

Feedback on proposed Unifon letters

Eduardo Marín Silva

24/12/2017

Introduction. On the date 24/02/2014 Michael Everson proposed new Latin letters in order to support the phonetic alphabet known as Unifon: <http://unicode.org/L2/L2014/14070-n4549-unifon.pdf> This proposal differed from the intent of its predecessor of encoding all the letters as a new script, even though it had plenty of overlap with the Latin letters. This would not have been unprecedented, since another script with Latin overlap was already accepted (Lisu). Nevertheless, the sheer number and proportion of letters for the new script that had a Latin counterpart (including all the basic Latin repertoire) was too big, so it would introduce problems with confusability.

This document provides feedback, primarily in the repertoire and names of the letters.

Urgent additions. At least two or three characters could be said to have more urgency to be encoded than the others:

- LATIN LETTER SMALL CAPITAL I WITH STROKE is the only Unifon character that has its lowercase counterpart encoded but not its uppercase. It has a very similar rationale than the encoded version without a stroke (A7AE).
- LATIN SMALL LETTER CLOSED U is also used in Swedish dialectology and so should have priority. Its uppercase counterpart could also be encoded to avoid doing it in a later version.

LATIN LETTER TURNED-E R. First, the name as it is confusing one may consider LATIN LETTER TURNED ER, but that may confuse people into thinking that one should also turn the R, so to be as clear as possible one should name it LATIN LETTER TURNED E AND R DIGRAPH. Secondly, I disagree with any attempt at unifying it with the SCHWA WITH HOOK, since that would be stretching the interpretation of that letter's identity, beyond what anybody would expect (there is no evidence that it was either inspired in the schwa or the turned e, but the turned e seems to me like the safer choice). Of the row of six glyphs shown, the first one is good for the capital, the second one for the small letter and the sixth one is good for the small capital.

Names of some letters.

- LATIN LETTER O WITH VERTICAL BAR: I propose the slightly more informative LATIN LETTER O WITH VERTICAL MIDBAR.
- LATIN LETTER O WITH LOW VERTICAL BAR: The name as is, does not describe the glyph as accurately as the name I propose: LATIN LETTER O WITH LOWER HALF OF VERTICAL MIDBAR.
- LATIN LETTER O WITH HIGH VERTICAL BAR: Similarly, to the other ones: LATIN LETTER O WITH UPPER HALF OF VERTICAL MIDBAR.

Unifications. I disagree with any attempt to unify with Greek or Cyrillic letters. Just like the Cyrillic letters QA and WE have shown, unifying across scripts is not desirable, since many applications rely on the script property to be consistent across the same text. Not to mention all of the simplification of collation operations that will be made. So, TURNED V, THETA, DHE, CHE and ZHE should be proposed as full on Latin letters.