TO: Unicode Technical Committee
FROM: Deborah Anderson, SEI, UC Berkeley
SUBJECT: Feedback on L2/14-185 Proposal to change glyph for small GREEK LETTER YOT
DATE: 20 October 2014

Below is feedback from Donald Mastronarde, Melpomene Distinguished Professor of Classical Languages and Literature at UC Berkeley, regarding the request in L2/14-185 to remove the dot from the glyph for U+03F3 GREEK LETTER YOT (ϳ).

The character GREEK LETTER YOT is used in historical linguistics of Greek to indicate the consonantal i sound (our consonant y), for which the classical Greeks had no letter, but whose presence in earlier stages is supported by Indo-European parallels. For instance, the double lambda in classical ἀγγέλλω is explained by the earlier presence of a present suffix jω added to the root with one lambda. So the character is used amidst Greek characters, not only in transliteration.

Another way that this sound is sometimes displayed is by using iota with reversed breve below. Also, sometimes a y is used, especially in transliteration.

Schwyzer's authoritative historical Greek grammar uses a dotted form (that is, roman j) to represent the half-consonant i (and mentions as an alternative representation roman i with reversed breve below). Helmet Rix, in his briefer but more up to date *Historische Grammatik des Griechischen*, 1976, uses the latter only (i with reversed breve below).

The four GreekKeys fonts (New Athena Unicode, KadmosU, BosporosU, AttikaU) contain U+03F3, as do Cardo and Aegean and IFA-Grec and Gentium, plus a few system or MS fonts. In New Athena Unicode and Aegean, there is no dot (I also find on my system a Copperplate font that has no dot). In all the other fonts there is a dot. So I, as maintainer of New Athena Unicode font and the other three GreekKeys fonts, have not been consistent (maybe this dotless glyph was already in Athenian Unicode [by J. Rusten] before I took it over and expanded it).

The examples shown in L2-14-185 with JHS have nothing to do with Greek, since they are Latin.[1] The examples with IHΣ have nothing to do with yot because they are postclassical and are simply iota, eta, sigma, the standard Koine way to represent Jesus.

So there is no justification for mandating that the letter should have no dot. It is a modern typographical construct, not an ancient letter.

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[1] The letters "IHS" and "JHS" are representations in Latin of the Greek: Latin I (or J) for iota, Latin H for eta, and Latin S for sigma (lunate or final form).