CAPITAL DOUBLE S

PROPOSAL TO THE UNICODE CONSORTIUM

PROPOSAL 2/2004

DATE: 10TH NOVEMBER 2004

SUBMITTED BY

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A. Administrative

1. **Title: Latin Capital Letter Double S**
2. Requester’s name: Andreas Stötzner
3. Requester’s type: Expert request
4. Submission date: 10 November 2004
5. Ref.: 2/2004
6. This is a complete proposal.

B. Technical – General

1. The proposal is for addition of one character to an existing block.
   Name of the existing block: »Latin Extended-B« (U+0180 ff.)
2. Number of proposed characters: 1
3. Proposed category: –
4. Proposed level of implementation: L. 1
   A rationale is provided on p. 3f
5. a. Character name: see p. 3
   b. Character name in accordance with guidelines
6. a. A Postscript-font will be provided by the author of this proposal on request.
   b. Published examples are attached, see p. 5f
7. Yes, see p. 3f
8. Additional information is provided, see following pages.

C. Technical – Justification

1. This proposal has not been submitted before.
2. Contact to user communities: yes.
3. User community: mainly German speaking public.
4. Context of usage: the Latin alphabet. ß is used when words containing a “ß” (U+00DF) become capitalised. There is no uppercase character matching the lowercase ß encoded yet, like it is with any other Latin character.
6. Yes.
7. –
8. Presentation form of a character sequence: no.
   Rationale: see p. 3f
9. No.
10. No.
11. No.
12. No.
13. No.
Proposed character name: LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S

Graphic presentation:

The character ß emerged as a ligature of f and s. Despite this widely acknowledged fact over the time it obtained in German orthography a status in which it is regarded a letter of its own rather than a mere representation form of s and s (or f and s). Due to this ambiguity there are discussions in Germany for at least hundred years. It has to be made clear at this point that the question of using ß is an orthographic one while the question of using an uppercase ß is explicitly a typographical one. Here the typographical issue allone is the matter under discussion. – The ß is a regular part of German writing as is þ or ð in Iceland, for instance.

For that ß emerged originally as a lowercase ligature, it had no uppercase counterpart. Since around 1900 in Germany debates arose several times on the creation of a capital ß. It has not been approved officially up to day, yet common typographic reality shows that the capital ß does exist. This proposal is put forward to take account of the necessity of an uppercase character ß for German typography. There are a couple of reasons to explain for the encoding of capital ß.

Figures 1 to 11 show evidence of the occurrence of uppercase ß in today German typography. Looking at it again we’ll find that all the ß’s here are actual lowercases set within an uppercase line. This is unavoidable since no font does provide a genuine ß so far. What these examples actually reveal is the feel for a need of ß. Why does somebody intend to set GEIẞLER instead of GEISSLER (Fig. 2) how he is supposed to do according to the official rule? Those practising this way regard ß a character of its own and therefore reject that there should be no uppercase option to it as is with any other letter. The uppercase ß is missed, so people just help themselves by freely adopting the common ß for a capital.

The matter is especially delicate with surnames. There are lots of names in Germany which occur in different spellings, the one half of them demanding ß and not ss-spelling. Herr Weise is not the same as Herr Weiße and not the same as Herr Weisse. If now the three of them decide to capitalise their names, by any reason, Herr WEISE as well as Herr WEISSE don’t have any problems, but Herr WEIßE has one, for he can only use a corrupt ß within his name – or switch to WEISSE, but then he looses his distinctiv spelling and this he must feel is inappropriate. The lack of a capital ß becomes obvious regarding passports. German authorities issue passports by using capitals only. If Herr Weiße gets his document handed out, he find himself officially named WEIßE. Not this but WEIßE is it what he would surely prefer, if possible.

Without a true uppercase ß Herr Weiße and many, many others remain typographically at a disadvantage. As with passports the issue is also a serious one in terms of extensive bibliographies, where lists of many names are likely to contain several similar ones, as Weisse and Weiße.
There are many names in existence occurring with different spellings: Geissler/Geißler, Großmann/Großmann, Gessner/Geßner, Hässler/Häßler, Meissner/Meißner, Nussbaum/Nußbaum, Rössler/Rößler, Wissmann/Wißmann, Weissflog/Weißflog, Schossig/Schoßig and many others. The GÄNGLÈ gravestone (Fig. 8) is a striking example for the need of a capital as is GEIßLER’s food store (Fig. 2). – As ß is widely regarded a letter of its own right, in capitalisation neither SS nor the corrupt ß usage is satisfactory. Therefore the possibility of a capital ß is needed.

