DOCUMENTING AND PRESERVING LANGUAGES WITH UNICODE

A TALK ON CHARACTER ENCODING, FONTS, AND KEYBOARDS

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UNICODE WEBINAR, MAY 16 2023



TODAY'S PRESENTATION

Debbie Anderson: Basics of Unicode character encoding

Based on slide set by Peter Constable (and Ken Whistler)

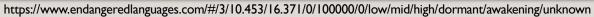
Andrew Glass: Fonts and keyboards



IMPORTANCE OF UNICODE

 Now is a critical time to document and preserve languages (and their scripts) due to disappearance of languages and the loss of written materials in those languages.







IMPORTANCE OF UNICODE

• Unicode underlies all electronic text communication today and hence is vital to preserving texts used to write languages (and to document them)

Na hïngängö

Sango language, example from https://www.unicode.org/udhr/d/udhr_sag.html





IMPORTANCE OF UNICODE

 A critical first step is getting those characters that are used to write and describe languages into Unicode.





THE SPECIAL-CHARACTER PROBLEM

- Linguists and language users work with all kinds of characters
 - International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
 - other phonetic systems and technical notation
 - transliterations
 - orthographies
 - scripts of living or extinct languages
 - developing orthographies

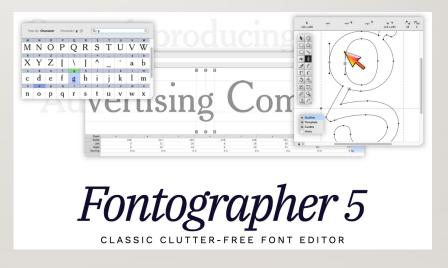
[ai phi: ei]



Bottom Image from Raymond Basquez Sr, Neal Ibanez & Myra Masiel-Zamora (2018) 'Atáaxum Alphabet. Great Oak Press, Pechanga Band of Luiseño Mission Indians.

THE SPECIAL-CHARACTER PROBLEM

- Language users' / Linguists' workaround: create custombuilt fonts
 - change the shapes in the 'slots' to the shapes needed
 - custom fonts built with Fontographer, etc.



https://www.fontlab.com/font-editor/fontographer/









"HACKED FONT"

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THE SPECIAL-CHARACTER PROBLEM

- "Hacked font" relies on font creator's private knowledge
 - can't exchange data
 - apps don't behave right
 - can't switch fonts
 - no inter-operability

Intended text (using nonstandard font)



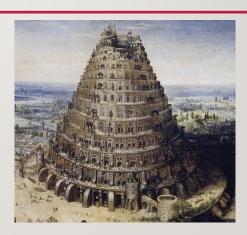
How same text may appear to others





THE SPECIAL-CHARACTER PROBLEM

- Solution: Unicode
 - a single, international standard
 - universal usage
 - inter-operability
 - comprehensive coverage
 - all the characters everyone needs



that's the goal, at least



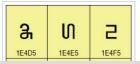
THE UNICODE CHARACTER REPERTOIRE



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022

Announcing The Unicode® Standard, Version 15.0

Version 15.0 of the Unicode Standard is now available, including the core specification, annexes, and data files. This version adds 4.489 characters.



LINKS OF INTEREST

What is Unicode?
The Unicode Consortium
Archived Announcements

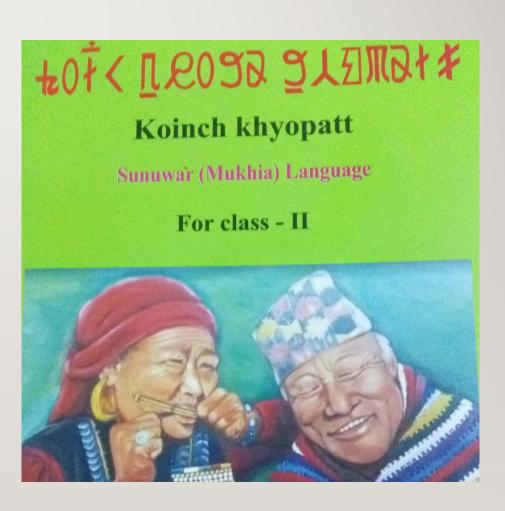
- Unicode 15.0 (the current version)
 - 149,186 characters
 - 161 scripts
 - Chinese characters: > 98,000
 - lots of symbols
 - room for 825,000 characters more!



