recent selection of Regenie Fräser to an additional, eighth seat on the board made her the first person from the Caribbean and the first non-white person to serve as a trustee. Fräser's appointment came as part of ARIN's push to develop Internet Governance policies that are more representative of its entire membership, not just those in the numerical majority.

"I thought that it was good for ARIN to expand its board not just in terms of numbers but in terms of background and experience. The broader the perspective of the membership of the board of trustees, the better it can represent the interests of the various stakeholders. And it would be very interesting to see that percolate through the organisation, but it starts with leadership. If the leadership is too narrow in its background and experience, it risks

falling out of touch with the realities being experienced by members of the ARIN community who are from other, very different backgrounds," Harrison said.

While significant, these recent changes in ARIN's leadership have not yet translated into the election of a Caribbean candidate to a full term at the level of the Board of Trustees. Which is why Harrison's candidacy matters all the more.

"If I'm elected it will show that the ARIN membership is willing to accept new points of view," he pointed out.

"More specifically, my nomination shows an appreciation of my experience in working across a spectrum of engineering environments. From the hyper-scale titans where you design the hardware, software, and protocols you use, to the much, much smaller organisations where limited budgets force the compromises of value engineering that don't exist elsewhere. I've seen these compromises first hand in Caribbean designs, and the early days of young companies. People forget that Netflix was young once."

Harrison has been working the United States for the last 20 years, during which time he has worked with hyper-scale companies like Google, Netflix and eBay, and smaller ones in the Caribbean.

After completing undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Computer Engineering and Management Studies at The University of the West Indies, he worked for the government of Jamaica, as part of the team that helped to set up the island's tax collection network and the islandwide point of sales offices for the water utility. He also worked with the government of Trinidad and Tobago, as an operative for a trade facilitation office in the Panama Canal free trade zone, promoting trade with Latin America.

"I have been in the web hosting business, where I worked for a company called Navisite. I then went on to work for Netflix, where my team of network engineers helped to launch Netflix's video-on-demand service. I then went on to Google where I was one of the founding members of the Google Fibre initiative and over-the-top television service. From there, I went on to form my own company, which is Colovore, a data centre colocation provider in Silicon Valley."

When the time came to re-invest his time and sweat equity into the Caribbean region, he worked with a group of tech professionals to create the Palisadoes Foundation in January 2016.

"The Palisadoes Foundation promotes technology usage in the region, starting with Jamaica. We're very small, but effective in preparing students to enter the software engineering workforce," Harrison said, adding that his work with Palisadoes had some parallels with the ARIN fellowship program.

By the time he made the decision to run for the ARIN elections, Harrison already understood the need to balance global Internet development priorities against specific Caribbean development considerations.

"One of the most important lessons I have learned is that technology does not solve everything. There are many cases in which dialogue is very important. Suggestions have to be made. The perspectives of stakeholders have to be heard. Consensus has to be sought, and there's always a delicate balance there that isn't best served by a binary approach. The complexity of the ARIN community requires that sensitivity. The needs of many different people need to be addressed. And that's particularly true of the Caribbean where there are different islands, different languages, different legal frameworks, different customs and immigration protocols and different trading partners. Much of the actual work is really to facilitate dialogue and provide technical expertise in a constructive, non-

judgmental way. That's kind of collaborative approach is really important for the development of the Internet."

The complexity of the ARIN community is evident. The USA and Canada are among the world's most advanced markets, but in the nascent networks of the Caribbean, the fundamental issues of autonomy, resiliency, interconnectivity, security and IPv6 adoption remain in the crosshairs.

"The transition from IPv4 to IPv6 is in full swing, but there remains significant challenges. These include a lack of awareness, resistance to change, misunderstood cost-benefit analyses, competing priorities, funding and more. Overcoming all these will take time and new approaches. What is striking is that there can be new approaches to IPv6 awareness, using product management strategies which have been prototyped by the Caribbean Outreach Liaison. It could be interesting to consider a product management perspective with market verticals, conversion targets and segment-focused marketing, for example. ARIN has had some success with this with its Caribbean Outreach Liaison efforts. It's not so much a technical challenge, as an execution challenge. Without the data and expertise of product management, it will be difficult to convert the long tail of late IPv6 adopters."

The prospect of a Caribbean candidate becoming an ARIN trustee represents a valuable opportunity for deeper technical dialogue between the region and North America, Harrison said.

"We often think of this as a North-to-South flow of discussion, but there is a real need for the reverse to occur. The Caribbean experience is pretty important because it resonates with small and non-metropolitan communities in North America. I'd be interested in seeing how some of those parallels can be brought to bear," Harrison said.

"This is not a revolution but an evolution. You can think of ARIN in the context of the Caribbean but there are many other constituents and stakeholders to consider. Change is going to be slow but incremental. In the long term, this should lead to more inclusivity for ARIN," he said.

On October 4, during ARIN's public policy meeting in Vancouver, Canada, candidates will have the opportunity to address ARIN members. Online voting opens on October 4 at 6 pm EDT and closes on October 12 at 6 pm. All terms will begin on January 1, 2019.

More information about the ARIN 2018 elections is available on the ARIN official website.

By [Gerard Best](), Development Journalist