Comments on comments about L2/19-063 Italics in Plain Text

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I have being looking at the comments made on page 22 of L2/19-173

> We reviewed this document which asked that U+FE0D VARIATION SELECTOR-14 be designated so the character preceding VS-14 be represented with an italic glyph.

Thank you. I am pleased that this matter is being formally considered. A formal decision by the Unicode Technical Committee, whichever way the decision goes, will be helpful definitive clarification.

> For the past 30 years, italicization has been identified as part of the rich text layer, above plain text representation.

Yes.

> Departing from this tradition would create a huge amount of confusion and ambiguity in data.

I have not suggested changing that so-called tradition. Traditions can be good but should not impede progress: each generation must be free to make changes if changes are considered necessary. There are plain text situations where being able to indicate italics using a variation selector would be a useful development.

> Italicization of text requires a identifying a span of text, which is a characteristic of text styles (bold, bold-italic, etc.).

There is no requirement. It may well be the usual practice, yet it is not a requirement. With metal type each italic character was an individual piece of metal type.

Yet the fact of the matter is that when people have previously suggested the encoding of characters to turn on and turn off italics over a span of plain text, the answer has been that that would be stateful and therefore should not be done. The present proposal is specifically not stateful and now it is being opposed because of a purported requirement that italicization of text needs to be on a span of text. This proposal solves the problem. It works.

> When a need for plain text italics has been shown, such as for math notation, italicized letters have been separately encoded.

Yes. True but irrelevant to this proposal.

> What would italics mean for a script that doesn't use italics?

A variation selector would not be used to request an italic glyph. This is not a problem as the next comment made in L2/19-173 would mean that such a script would not be set up so as to have italics available.

> If the use of VS-14 were to be designated in Unicode as proposed, each character to which it is applied would need to be explicitly listed.

Yes.

> In other words, a glyphic registration for each combination would be required, …

Yes.

> … which would be very burdensome to maintain.

Well, I am not expert in that part of it, but it seems to me that once the list is set up then the list would exist. What exactly, precisely would need to be maintained? Also, everything Unicode Inc. does takes effort, and this would take effort. If people want to start purporting burdensomeness then that is a matter for them. If people do not want this facility encoded then that is that and the proposal will fall, but I opine that an appeal to it being burdensome with no explanation of what that burdensomeness is claimed to be is unfortunate.

> Recommendations: We recommend the UTC reject this proposal, and use the comments from from the Script Ad Hoc (above) to serve as the basis for a notice of non-approval.

The comments made by the Script Ad Hoc in relation to this proposal do not seem to me to include any valid reason whatsoever for not accepting this proposal.