Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set

International Organization for Standardization

Organisation Internationale de Normalisation

Международная организация по стандартизации

Doc Type:	Working Group Document
Title:	Proposal to add additional characters into the *Graphics for Legacy Computing* block of the UCS
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Status:	Individual Contribution
Action:	For consideration by JTC1/SC2/WG2 and UTC
Date:	July 20, 2019

I. Introduction

This document proposes the addition of 8 new graphic characters to provide capability with various symbols widely used in modern programming society into the UCS.

II. Background

Software developing heavily used text editors, especially text editors in terminal environments that all user interface elements are formed with text characters. Box-drawing characters and block elements are heavily used in such text editors to build user interface for programmers.

Box-drawing characters, solid and shaded blocks, and similar graphic characters were encoded in the UCS since 1991 (Unicode 1.0) for compatibility with character sets in various computer systems, especially IBM PC. The set of block characters was augmented in 1999 (Unicode 3.0) and in 2002 (Unicode 3.2) to cover additional platforms, due largely to proposals by Frank da Cruz [1] [2] [3] [4]. In 2019, Ewell et al. introduced Graphics for Legacy Computing block to support the similar characters included in various vintage computers and terminal emulators, including Apple, Atari and Commodore systems [5].

However, these change does not cover recent motivations of block element extension. A popular extension to existing block element set is called *Powerline*, initially introduced for *vim* text editor, which is a popular text editor that runs in terminals under various operating systems. *Powerline* introduced 7 PUA characters: 3 of them are indicators for source control branch, file writability and cursor position, and the rest 4 are triangular or angular block elements forms the user interface.

Figure 1. Image of *Powerline* in *vim* [6]

Powerline PUA characters get rapidly widespread across modern mono-space typefaces. Many recent mono-space typefaces, noticeably *Pragmata Pro* [7], *Source Code Pro* [8] and *Fira Code* [9] natively supported *Powerline* characters. On the other hand, these characters are also get used by other software, including *Vim-Airline*, *Agnoster* [10] shell theme for *zsh*, *SpaceVim* [11], and more.
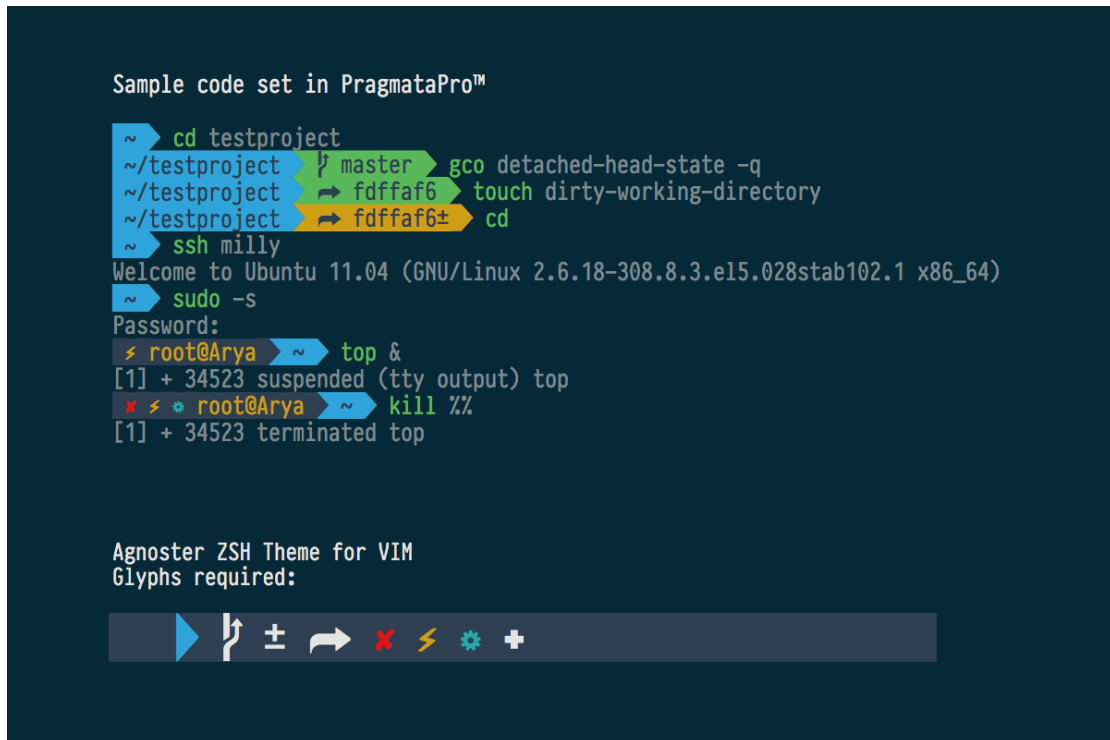
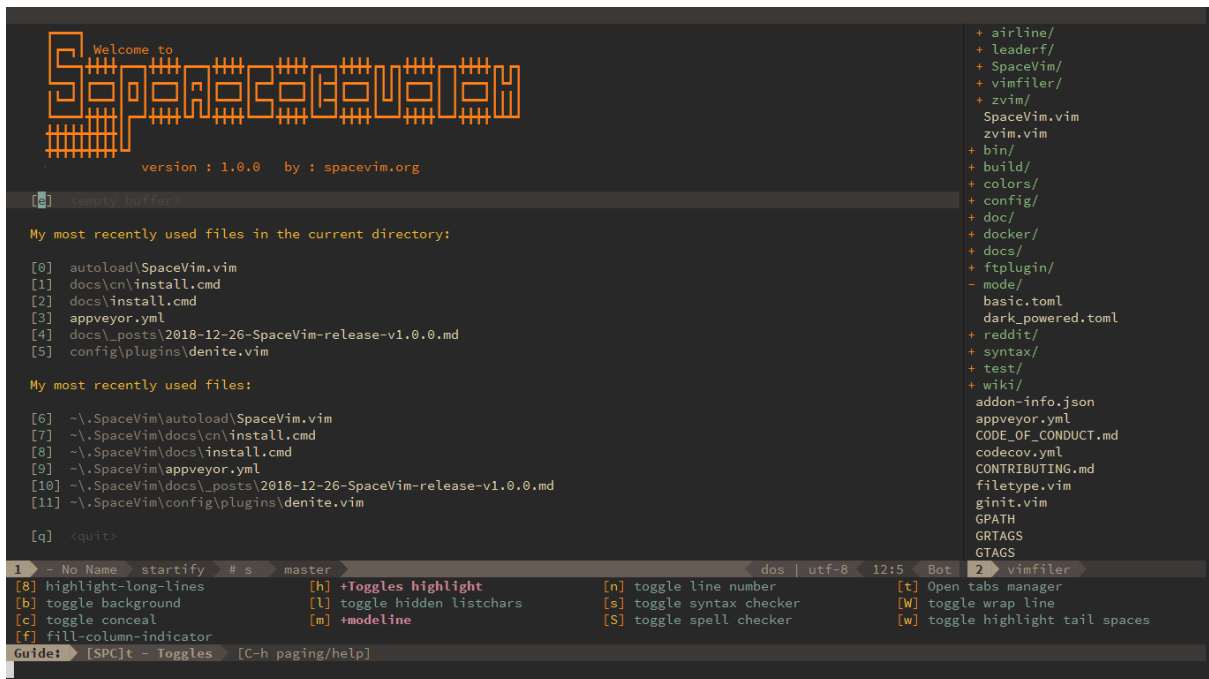Figure 2. *zsh* theme *Agnoster* under Pragmata Pro font, heavily utilizing Powerline symbols