http://blog.unicode.org/2022/09/announcing-unicode-standard-version-150.html

THE UNICODE CHARACTER REPERTOIRE

- Upcoming full version
 - Unicode 16.0 is scheduled to be published Sept. 2024
- Beyond 16.0: Work in progress
 - Many additional symbols and scripts, including Seal script, Jurchen, and Mayan Hieroglyphs



Sunuwar script (scheduled for Unicode 16.0)

THE BASICS: THE UNICODE CHARACTER REPERTOIRE (I)

- Referring to a Unicode character
 - two unique identifiers:
 - a name: LATIN SMALL LETTER ESH WITH DOUBLE BAR
 - a number a "code point" U+IDF0B

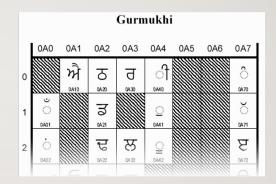
(representative glyph can be changed)





THE BASICS: THE UNICODE CHARACTER REPERTOIRE (2)

- Code charts (on Unicode website)
 - graphic chart
 - names list
 - may include some additional info about identity and purpose of character

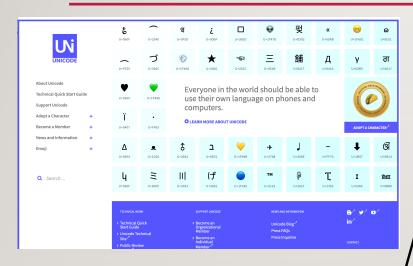






From https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U0A00.pdf

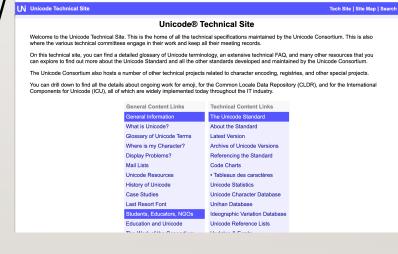
GENERAL WEBSITE



https://home.unicode.org/

/ TECHNICAL WEBSITE

http://unicode.org/main.html





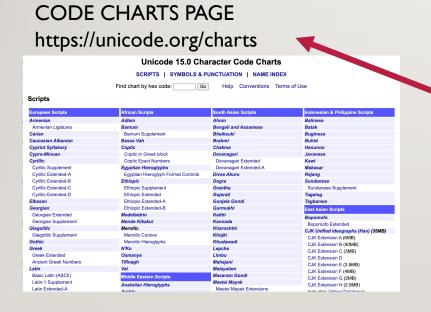
TECHNICAL SITE (LINK TO CODE CHARTS PAGE)

TECHNICAL SITE: http://unicode.org/main.html

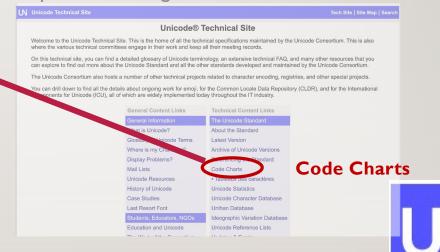


UNICODE

TECHNICAL SITE (LINK TO CODE CHARTS PAGE)



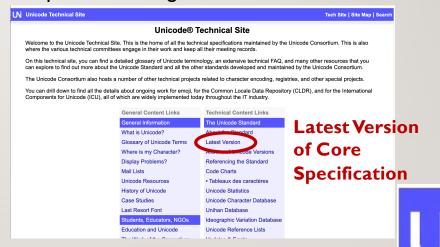
http://unicode.org/main.html



UNICODE

TECHNICAL SITE (LINK TO "LATEST VERSION")

