Feedback on encoding proposals L2/17-236 and L2/17-300

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Introduction. The documents in question are similar in the sense that they pertain to letters and signs used in the medieval Latin script, and my criticism is similar in both cases so I found joining them together to be proper.

Disunification of thorn with diagonal stroke. In the document the main argument for disunification is that it would be convenient for transcribers to have separate characters for separate languages. That would be reason enough, however it is only implied that the two glyphs are used consistently in such a manner; it may be that the original scribes intended them to be the same letter but their handwriting make the stroke slanted, as it is obvious when looking at figure 3, where the lower serif of the thorn is not perpendicular.

Of all the figures shown only figure 1, 3, 9, 10 12, 14, 15, 16 17, 18 and 19 show a clearly diagonal stroke, of those only 1 and 3 are original documents, the rest of the originals show a horizontal stroke, giving credence to the idea that it has nothing to do with the language at hand. I didn't include figure 8 and 20 since they are italicized and it is not clear that the diagonal stroke is because of it being italic.

All the authors would need to do is to show a consistent pattern in both languages by comparing documents from both; maybe they have done so, but this is not shown in the document as they only show old English documents.

If it turns out that it is only a preference of the transcribers the it is does not merit encoding, since it would only make sense if we wanted to transcribe the transcriptions.

Tironian sign et casing. First of all, the authors argue that the sign et is treated as a letter with an uppercase counterpart, however this is only evident in the original documents; all transcriptions of the documents show space before and after the et, just like it was the sign. I am not avid in the languages at hand, but it is never explained why would transcribers do that if they were convinced that they were in fact part of the same word.

Furthermore, it is never explained how if it is a letter can it not form different words, as it is obvious in the translation in figure 6, they just replace every instance of the sign with the word "and", without losing meaning. So overall either all transcriptions are mistaken in leaving spaces or they caught up to the fact that medieval scribes would just omit the space in those instances (for whatever reason).

I do not deny that there is obviously a big and a small version of the sign, but this does not necessitate a formal casing relationship or any change in properties, all that needs to happen is to encode the new sign as TIRONINAN SIGN INITIAL ET and so their relation would be similar to that of Sigma and Final Sigma in Greek.

Tironian et variants separate encoding. Two glyphic variants of Tironian et are proposed one with hook and one with hook and stroke. Encoding glyphic variants is okay as long as it is done with

care. We do not want to unify the Ampersand and the Tironian et just because they have similar semantics; its contrastive usage in different languages (Gaelic and English) and its completely different glyph warrant disunification. However, encoding all attested scribal preferences is going way overboard.

The document does not make a good case that the specific glyphs warrant disunification, it says that "Unification of the hooked characters with or without bars would result in illegibility in Irish texts (and public signage)" however, I do not see how Irish users would suffer, since it is already expected that for transcribing certain documents a particular typeface will be required, so regular users would use the regular font for their signs and newer documents, and transcribers will switch the font as it is pertinent for the specific scribal tradition, there is no scenario when the two fields would clash unless someone used the wrong typeface by mistake.

It is argued that "Just as significant, however, is the distinction presses like Oxford have made of the three letters, particularly where discussion the provenance and age of a manuscript in paleographic studies is relevant" However evidence of such a claim is not presented, it should be easy to find authors discuss such distinctions and maybe even make connections between the languages and the glyphs. It simply does not follow that if a publisher decides to disunify, so should the consortium, especially considering the intrinsic differences between digital and physical typography; unless one wants to transcribe the transcription (again, something absurd to do, since the original documents are not lost).

Furthermore, it is pointed out that they were also forms of the "letter" also happens in various swash forms, why not be consistent and also include those forms in the repertoire? Separate encoding is only merited if something is lost by unification that cannot be regained by just using a different typeface.

Glyphs proposed for the ets. Let's say for the sake of argument that the consortium rules that the two variants should be encoded, the last issue I bring up are the glyphs chosen: they look nothing like the examples provided except in figure 11. This is strange since the authors claim that the regular Tironian sign should never look like the digit seven (even when it is sometimes the case in the transcriptions he showed), so why would the glyph should look like the turned digit two (an already encoded character)? Glyphs based on figure 9 (with a stroke for the other variant) seem to be much more suited for the task. If the proposed glyphs are used it could confuse users by making them think the digit two is somewhat related.