Figure 3. Image of *SpaceVim*, a popular *vim* configuration using *Powerline* characters

III. Character Set

Table 1 defines the purposed character additions to the block "*Graphics for Legacy Computing*", encompassing 8 code points. The preferred code point assignment for these symbols are U+1FBE0 to U+1FBE7.

The UCD properties for all the characters listed above will follow this pattern, similar to other box-drawing characters and block elements: `<Code Point>;<Name>;So;0;ON;;;;;N;;;;;`.

Graphics for Legacy Computing

⑂	`U+1FBE0`	VERSION CONTROL BRANCH SYMBOL
ᴸ/N	`U+1FBE1`	LINE NUMBER INDICATOR
⧇	`U+1FBE2`	READ-ONLY SYMBOL
C/N	`U+1FBE3`	COLUMN NUMBER INDICATOR
▶	`U+1FBE4`	RIGHT-POINTING TRIANGULAR BLOCK
❯	`U+1FBE5`	RIGHT-POINTING ANGULAR LINES SEPARATOR
◀	`U+1FBE6`	LEFT-POINTING TRIANGULAR BLOCK
❮	`U+1FBE7`	LEFT-POINTING ANGULAR LINES SEPARATOR

Table 1. Block encoding chart

IV. References

[1] F. d. Cruz, "L2/98-353: Additional Control Pictures for Unicode," 1998.

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[4] F. d. Cruz, "L2/00-159: Supplemental Terminal Graphics for Unicode," 2000.

[5] D. Ewell, R. Bettencourt, R. Bánffy, M. Everson, E. M. Silva, E. Mårtenson, M. Shoulson, S. Steele and R. Turner, "L2/19-025: Proposal to add characters from legacy computers and teletext to the UCS," 2019.

[6] Powerline Team, "Powerline," [Online]. Available: https://github.com/powerline/powerline. [Accessed 16 2 2019].

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[10] I. Wolkerstorfer, "Agnoster," [Online]. Available: https://github.com/agnoster/agnoster-zsh-theme. [Accessed 16 2 2019].

[11] SpaceVim, "SpaceVim," [Online]. Available: https://github.com/SpaceVim/SpaceVim. [Accessed 16 2 2019].