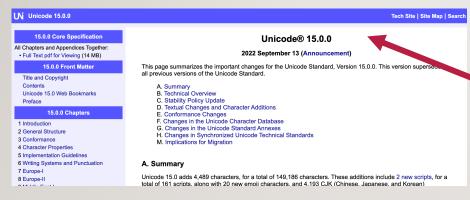
http://unicode.org/main.html



UNICODE

TECHNICAL SITE (LINK TO "LATEST VERSION")

LATEST VERSION OF "CORE SPEC"



"Core Spec" includes

- general introduction,
- conformance and implementation guidelines
- chapters on all the characters (arranged by script / class of characters)

http://unicode.org/main.html

Students, Educators, N

Education and Unicode



Ideographic Variation Database Unicode Reference Lists



THE BASICS: THE UNICODE CHARACTER REPERTOIRE (3)

- Basic character identity
 - name and code point are immutable, but glyph can be changed (within limits)
- Many other properties that define complete identity and semantics
 - case, case mappings, general category, behavior for text segmentation, etc.

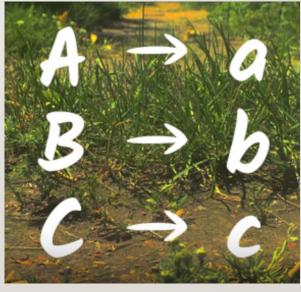




Image from https://typeclasses.com/beginner-crash-course/map

THE BASICS: THE UNICODE CHARACTER REPERTOIRE (4)

- Organization in Unicode code space
 - characters organized into blocks of related characters
 - typically, by script
 - characters for a writing system may be in multiple, noncontiguous blocks
 - punctuation may be shared across different scripts

Georgian

Georgian Extended
Georgian Supplement

Glagolitic

Glagolitic Supplement

Gothic

Greek

Greek Extended

Ancient Greek Numbers

Latin

Basic Latin (ASCII)

Latin-1 Supplement

Latin Extended-A

Latin Extended-B

Latin Extended-C

Latin Extended-D

Latin Extended-E

Latin Extended-F

Latin Extended-G

Latin Extended Additional

Latin Ligatures

Fullwidth Latin Letters

IPA Extensions

Phonetic Extensions

Phonetic Extensions Supplement

Linear A

Linear B

Linear B Syllabary

Linear B Ideograms

https://www.unicode.org/charts/



UNICODE DESIGN PRINCIPLES (1)

- Unification
 - unify characters within scripts
 - Same script, different languages: unify

N.B. Unicode encodes scripts, not languages

• Different scripts: don't unify

ABCD ABΓΔ AБBΓ



UNICODE DESIGN PRINCIPLES (2)

- Characters, not glyphs
 - character: unit of abstract, textual information
 - glyph: graphic image used for presentation of a character

character: LATIN SMALL LETTER A

Glyphs: a a a a a a a



UNICODE DESIGN PRINCIPLES (3)

- Characters, not glyphs
 - characters: glyphs may not be 1:1

ARABIC LETTER HEH











font + rendering engine



UNICODE DESIGN PRINCIPLES (4)

• Characters may not be the same as text elements in a writing system

C < U+0063 LATIN SMALL LETTER C, U+0303 COMBINING TILDE >

ch < U+0063 LATIN SMALL LETTER C, U+0068 LATIN SMALL LETTER H >



UNICODE DESIGN PRINCIPLES (5)

- Dynamic composition
 - complex text elements can be composed dynamically from sequences of characters



< U+0063 LATIN SMALL LETTER C, U+0324 COMBINING DIAERESIS BELOW, U+032A COMBINING BRIDGE BELOW, U+0303 COMBINING TILDE, U+0306 COMBINING BREVE, U+0301 COMBINING ACUTE ACCENT >



UNICODE DESIGN PRINCIPLES (6)

- Support for legacy standard character sets
 - all standards in wide usage as of May 1993
 - required many compromises with other design principles
 - many "presentation" and pre-composed characters

U+00EI "á" LATIN SMALL LETTER A WITH ACUTE



ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIONS (DYNAMIC COMPOSITION)

