BOOMERANG EMOJI PROPOSAL

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Abstract

This proposal requests the addition of a BOOMERANG to the Unicode emoji library. This proposal requests the addition of a BOOMERANG emoji.

A boomerang is a tool, traditionally used by Indigenous Australians for hunting, sport and entertainment purposes, which is recognised worldwide, with many secondary meetings.

Aphelandra Messer/Emojination. Free for use in conjunction with this proposal.

Introduction

Traditional boomerangs in Australia were typically constructed from wood, and were used for both hunting and entertainment. Returning boomerangs are flat tools, curved so that when thrown correctly they return back to their point of origin. Non-returning boomerangs, koondi, were typically long sticks designed to travel as straight as possible. Although the non-returning style is believed to have been more commonly used for hunting and survival, it is the traditional two-winged returning style that is commonly associated with the name.

There are a number of theories on how the word Boomerang came to enter the English vocabulary, with one theory being that it was an English interpretation of the word from a now extinct Aboriginal language.

Boomerangs have long been used by Indigenous Australians. The oldest surviving Australian Aboriginal boomerangs date back to 10,000 BC and were found in a peat bog in South Australia. During hunting the non-returning style was typically used by throwing it directly at an animal, or the noise that it made passing through the air would scare small birds and other prey towards the thrower or a net.

Although generally thought of as being Australian, boomerangs have also been found in ancient Europe, Egypt and North America.

In modern use boomerangs are mostly used for entertainment or sport. There are a variety of competitions and goals, such as maximum time aloft and accuracy of return. Modern boomerangs come in a variety of styles, they often have more than two wings and can be made materials including plastics.

Given their limited modern-day use boomerangs are more of a cultural icon than a practical tool. The image of a two-winged returning boomerang is commonly associated with Australia, and Indigenous Australians.

1. Identification (Names)

      A. CLDR short name: Boomerang

      B. CLDR keywords: Boomerang | Australia

2. Images
Credit: Aphelandra Messer/Emojination. Free for use in conjunction with this proposal.

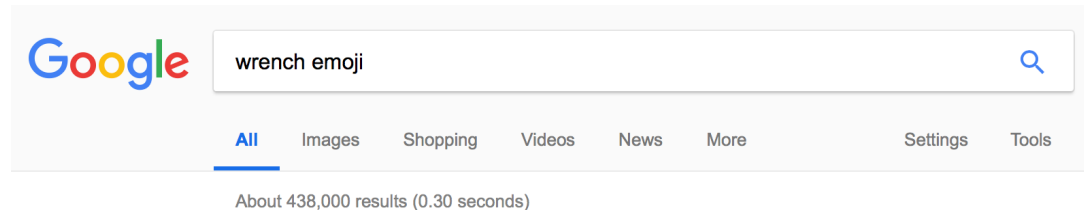## 3. Selection Factors — Inclusion
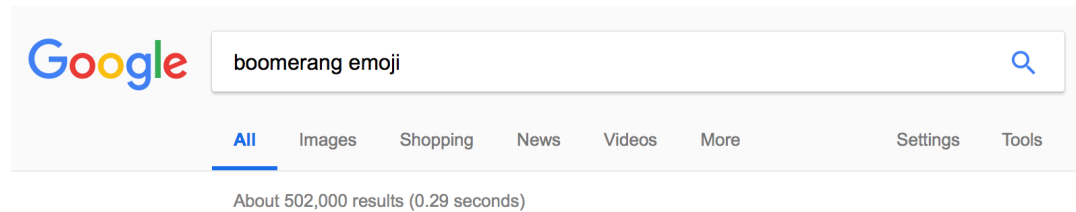
A. Compatibility:

There is currently no representation of a boomerang on major digital platforms. However, it is represented in a number of additional "sticker" packs available on platforms like iMessage and Facebook Messenger.
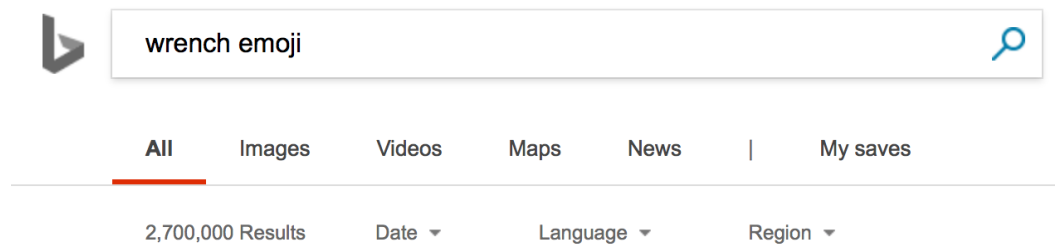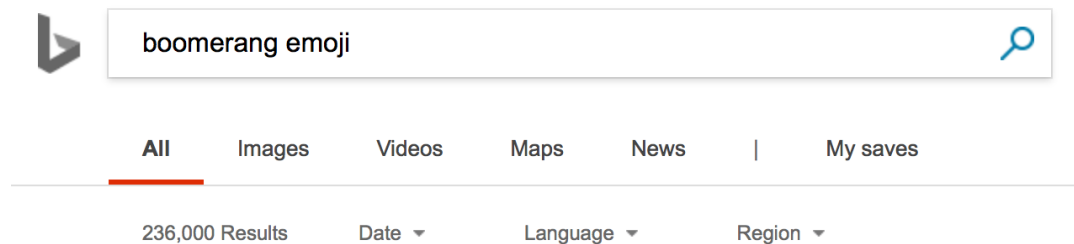
B. Expected Usage Level

