

# Proposal to encode Universal Feed Symbol

Submitted by Pierre Marshall

November 10, 2022

## Abstract

The universal feed symbol (🍷) is used on blogs, podcasts, and other news media online to indicate a subscription feed. The symbol was introduced in Firefox in 2004, and has been in use consistently and continuously for over a decade. This proposal makes the case for inclusion in the Unicode standard, and I provide TrueType and OpenType fonts named ‘universal\_feed\_symbol’ containing the glyph as specified.

## 1 Introduction

The 🍷 symbol was introduced in the Mozilla Firefox browser by Stephen Horlander around 26th September 2004 to replace the text on the existing RSS feed icon, which at small sizes could be confused with the word ‘ASS.’ In December 2005, Matt Brett started a website called <http://feedicons.com> to promote the icon as a standard symbol for all subscription feeds. Description text for the symbol on Wikimedia Commons explains that “Microsoft Internet Explorer, Opera and some other browsers have adopted the icon in order to promote a *de facto* standard.”<sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: Original symbol introduced in Mozilla Firefox

In 2006, Mozilla published a set of guidelines<sup>2</sup> on use of the symbol, they outlined its semantic purpose:

[To] indicate the presence of information provided via web syndication in an open format, including in particular the widely-used RSS 1.0, RSS 2.0, and Atom 1.0 formats. [...]

The canonical use of the feed icon is on a web page containing information (such as blog posts, news articles, and so on) that is also made available via web syndication, with the icon linking to a URL for the web feed. The feed icon may be used in other contexts that involve discovery, retrieval, reading, creation, or manipulation of information in open web syndication formats.

The symbol is made up of a circle on the bottom-left, followed by two quarter-circle arcs around it. When used as a standalone icon, the coloured version of the symbol is surrounded by an orange box. Ben Hammersley has suggested the orange colour scheme was inspired by an icon for XML produced by UserLand Software. [Ham05, pp. 154–155]

## 2 Suitability for inclusion

Syndicated feeds are an established web technology, as such they are in widespread use on web sites and news readers. As noted in §1, the universal feed icon is often used to identify an online feed. For example, figure 2 shows 🍷 indicating a subscription to posts from the Unicode blog.

<sup>1</sup> <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Feed-icon.svg>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/foundation/feed-icon-guidelines/>

If the symbol were part of the Unicode standard, web developers would not need to resort to workarounds involving inline images or font shifting. If it were a standard unicode character, the symbol could be styled consistently with the font used in the rest of a web document.

## 2.1 Use in text

Figures 2 to 8 show examples of 📡 in use both online and in printed material.

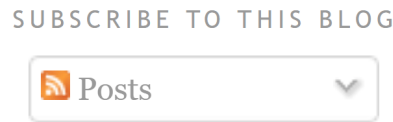


Figure 2: Example of use on the Unicode blog at <https://blog.unicode.org>.

Websites that have their own RSS feed(s) for notifying users of new syndicated content will usually display a standard icon (in most cases a rounded orange square with white radio waves inside: 📡) and a text link (hyperlink) to their feed's URL (Uniform Resource Locator), a file located on a web

Figure 3: Example of use from Doree [Dor07, p. 57].



Figure 4: Example of use from Brusha and Whalen [BW09, p. 24].

- The RSS icon 📡 on a web page shows visitors they can subscribe to an RSS feed by clicking on it or by

Figure 5: Example of use from Ashley, Kenton, and Milligan [AKM09, p. 115].



Figure 6: Historical example of use on a Flickr user page at [http://www.flickr.com/photos/absolutely\\_loverly](http://www.flickr.com/photos/absolutely_loverly) in 2009 (archived by the Wayback Machine).

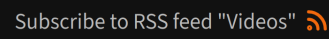


Figure 7: Example of use on a Peertube channel page at <https://peertube.stream/c/usul/videos>.

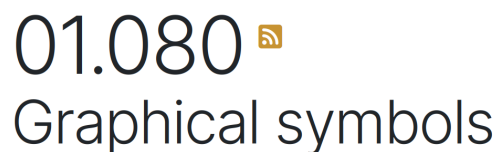


Figure 8: Example of use on a 'graphical symbols' page of the International Standards Organisation website at <https://www.iso.org/ics/01.080/x/>.

