

ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2
CODED CHARACTER SETS
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Resolution 4 of the 28th Plenary meeting of ISO/TC 46 in Paris, May 1999
(Extract from TC 46 N 1540)

Resolution 4:

TC 46 endorses the SC 4 proposal to transfer the six character set standards to JTC 1/SC 2 as described in TC 46 N 1534 and directs the TC 46 Secretariat to prepare a written agreement in coordination with the representatives of JTC1/SC2 outlining the terms of the transfer.

Résolution 4:

Le TC 46 approuve la proposition du SC 4 de transférer les six normes de jeux de caractères au JTC 1/SC 2 comme prévu au TC 46 N 1534 et recommande au Secrétariat du TC 46 de préparer un accord écrit en coordination avec les représentants du JTC1/SC 2, précisant les conditions du transfert.

ISO/TC 46 N 1534

**TC 46 INFORMATION AND
DOCUMENTATION
SC 4 COMPUTER APPLICATIONS
IN INFORMATION
AND DOCUMENTATION**

Secretariat: USA



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ISO/TC46/SC4/WG1 N 235

1999-05-19

ISO/TC46/SC4/WG1

Character Sets

TITLE:

TC46/SC4/WG1 N235

Response to JTC1/SC2 request for transfer of TC46/SC4
character set projects

SOURCE:

TC46/SC4/WG1

PROJECT:

STATUS:

REQUESTED ACTION:

For information

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**Response to JTC1/SC2 Request for
Transfer of TC46/SC4 Character Set Projects**

ISO/TC46/SC4 Working Group 1 (Character Sets) was surprised by the recent JTC1/SC2 resolution requesting that TC46 transfer character coding projects to JTC1/SC2. This is the second such resolution formulated by JTC1/SC2 in the past few years that has dealt with TC46's work in the area of character sets. In TC46/SC4's last response regarding this, it was stated in certain terms that it was WG1's intent to no longer consider new work items to develop character sets. Instead, WG1 decided to focus its energies on the migration of existing applications of the TC46 "bibliographic" character sets to ISO/IEC 10646 (or its Unicode industry subset). In the interim, TC46/SC4 expressed its belief, confirmed by the ISO Technical Management Board (TMB) that it was within TC46's right to maintain standards which it had developed until they were no longer needed.

Although ISO/IEC 10646 has generated much interest in the library community and many libraries and library system vendors intend to move to ISO/IEC 10646 (or Unicode) for the encoding of library data, this goal has not been reached by most libraries. Operating systems, particularly for microcomputers, do not yet fully support ISO/IEC 10646, thus most libraries are still dependent on the ISO bibliographic character sets, and their maintenance must be continued for the time being.

In response to JTC1/SC2's recent request that TC46/SC4 transfer its character coding projects to JTC1/SC2, we can only reiterate that SC4 has no active work items for any new sets. TC46/SC4/WG1 work has focused on facilitating the migration of the users of the various TC46 character sets to ISO/IEC 10646. Primarily, this work has involved efforts to find acceptable mappings of characters in the TC46 sets to characters in ISO/IEC 10646. In cases where acceptable mappings are not found, WG1 has worked with experts in JTC1/SC2/WG2 to get new characters added to ISO/IEC 10646.

In a clarification made by the JTC1/SC2 liaison, Michael Everson, "transfer of character coding projects" was intended to be a broad statement relative to TC46/SC4 character set work. This would imply that JTC1/SC2 would like for all character set work to cease within TC46. TC46/SC4 can only say that until acceptable mappings are found for characters from all TC46 sets, SC4/WG1 must remain active. WG1 is happy to report however that several TC46/SC4 character sets have been fully mapped to ISO/IEC 10646 and it is feasible that responsibility for those sets could be transferred to JTC1/SC2, if this is acceptable to TC46/SC4 and with the guarantee that these standards will not be withdrawn without agreement from TC46/SC4. The six character sets for which all characters have been mapped to ISO/IEC 10646 (and could be transferred now) include: ISO 5426:1980, ISO 5427:1984, ISO 6438:1996, ISO 10585:1996, ISO 10586:1996, and ISO 11822:1996.

There does not appear to be any procedural problem with transfer of responsibility for the maintenance of a standard from one ISO subcommittee to another. WG1 hopes that within the next few years characters from the other sets it helped develop are accommodated by acceptable mappings to ISO/IEC 10646. WG1 is willing to accept as a new policy the transfer to JTC1/SC2 of responsibility for the maintenance of an existing TC46 character set once acceptable mappings in ISO/IEC 10646 have been found for all characters in the TC46 set. At present, the seven character sets for which all characters have not been mapped to ISO/IEC 10646 (and therefore cannot be transferred now) include: ISO 5426-2:1996, ISO 5428:1984, ISO 6630:1986, ISO 6861:1996, ISO 6862:1996,

ISO 8957:1996, and ISO 10754:1996.

If ultimately responsibility for all existing TC46 character sets is transferred to JTC1/SC2, the status of TC46/SC4/WG1 as a working group may need to change. In the past few years the scope of work of WG1 has been significantly restricted so as to allow JTC1 to assume responsibility for development of new character sets. It is hoped that in whatever decision is made regarding responsibility for character sets within ISO, that a channel for input to the process by libraries and the documentation community is not lost. Liaison between TC46/SC4 and JTC1/SC2 is very important and is taking on an even greater significance as ISO/IEC 10646 reaches maturity as a standard.