

TITLE: Letter to JTC 1 Chair and JTC 1/SC 2 Chair

SOURCE: Deborah Anderson, UC Berkeley (liaison member to SC2)

ACTION: For consideration by WG2

DISTRIBUTION: ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG 2

Dear Sirs,

I head a project at UC Berkeley (an external liaison of ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2) that helps get unencoded scripts proposed for inclusion in the international character encoding standard ISO/IEC 10646 and Unicode. The majority of the unencoded modern scripts are used by minority language speakers in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. Once these scripts are encoded, standardized fonts can be created, so users can write email, and create web-pages and word-processing documents in their native script. But without access to a standardized encoding in ISO/IEC 10646 and Unicode, minority populations will be left out of today's digital world, meaning they will have to rely on proprietary fonts or other work-arounds for writing their language. Furthermore, historic and cultural documents in their script could be inaccessible because they won't be based on an international standard.

The project I run has been able to get some funding, but we have only raised a small amount towards the overall project's budgetary goal in order to continue work on scripts.

I would like to invite ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2 to encourage its experts to participate on the Unicode email list, particularly the Africa list or Indic list (as applicable). Given that many representatives may not have the funds to travel to participate in the character encoding meetings which are held throughout the world -- participating via email offers a low-cost alternative that is within reach for more people: participants can read the email, participate in the discussion via email, and read and post documents. It is also possible that CDs with the documents could be sent, if needed.

I also ask that ISO/IEC JTC 1 members broadly invite experts to participate, so that we can get better information on the various scripts. It is often difficult to locate experts on these scripts, which are typically less well known.

Finally, if JTC 1 could circulate this to ISO and IEC with the endorsement, I would be greatly appreciative.

Support for this project would act as a model for other ISO/IEC activities and other ISO/IEC subcommittees, whose work likewise touches on technology and language/culture-related issues.

Sincerely,

Deborah Anderson
Project Leader, Script Encoding Initiative
UC Berkeley