

Subject: BIDI URL Display
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The Unicode Bidirectional Algorithm (UBA) was designed for handling normal text, and predated the rise of the web. Unfortunately, URLs* are not normal text; they are syntactically complex in ways that don't work well with the UBA. That causes URLs to appear jumbled to bidi users (Arabic/Hebrew/...).

[*Formally speaking, what we are talking about are IRIs, although most end users know them as "URLs", see [idn-and-iri](#).]

For example, consider the following URL: `http://a.b.C.D.com` (as per convention, uppercase represents right-to-left characters). It would be displayed as follows:

Environment	Display	Details
LTR	<code>http://a.b.D.C.com</code>	http://goo.gl/NozQR
RTL	<code>com.D.C.http://a.b.</code>	http://goo.gl/Lsqis

People have been looking for an extension to the Unicode Bidirectional Algorithm (UBA) that handles IRIs in a more consistent way for bidi users. The general goal would be for the "fields" of an IRI to flow in a consistent direction.

This requires consistency in usage across different applications. For example, when someone copies the contents of an address bar into an email, we don't want all the fields in the URL to switch around. Such consistency would require a general extension to the UBA to indicate how IRIs to be should be displayed, both in the limited context of an address bar, and in other contexts.

The challenges are:

1. There will be a long migration period, so making sure that the negative effects are mitigated as much as possible.
2. For the purpose of the UBA, having a simple, comprehensible way to recognize IRIs in plaintext.

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Recognizing IRIs in Plaintext

Here are rough thoughts about the second task (recognizing IRIs in plaintext) for use with the UBA.

There are two problems:

1. A formal reading of the spec allows almost anything in fields, so it is hard to test for termination.
2. The URL may not be headed by a scheme in plaintext (eg: [google.com](#) should be recognized).

While in theory, almost anything can occur in fields, in practice many Unicode characters never or very rarely occur in these contexts. So one approach is to have a simplified syntax that could be easily recognized. Any characters that were legal, but outside of that syntax would need to be represented with % escapes *if* they are to be handed by the UBA.

For the second issue, a list of TLDs would be used (in the appropriate context) if there is no scheme.

Here is the proposed BNF (using Perl-style syntax):

```
bidi_IRI := ((scheme “://” domain) | domain2) (“/” path)? (“?” query)? (“#” fragment)?
```

```
domain := UTS46Chars + (IDNSep UTS46Chars+)* IDNSep?
```

```
domain2 := domain IDNSep TLD IDNSep?
```

```
path := (char - “?” - “#”)*
```

```
query := (char - “#”)*
```

```
fragment := char*
```

```
IDNSep := [\u002E \uFF0E \u3002\uFF61] // see http://unicode.org/reports/tr46/#Notation
```

```
TLD := <list on http://www.iana.org/domains/root/db/>
```

```
char := percentEncodedUTF8
```

| [[:L:][:N:][:M:][:S:][:Pd:][:Pc:][:Cf:]] inclusionChar - exclusionChar]

inclusionChar :=

[U+0021](#) (!) EXCLAMATION MARK
[U+0022](#) (") QUOTATION MARK
[U+0023](#) (#) NUMBER SIGN
[U+0025](#) (%) PERCENT SIGN
[U+0026](#) (&) AMPERSAND
[U+0027](#) (') APOSTROPHE
[U+002A](#) (*) ASTERISK
[U+002C](#) (,) COMMA
[U+002E](#) (.) FULL STOP
[U+002F](#) (/) SOLIDUS
[U+003A](#) (:) COLON
[U+003B](#) (;) SEMICOLON
[U+003F](#) (?) QUESTION MARK
[U+0040](#) (@) COMMERCIAL AT
[U+005C](#) (\) REVERSE SOLIDUS
[U+00A1](#) (¡) INVERTED EXCLAMATION MARK
[U+00B7](#) (·) MIDDLE DOT
[U+00BF](#) (¿) INVERTED QUESTION MARK

exclusionChar :=

[U+003C](#) (<) LESS-THAN SIGN
[U+003E](#) (>) GREATER-THAN SIGN

In addition, a final inclusionChar is excluded from the bidi_IRI when parsing (it is possible to capture this with the BNF, but it makes the formulation much less readable).

For the full IRI syntax, see: <http://rfc-ref.org/RFC-TEXTS/3987/chapter2.html>

- **TBD:** add userinfo, port, IP, etc.
- **TBD:** include some statistics on the character usage in URLs based on data collected at Google.

Termination and Continuation

Thus the bidi IRI basically *terminates* with:

1. Unassigned, surrogates, private-use, control codes
2. Whitespace
3. Open, close or most 'other' punctuation, plus special cases < and >.

These characters can be included in an IRI, but they would need to be % encoded for the

specialized bidi display to kick in.

The bidi IRI basically *continues* with:

1. Letters, Marks, Numbers
2. Dash and connector punctuation
 - See <http://unicode.org/cldr/utility/list-unicodeset.jsp?a=%5Cp{Pc}%5Cp{Pd}-%5Cp{ascii}>
3. Symbols
 - See <http://unicode.org/cldr/utility/list-unicodeset.jsp?a=%5Cp{s}-%5Cp{ascii}>

For ASCII and Latin1, the terminating punctuation* in #3 are:

[U+003C](#) (<) LESS-THAN SIGN

[U+003E](#) (>) GREATER-THAN SIGN

[U+0028](#) (() LEFT PARENTHESIS

[U+0029](#) () RIGHT PARENTHESIS

[U+005B](#) ([) LEFT SQUARE BRACKET

[U+005D](#) (]) RIGHT SQUARE BRACKET

[U+007B](#) ({) LEFT CURLY BRACKET

[U+007D](#) (}) RIGHT CURLY BRACKET

[U+00AB](#) («) LEFT-POINTING DOUBLE ANGLE QUOTATION MARK

[U+00BB](#) (») RIGHT-POINTING DOUBLE ANGLE QUOTATION MARK

Open issues

- The inclusionChars are from ASCII/Latin1. Do we want to tweak any of the ASCII/Latin1 exceptions to move them to terminating characters?

Applying the BIDI algorithm

Here's how we'd apply the bidi algorithm extension.

This is just a strawman, and needs more discussion!

Given a bidi_IRI:

A separator is defined as any instance of the quoted strings in the bidi_IRI line above, or:

- IDNSep in a domain
- “/” in a path
- “=” or “&” in a query

A field is text between separators, or at the front/end.

Each bidi_IRI is displayed with fields from left to right. Thus the following will always appear

with the same display, whether in a RTL or LTR environment.

Environment	Display
LTR	http://a.b.C.D.com
RTL	http://a.b.C.D.com

(As per the normal convention, capitals represent RTL characters.)

This can be handled in the UBA extension by behaving as if:

- the entire bidi_IRI is embedded in <LRE>...<PDF>
- each field is surrounded by LRMs.

Open Issues

Alternatively, the display could be subject to the environment, or perhaps keyed off of whether there was at least one BIDI character. In that case, the display would be something like:

Environment	Display
LTR	http://a.b.C.D.com
RTL	com.D.C.b.a//:http