## 3 Details

### 3.1 Suggested category and other properties

The  $\mathbb{N}$  symbol is a language-neutral technical symbol, so could be categorised under ‘Miscellaneous Technical’. All code points in the Miscellaneous Technical block range have already been assigned, it would be for the committee to decide whether to create an extended block, or assign this symbol to a different block entirely. The symbol could also be mirrored for use in right-to-left scripts, like this:  $\mathbb{N}$   $\mathbb{N}$ .

**Code point:** Left for the committee to decide.

**Name:** Universal Feed Symbol

**General Category:** So

**Canonical Combining Class:** 0

**Bidirectional Class:** L

**Decomposition Type/Decomposition Mapping:** Left blank

**Numeric Type:** Left blank

**Numeric Value:** Left blank

**Bidi Mirrored:** Y

**Unicode 1 Name:** Left blank

**ISO Comment:** Left blank

**Simple Uppercase Mapping:** Left blank

**Simple Lowercase Mapping:** Left blank

**Simple Titlecase Mapping:** Left blank

The entry in UnicodeData.txt would look like this:

```
<code point>;UNIVERSAL FEED SYMBOL;So;0;L;;;;;Y;;;;;
```

### 3.2 Copyright

I confirm that the font files included with this proposal are entirely my own work, and agree to grant the Unicode Consortium a license for their use.<sup>3</sup>

I acknowledge inspiration from the original RSS feed symbol used in the Mozilla Firefox browser. The original symbol was distributed under a MPL/GPL/LGPL tri-license:

MPL Mozilla Public License 1.1 available at <https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/MPL/1.1/>  
GPL GNU General Public License available at <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-3.0.en.html>  
LGPL GNU Lesser General Public License available at <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/lgpl-3.0.en.html>

This is a license arrangement which permits free redistribution and modification of the symbol.

### 3.3 Issues

In a discussion on the Mozilla bug tracker following the introduction of the symbol,<sup>4</sup> JongAm Park suggested that  $\mathbb{N}$  looks similar to a symbol for ‘wireless.’

“And... is the new icon represent the RSS well? It looks like an icon for some wireless thing.” The universal feed symbol is visually similar to the emoji 1F6DC WIRELESS – both involve stylised waves facing outwards to represent some kind of broadcasting activity. The canonical depiction of the emoji on the Unicode character list also has an orange background, similar to the orange background which appears on  $\mathbb{N}$  when it’s used as an interface icon.



Figure 9: Wireless emoji.

However,  $\mathbb{N}$  refers to a distinct concept, and its basic visual structure hasn’t changed since it was first introduced. The universal feed symbol has become

<sup>3</sup> See Grant of Font license enclosed with this proposal.

<sup>4</sup> [https://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show\\_bug.cgi?id=261354](https://bugzilla.mozilla.org/show_bug.cgi?id=261354)

so closely associated with its subject that the wireless symbol could not convey the same meaning, if the two were substituted one for another.

### 3.4 Variations

Figure 10 below shows different expressions of  from OpenClipArt. All of these images are in the public domain under the CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.



Figure 10: Variations of the feed symbol.

## 4 Personal reference

For questions or other commentary, I can be contacted by email at [pierre.marshall@gmail.com](mailto:pierre.marshall@gmail.com) or by post at:

Loft 2, The Factory  
9 Denmark Road  
Leicester LE2 8AB  
United Kingdom

## References

- [AKM09] Holly Ashley, Nicole Kenton, and Angela Milligan, eds. *Change at Hand: Web 2.0 for Development*. Participatory Learning and Action 59. London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 2009. 148 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84369-716-9.
- [BW09] Patricia Brusha and Alicia Whalen. *Online Marketing Revealed: A Couple of Chicks Guide to Optimizing Your Presence on the Web*. A Couple of Chicks Marketing, May 13, 2009. 72 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4251-8747-7.
- [Dor07] Jim Doree. "RSS: A Brief Introduction". In: *Journal of Manual & Manipulative Therapy* 15.1 (Jan. 1, 2007), pp. 57–58. ISSN: 1066-9817. DOI: [10.1179/106698107791090169](https://doi.org/10.1179/106698107791090169).
- [Ham05] Ben Hammersley. *Developing Feeds with RSS and Atom*. 1st edition. O'Reilly Media, Apr. 23, 2005. 272 pp. ISBN: 978-0-596-00881-9.

**ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 2  
PROPOSAL SUMMARY FORM TO ACCOMPANY SUBMISSIONS  
FOR ADDITIONS TO THE REPERTOIRE OF ISO/IEC 10646<sup>1,2</sup>**

**Please fill all the sections A, B and C below.**

Please read Principles and Procedures Document (P & P) from <http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/principles.html> for guidelines and details before filling this form.

Please ensure you are using the latest Form from <http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/summaryform.html>.

See also <http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/roadmaps.html> for latest Roadmaps.

**A. Administrative**

1. Title:	<i>Proposal to encode Universal Feed Symbol</i>
2. Requester's name:	<i>Pierre Marshall</i>
3. Requester type (Member body/Liaison/Individual contribution):	<i>Individual Contribution</i>
4. Submission date:	<i>10 November 2022</i>
5. Requester's reference (if applicable):	
6. Choose one of the following: This is a complete proposal:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Complete</i>
(or) More information will be provided later:	<input type="checkbox"/>

**B. Technical – General**

1. Choose one of the following: a. This proposal is for a new script (set of characters):	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>NO</i>	
Proposed name of script:		
b. The proposal is for addition of character(s) to an existing block:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>YES</i>	
Name of the existing block:	<i>Miscellaneous Technical</i>	
2. Number of characters in proposal:	<i>1</i>	
3. Proposed category (select one from below - see section 2.2 of P&P document):		
A-Contemporary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	B.1-Specialized (small collection) <input type="checkbox"/>	B.2-Specialized (large collection) <input type="checkbox"/>
C-Major extinct <input type="checkbox"/>	D-Attested extinct <input type="checkbox"/>	E-Minor extinct <input type="checkbox"/>
F-Archaic Hieroglyphic or Ideographic <input type="checkbox"/>	G-Obscure or questionable usage symbols <input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Is a repertoire including character names provided?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>YES</i>	
a. If YES, are the names in accordance with the "character naming guidelines" in Annex L of P&P document?	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Are the character shapes attached in a legible form suitable for review?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>YES</i>	
5. Fonts related:		
a. Who will provide the appropriate computerized font to the Project Editor of 10646 for publishing the standard?	<i>Pierre Marshall</i>	
b. Identify the party granting a license for use of the font by the editors (include address, e-mail, ftp-site, etc.):	<i>Pierre Marshall (pierre.marshall@gmail.com)</i>	
6. References:		
a. Are references (to other character sets, dictionaries, descriptive texts etc.) provided?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>NO</i>	
b. Are published examples of use (such as samples from newspapers, magazines, or other sources) of proposed characters attached?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>YES</i>	
7. Special encoding issues: Does the proposal address other aspects of character data processing (if applicable) such as input, presentation, sorting, searching, indexing, transliteration etc. (if yes please enclose information)?	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>NO</i>	

**8. Additional Information:**

Submitters are invited to provide any additional information about Properties of the proposed Character(s) or Script that will assist in correct understanding of and correct linguistic processing of the proposed character(s) or script. Examples of such properties are: Casing information, Numeric information, Currency information, Display behaviour information such as line breaks, widths etc., Combining behaviour, Spacing behaviour, Directional behaviour, Default Collation behaviour, relevance in Mark Up contexts, Compatibility equivalence and other Unicode normalization related information. See the Unicode standard at <http://www.unicode.org> for such information on other scripts. Also see Unicode Character Database ( <http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr44/> ) and associated Unicode Technical Reports for information needed for consideration by the Unicode Technical Committee for inclusion in the Unicode Standard.