B1. Frequency

A boomerang emoji would be used regularly in a variety of contexts. When comparing to the reference emoji for the tools category, the wrench, searches for "boomerang emoji" typically outperform those of "wrench emoji".

Google search:

Google | boomerang emoji | 🔍

All   Images   Shopping   News   Videos   More   Settings   Tools

About 502,000 results (0.29 seconds)

Google | wrench emoji | 🔍

All   Images   Shopping   Videos   News   More   Settings   Tools

About 438,000 results (0.30 seconds)

Bing search:

boomerang emoji | 🔍

All   Images   Videos   Maps   News | My saves

236,000 Results   Date ▾   Language ▾   Region ▾

wrench emoji | 🔍

All   Images   Videos   Maps   News | My saves

2,700,000 Results   Date ▾   Language ▾   Region ▾

YouTube search:

About 25,400 results

About 5,450 results

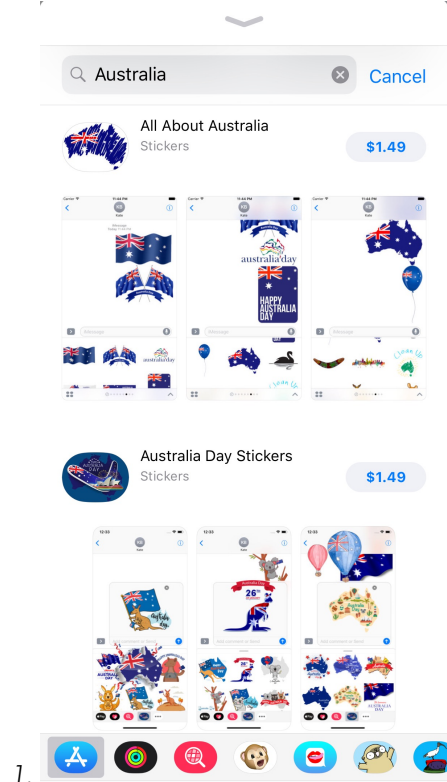Google trends:

Additionally, on most major messaging services there are a wide range of sticker packs available that include Australian icons, nearly all of them contain at least one image of a boomerang.

Australian sticker packs on the Australian iMessage App Store

1.

B2. Multiple Usages

Users are likely to use a boomerang emoji to refer to Australia or Australian culture. Currently there are few emoji options that allow for this expression, limited mostly to an Australian flag as there is little to no representation of Australian icons or animals. Additionally there are no emoji that allow for expression of Indigenous Australian identity, the official Australian flag is sometimes seen as a symbol of colonisation and there are no emoji for the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander flags.

Outside of an Australian context users may use it to refer to something or someone that comes back, such as a former partner wanting to reunite a relationship, or a dog returning with a stick. Additionally it could also be used to indicate that someone will be back soon, similar to "brb".

B3. Use in Sequences

Some common sequences including the BOOMERANG emoji would be:

Australian Flag + Boomerang: Australia

Boomerang + Kangaroo: Australia (avoids connotations of the flag)

Boomerang + Plane: Coming home

Boomerang + Man: Returning boyfriend

Boomerang + Thumbs down: Not taking someone back.

