Criteria & Considerations for Rebranding Hydra

In February of 2017, the Hydra Project learned through its trademarking efforts that the term "Hydra" was strongly associated with another firm, and as a result has decided to rebrand itself in a 6 months timeframe. This page lists a set of considerations for selecting a new name for the Project. These criteria have been drawn from a number of sources (email, Slack and in person discussions), and should be regarded as a "living list" of the community's input on selecting a new name that reflects the values and value proposition for the Hydra Project.

Subjective Criteria

- has or can grow a strong, positive brand identity
- has potential mass market appeal
- unlikely to be confused with other products in the space
- projects our values & value proposition
- easy to say
- easy to spell

More Objective Criteria

- .org, .com, .net, etc. names available
- Not in use by another product or business in the same field/market
- not already TMed - name in the same field as us (software)
- not an offensive word in a foreign language
- General search results on the name should be family-friendly

Project Values & Value Proposition Considerations

- +1 to a new name that projects our values and value proposition – open, versatile/agile, community, tolerance/respect
- in many cases the architecture of Hydra has shifted, and I have a sense (I can’t back it up with numbers) that the number of institutions running many heads over one body is somewhat small, so the metaphor may be broken in practice anyway. Basing anything on a Gobstopper (TM, Nestlé)[1] probably won’t get us very far either.
- What about something related to trees? They generally have a big trunk with with smaller branches and they’re also made up of concentric circles, similar to a Gobstopper. The Hydra body (or neck, some have said) in the metaphor has grown bigger while the heads have grown smaller.
- I was thinking of fractals myself. I like the tree/branch metaphor but I like the predictability of fractals or even crystalline structures.
- The short version is that this is support for the prior suggestions of shifting the branding toward values, which are more resilient over time. I also support distinguishing the software from the people to simplify conversations.

A few principles come to mind as to what “Hydra” is:

1. A software solution for repositories - for this discussion, Hyku, as it is the most concise “thing” that someone could "just use"
2. An open source platform/framework/toolset for building such solutions and repositories
3. A community of partners, contributors, adopters, and users of the building blocks or larger products
4. An organization to steward 1-3 - for this discussion, Steering, as it is charged with legal and administrative responsibilities

This is a moment to consider how each of the four layers above should be distinguished. I will note that they are listed in roughly increasing scope and probable lifespan.

I would suggest that a fair dividing line is between "the people" and "the stuff”. That is, I think that the most helpful exercise is to come up with a values-oriented brand for the community/organization, and either another brand or descriptive labels for the software.

Some of our coworkers with branding experience here say that having someone outside the organization is very important -- it forces you to think about how to articulate the work in a way that people outside the organization could understand.

Noah’s suggestion to distinguish between “the people” and “the stuff” resonates with me. Or as Noah said “a values-oriented brand for the community/organization, and either another brand or descriptive labels for the software.” We have overlapping, concentric circles of people involved in related or complimentary open source projects, such as Project Blacklight. Our community is open, broad and diverse but worth promoting along with the software. And perhaps in the future we will be stewards of more than one open source framework.

I especially want to follow Linda and Noah, and add that I’d prefer a focus on the community in the branding as opposed to the software—the framework is great, but it’s the community that makes it possible, and I think the most distinctive aspect of the project.