Surname capitalisation is one of the main reasons to provide an uppercase ß, another one is the capitalisation of compound words which German language makes frequent use of. If the ß happens to be at the end of the first part (Nuß-, Faß-, Biß-, Fluß-) and the initial of the second part happens to be a s, then capitalisation causes the problem of a triple uppercase S – which looks bad and therefore usually becomes replaced by just a double S: Nußschale (nutshell) becomes NUSSSCHALE, which is rejected by many because it looks terrific, then it turns to NUSSCHEALE, which is just a compromise. Yet in our example (Fig. 5), the cover of a Steven Hawking edition by a well-established German publisher, neither the first nor the second version applies: NUßSCHALE has been typed instead. The designer preferred a corrupt lowercase ß among the capitals, although this custom is not officially approved. At the end this version was felt being more appropriate to the reader. Also well-known German typographer F. H. Ehmcke choose to set STOßSEUFZER instead of STOSSEUFZER (Fig. 21), like others did as well. The distinction is important in terms of legibility. Between the ß of Nuß- and the s of -schale there is a semantic boundary. In NUSSSCHALE as well as in NUSSCHEALE this boundary becomes blurred, but not so in NUßSCHALE. – A lots of words contain such a ß-s junction:

Nußschale – NUßSCHALE
Flußsottler – FLUßSCHOTTER
Naßschliff – NAßSCHLIFFF
Maßstab – MAßSTAB
Stoßseufzer – STOßSEUFZER
Roßschlächter – ROßSCHLÄCHTER
Stoßstange – STOßSTANGE

Baßsait – BAßSAITE
Großstadt – GROßSTADT
Fußschiffahrt – FLUßSCHIFFFAHRT
Mißtand – MIßTAND
Rißstelle – RIßSTELLE
Rußschleier – RUßSCHLEIER
Schloßschenke – SCHLOßSCHENKE

Although a capital ß has been considered by the public for more than 100 years it did not happen up to day to become actually confirmed or even realised in font production, with few exceptions. A main reason for this is a certain difficulty or uncertainty about how the letter should actually look like. Many proposals have been made adressing this problem (see p.16). However, it is demonstrated in this proposal that there are sufficient possibilities to shape the character ß in an appropriate manner (see p.17).

As recent Internet discussions revealed the request for an uppercase ß is regarded an open question today more than ever. Even more interesting it seems that the recent mood among users towards an increased application of capital ß proves to develop independently from official or professional efforts.

Conclusion
The proposed Latin Capital Letter Double S – ß should become encoded to enable a hitherto unsolved bug in German typography become fixed. Surnames containing a ß and compound words with a ß-s junction in particular raise the need of an uppercase ß, as typographical custom of today shows.
These examples show the increasing custom to use a ß within uppercase lines, the actual lowercase ß performs more or less successful among uppercase letters.


More examples of current usage of a “corrupt” ß in German typography, as seen in 2004.

6.a, b  Seen on equipment of a cast asphalt floor supplier (GUßASPHALTESTRICHE). The “false” (lowercase) ß proves to fit quite well in the line of capitals.

Latin capital letter double S – B

One of the most sensible areas of the β-usage is the ortho-typographic representation of surnames, like this example from a graveyard shows.

8. GÄNßLE, lettering on a gravestone, 1983. Even a glyph featuring a descender is possible for β, thus matching J or Q.


The most spectacular case of a capitalised ß known in Germany.

12., 13. DER GROSSE DUDEN – “The Great Duden” (principal dictionary for the German language), edited by Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig, 1957. Front cover and title page. Several editions appeared until the mid-sixties featuring this title design. Remarkable, because the ß did not yet exist as an official character.

14. On page 800, §41, there is explained: “2. The character ß is unfortunately still missed as an uppercase letter [Grossbuchstabe]. Attempts towards its creation are going. ...” – These attempts seem to have been terminated without result, it is not known, when exactly and why.
Some German typefaces from the beginning of the 20th century feature a genuine capital ß.


LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S – ₿

18. Belwe-Antiqua family, embracing Italic, Semibold and Bold cuts, all equipped with an uppercase ₿.
LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S – Ё

Capital Ё in letterpress usage.

LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S – ß

bereits in der alten römischen Kursive, also bei einer Type, die noch keinen Unterschied zwischen Majuskeln und Minuskeln kannte, das lange s fand, so lag kein Bedenken vor, dieses Zeichen auch in die Verfassung aufzunehmen. Damit und endlich mit der Schaffung eines Verfal ß wurde die Möglichkeit einer größeren Differenzierung der S-Formen, einer spezifisch deutschen Eigen
tümlichkeit, auch im Verfallatz gewonnen.

20. “... already in the older roman italic, which is not yet differentiated by upper- and lower-
case letters, the long s can be found, so I had no reservations about admitting this character into the capitals. By this and, finally, the creation of a capital ß more options of differentiation of the S-forms, a specific german feature, have been gained.”

LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S – Б

LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S – ẞ


LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S — $β$

Considerations about an appropriate glyph of the character have been made at several times.


27. Designs considered around 1960.


29. Type designer Andreas Seidel (Cottbus) gives a $β$ to each of his typefaces (2004).
30. Extensive research has been undertaken by the author to explore the glyptic options for \( \beta \). Typeface Andron, Andreas Stötzner, 2004.
LATIN CAPITAL LETTER DOUBLE S – B

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