Food + Boomerang + Nauseated Face: Ate something bad

B4. Breaking New Ground

C. Image Distinctiveness

There are currently very few shapes in the emoji library that resemble the outline of a boomerang, the sock is perhaps the most similar in shape. A boomerang would be visually distinct without even considering colour and texture, which would ensure it's unlikely to be confused even at smaller sizes.
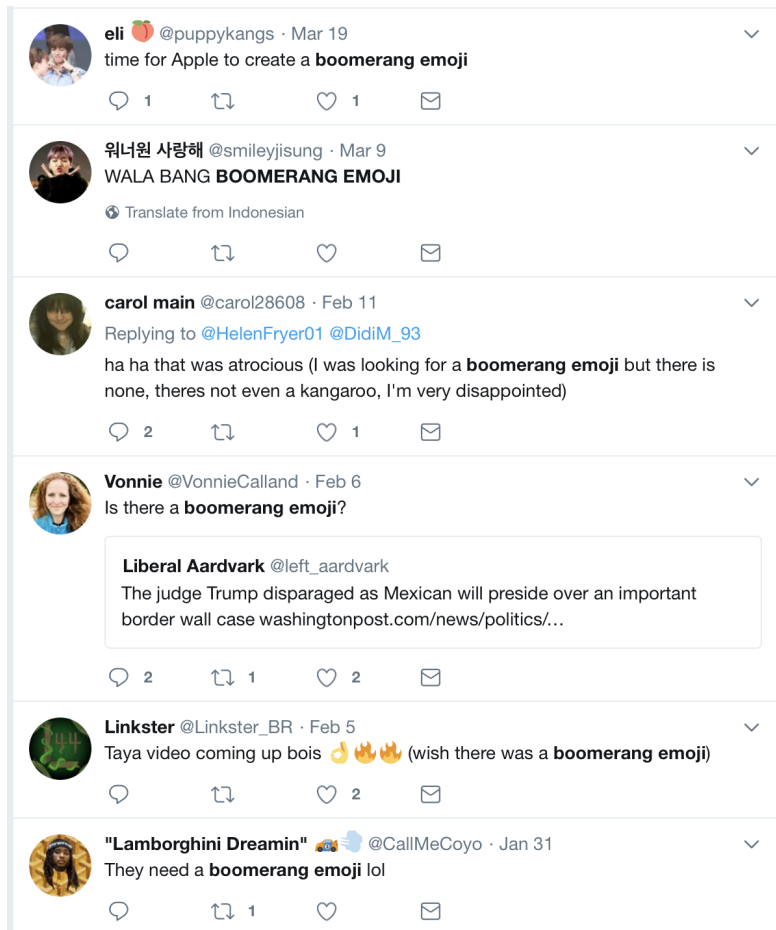
D. Completeness

The BOOMERANG would join other tools in the tools category, such as the bow and arrow. It would also complement the kangaroo emoji that is currently included in the proposed Unicode 11 standard.

E. Frequently Requested

There is moderate but sustained interest in a boomerang emoji both within and outside of Australia. As previously discussed this is evident in Google Trends search data. It is though difficult to attribute because of Instagram's popular video service Boomerang.

There are regular requests for a BOOMERANG emoji on social networks like Twitter:

Example tweets when searching Twitter for "Boomerang emoji"

These are usually both earnest requests for Australian representation ("there's not even a kangaroo") or sarcastic comments about something coming back / returning.

4. Selection Factors — Exclusion

F. Overly Specific
The boomerang is in some sense more of a cultural icon than a practical tool. It visually embodies aspects of Australian and Indigenous Australian culture. It carries a broad appeal that extends beyond its literal usage.

G. Open Ended
A BOOMERANG emoji would be a unique addition to the Unicode Standard. It would complement existing cultural icons and sporting equipment, along with the proposed kangaroo emoji in Unicode 11. It rises in status above many other similar items, for its simplicity and iconic shape, and would not open the floodgates to hunting-themed Emoji.

H. Already Representable

There are currently very limited ways to represent Australian culture in emoji, and none that are inclusive of Indigenous Australians.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

The proposed BOOMERANG emoji does not represent a specific logo, brand, UI icon, sign, person or deity. Although a number of large companies produce boomerangs no single company owns the overall design.

J. Transient

Boomerangs have been in use for up to 50,000 years and despite their limited traditional and modern use the image of a two-wing non-returning boomerang is still a widely recognised cultural icon.

K. Faulty Comparison

A boomerang is a unique addition to the Unicode Standard.

L. Exact Images

The proposed emoji does not require an exact image to be distinguishable. It allows for many variations in colour and style that will still be identifiable given the basic form.

5. Sort location

A. Category: tool

B. Emoji before it in that category: After bow and arrow (No. 1132 / U+1F3F9)

Other Character Properties

The other character properties are suggested to be defined as follows.

General Category: So

Canonical Combining Class: 0

Bidirectional Class: ON

Decomposition Type: Decomposition Mapping:

Numeric Type:

Numeric Value:

Bidirectional Mirrored: N Unicode 1 Name:

ISO Comment:

Simple Uppercase Mapping:

Simple Lowercase Mapping:

Simple Titlecase Mapping:

Author Biographies

Callum Ponton (callumponton@icloud.com) *is a an Australian designer and marketer. He grew up in rural Western Australia, studied in Melbourne, and now calls Sydney home. On a primary school excursion he once made the mistake of eating a live Witchetty grub, and then tried and failed to throw a boomerang. He hopes that to have better luck sending boomerang emoji.*

Jacqui Maher (jacqui.maher@gmail.com) *is a journalist, software engineer, and New Yorker living in Australia. She loves figuratively expressing herself whilst picking up Aussie slang, and she looks forward to coming back to the boomerang emoji repeatedly.*

Justin Stankovic (justinbstankovic@gmail.com) *is an Indigenous Australian of the Gunai Kurnai clan from Gippsland located in Victoria. He became a master of the boomerang during his teenage years as he transitioned from a boy to a man and received training in the art of using the boomerang during this period from his tribal Elders. He is currently studying to become a school teacher and enjoys liaising between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians.*