

18 February, 1998

Title:	Distribution of ISO 1073-2, OCR-B reference drawings
Source:	Edwin Hart (USA)
Status:	personal contribution
Action:	For SC 2 consideration and action
Distribution:	ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2 and SC 2/WG 3

Even though the current OCR-B standard states that ECMA and NBS (now called NIST, the US National Institute of Science and Technology) are sources of the OCR-B reference materials, both organizations have stated that they are no longer distributing the OCR-B reference materials. Without public access to the reference materials, the OCR-B standard is essentially useless. Since OCR-B is a requirement for passports, ISO needs to decide what to do about OCR-B reference materials and update the standard to reflect the decisions. Some issues are:

1. Are the OCR-B reference drawings still required or are better alternatives available for OCR-B reference materials?
2. Can ISO obtain a new volunteer organization to distribute the current reference drawings?
3. What is required to create and distribute alternative reference materials?

Mr. Karl Larsson, the editor of the OCR-B revision, had asked me to verify that the US NBS was still distributing the OCR-B reference materials as indicated in the standard. Annex A contains an electronic mail document from Mr. Michael Hogan of NIST. Mr. Hogan states that NIST is no longer distributing these reference drawings but would be willing to send its remaining copies to an organization designated by ISO.

In addition, I also contacted ECMA to determine if ECMA were still distributing the OCR-B reference materials. Annex B has an electronic mail document from Mr. Jan van den Beld of ECMA. Mr. van den Beld indicated that ECMA is no longer able to distribute copies of the OCR-B reference drawings and asks that ISO assign a new organization to distribute the materials.

Because ISO no longer has a source for the OCR-B reference drawings, it appears that ISO needs to make decisions of what to do about the OCR-B reference materials and reflect this decision in a revision of the OCR-B standard.

## Annex A: Electronic Mail from NIST

To: "Hart, Edwin F."  
From: Mike Hogan  
Subject: Re: OCR-B Drawings  
Cc: Shirley Radack , Mike McCabe, Kate McMillan

Dear Ed,

I have checked on the status of the NIST (NBS) Standard Reference Materials (SRMs) for the OCR-B characters. NIST has withdrawn these SRMs. However, we still have some sets of some of these reference drawings. I have a paper copy of the old NBS SRM certificate and can send you one if you wish. I believe we have our master drawings as well. I and Mike McCabe were scheduled to do an inventory today of what we still have but Mike McCabe is now hospitalized and any further checking will have to wait.

Some further information which may assist you is: our master drawings are derived from the ECMA master drawings; our reference drawings are for the constant strokewidth fonts (not the letterpress fonts); and our drawings are photographic reproductions (silver halide film emulsions on a polyester base) and should inherently have a long shelf-life even though they are now about twenty years old.

If, after checking with ECMA, you determine that no one is still offering OCR-B reference drawings and ISO/IEC JTC 1 SC 2 would like to remedy this, it should be possible for NIST to transfer its reference drawings to someone designated by SC 2, if this would help. If SC 2 decides upon an alternative approach, NIST will probably decide to dispose of our remaining OCR-B material which is still around only by chance.

Please let me know what SC 2 finds out from ECMA .

Also, you may want to copy X3A1 on all of this since I believe ANSI X3.49 (OCR-B) is still on the books. If so, is it clear who has the U.S. TAG assignment for ISO 1073-2?

Good Luck,  
Mike Hogan

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At 02:16 PM 8/20/96 -0400, you wrote:

>Dear Mike,  
>  
>ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 3 is in the process of revising OCR-B (ISO 1073-2).  
> After the SC 2/WG 2 meeting in Quebec, the editor asked me to verify  
>information about NIST being the source of reference material for OCR-B.  
>  
>The section 14.3 references ECMA and National Institute of Science and  
>Technology [it actually references your old NBS name.] as a source of the  
>reference drawings.  
>  
>1. Does NIST still sell these?  
>2. If so, will NIST continue to sell them?  
>3. If not, from whom may someone obtain this material?  
>4. What is the address of the organization selling the material?  
>  
>Thanks,  
>Ed Hart  
>(member of US X3L2 committee)

## Annex B: Electronic Mail from ECMA

**From:** van den Beld Jan  
**Sent:** 18 February, 1998 10:27  
**To:** Hart, Edwin F.  
**Cc:** Broxner Moni  
**Subject:** RE: OCR-B reference drawings

Dear Mr.Hart,

On behalf of ECMA I can only state that we have (got back) the set of original drawings, but that we don't have any spares or copies in stock. We also don't have a supplier anymore to make copies if so required.

Therefore, ECMA is more or less in the same position as NIST. I would like to know what to do with the original drawings. If SC2 could assign another organization to preserve/maintain the set then that would be highly appreciated. Could it be a suggestion to put the set in the SC2 archive?

Looking forward to your response.

Kind regards.

Jan van den Beld

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ECMA - An International Europe-based Industry Association for  
Standardizing Information and Communication Systems

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**From:** Hart, Edwin F.  
**Sent:** lundi, 16. février 1998 14:16  
**To:** van den Beld Jan  
**Cc:** Hogan M.D.  
**Subject:** OCR-B reference drawings

>

>Dear Mr. van den Beld,

>

>The US NIST (formerly NBS) is no longer selling the OCR-B reference  
>drawings but has a few copies still in stock. On behalf of NIST, the US  
>will be asking SC 2 to decide what to do with the remaining copies.  
>Assuming ECMA will still be distributing the OCR-B reference drawings,  
>would ECMA want the NIST copies? I would plan to provide your response  
>as information to SC 2.

>

>Thanks and best regards,

>Ed Hart