<sup>1,2</sup> Form number: N4502-F (Original 1994-10-14; Revised 1995-01, 1995-04, 1996-04, 1996-08, 1999-03, 2001-05, 2001-09, 2003-11, 2005-01, 2005-09, 2005-10, 2007-03, 2008-05, 2009-11, 2011-03, 2012-01)

**C. Technical - Justification**

1. Has this proposal for addition of character(s) been submitted before? If YES explain _____	NO
2. Has contact been made to members of the user community (for example: National Body, user groups of the script or characters, other experts, etc.)? If YES, with whom? _____ If YES, available relevant documents: _____	NO
3. Information on the user community for the proposed characters (for example: size, demographics, information technology use, or publishing use) is included? Reference: _____ <i>Proposal document</i>	YES
4. The context of use for the proposed characters (type of use; common or rare) Reference: _____ <i>Proposal document</i>	Common
5. Are the proposed characters in current use by the user community? If YES, where? Reference: _____ <i>Proposal document</i>	YES
6. After giving due considerations to the principles in the P&P document must the proposed characters be entirely in the BMP? If YES, is a rationale provided? _____ If YES, reference: _____	NO
7. Should the proposed characters be kept together in a contiguous range (rather than being scattered)?	N/A
8. Can any of the proposed characters be considered a presentation form of an existing character or character sequence? If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided? _____ If YES, reference: _____	NO
9. Can any of the proposed characters be encoded using a composed character sequence of either existing characters or other proposed characters? If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided? _____ If YES, reference: _____	NO
10. Can any of the proposed character(s) be considered to be similar (in appearance or function) to, or could be confused with, an existing character? If YES, is a rationale for its inclusion provided? _____ If YES, reference: _____ <i>Proposal document</i>	YES YES
11. Does the proposal include use of combining characters and/or use of composite sequences? If YES, is a rationale for such use provided? _____ If YES, reference: _____ Is a list of composite sequences and their corresponding glyph images (graphic symbols) provided? _____ If YES, reference: _____	NO
12. Does the proposal contain characters with any special properties such as control function or similar semantics? If YES, describe in detail (include attachment if necessary) _____ _____ _____	NO
13. Does the proposal contain any Ideographic compatibility characters? If YES, are the equivalent corresponding unified ideographic characters identified? _____ If YES, reference: _____	NO

## Grant of Font License

Pierre Marshall ("Vendor"), and its successors and assigns, hereby issues to The Unicode® Consortium ("The Consortium") a permanent, worldwide, non-exclusive and royalty-free license to use the fonts or glyph outlines listed in Exhibit 1 ("Fonts"), subject to the following conditions:

1. The primary purpose for the use of the Fonts is the printing The Unicode Standard, and ISO/IEC 10646 including their code charts and all related reports, standards, drafts and other documents ("Documents") by the Consortium, including distribution of digital versions of the Documents via internet or CD-ROM.
2. The font data in the Fonts may not be published or distributed in stand-alone data file form. To distribute digital versions of the Documents, the characters in the Fonts must be embedded in a document file format, for example PDF. The Consortium may create low resolution bitmap images for HTML based Documents.
3. The Consortium may install the Fonts on as many machines necessary to do the work, provided that the Fonts are only used by the Consortium's officers, staff members, or those contractors, or volunteers designated by the Consortium to do the work.
4. Members of the Consortium, by reason of membership, do not acquire rights in the Fonts.
5. The Consortium may modify the Fonts in any manner or may use their glyphs in other fonts as necessary to do the work. Such modified fonts are subject to the same license terms.
6. Vendor's font contribution will be acknowledged on the Unicode Web site, which will include links to the Vendor's web site (Exhibit 2). Upon request, The Consortium will update the website if the name of Vendor changes.
7. Vendor warrants that the Fonts represent original work and submitting it under this grant of license does not infringe on the intellectual property rights of any third party.

Date: 10 November 2022  
Signature: Pierre Marshall  
Name: PIERRE MARSHALL  
Title: Mr.

### Exhibit 1

Font Name: Universal feed symbol font  
File Name: universal\_feed\_symbol.otf  
Scripts or characters covered by font:  
UNIVERSAL FEED SYMBOL

**Exhibit 2**

On page <https://www.unicode.org/charts/fonts.html> on the Unicode site the following information will be added:

Vendor's Name: Pierre Marshall

Vendor's Web Site: <https://www.extna.pw>

Font Designer (optional): \_\_\_\_\_