- Combining mark sequences
 - if two marks occupy similar space:
 - "stack" in order
 - different order of marks are significant

$$a + \tilde{\circ} + \hat{\circ} \rightarrow \hat{\tilde{a}}$$

$$a + \hat{\circ} + \tilde{\circ} \rightarrow \tilde{\hat{a}}$$



ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIONS (DYNAMIC COMPOSITION)

- Combining mark sequences
 - if two marks don't interact typographically:
 - different orders look the same
 - no meaningful difference

$$a + \hat{\circ} + \hat{\circ} \rightarrow \hat{a}$$

$$a + \phi + \hat{\phi} \rightarrow \hat{a}$$



ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIONS - NORMALIZATION

- A text element may have several equivalent representations:
 - Canonically equivalent: considered the same

$$B + \ddot{A} \equiv B + A + \ddot{\circ}$$

 Compatibility equivalent: can mean the same in some, but not all, circumstances

$$2 + \frac{1}{4} \approx 2 + 1 + / + 4$$



GETTING PRACTICAL: ENCODING CHARACTERS AND SCRIPTS (I)

- What do you need to be able to use Unicode?
 - Encode characters and scripts
 - Process (takes at least 2 years)
 - Write a Unicode proposal
 - Review by the Script Ad Hoc (for non-emoji/non-CJK)
 - Approval by the Unicode Technical Committee
 - Publish in a version of Unicode

Unicode request for two BMP Latin characters L2/22-113R

Kirk Miller, kirkmiller@gmail.com

2022 July 09

This request is for two Latin letters used in basic literacy material. We request that they be added

The Luiseño community of California (Uto-Aztecan, ISO [LUI]) uses the casing pair ⟨ℜ ⋪⟩ in their literacy and language-revival program. Myra Masiel-Zamora, Curator of Pechanga Cultural Resources in Temecula, has asked that we adopt \(\mathbb{g} \, \mathbb{g} \) into Unicode to aid those efforts. These two letters are also used in descriptive Cupeño material (ISO [CUP]).

Thanks to Deborah Anderson of the Universal Scripts Project for her assistance.

Characters

- A7CC LATIN CAPITAL LETTER S WITH DIAGONAL STROKE. Figures 1-2.
- A7CD LATIN SMALL LETTER S WITH DIAGONAL STROKE. Figures 1-3.

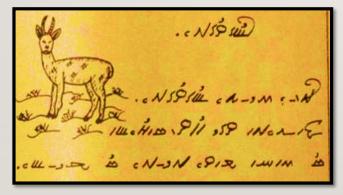
Properties

A7CC; LATIN CAPITAL LETTER S WITH DIAGONAL STROKE;

Example from https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2022/22113r-two-latin-chars.pdf

GETTING PRACTICAL: ENCODING CHARACTERS AND SCRIPTS (2)

- Write a Unicode proposal, using proposal templates:
 - For new character additions (use document <u>L2/23-104</u>)
 - For new scripts (use document <u>L2/23-105</u>)



Garay script



https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2012/12139-n4261-garay.pdf

GETTING PRACTICAL: ENCODING CHARACTERS AND SCRIPTS (3)

- Proposal review process by Script Ad Hoc:
 - Proposals should be complete
 - Proposals need to make a case why characters are needed
 - New scripts need to demonstrate usage with list of publications in script (not written by script creator); repertoire should be stable for several years



Garay script https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2012/12139-n4261-garay.pdf

GETTING PRACTICAL: ENCODING CHARACTERS AND SCRIPTS (4)

- For a language with no orthography
 - Suggestion: Develop an orthography using Unicode characters

See Unicode Technical Note #19 "Recommendations for Creating New

. Orthographies":

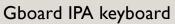




GETTING PRACTICAL: AFTER ENCODING CHARACTERS AND SCRIPTS

- What do you need to be able to use Unicode?
 - Use Unicode characters and scripts
 - Fonts
 - Keyboards
 - Software support







GETTING INVOLVED IN CHARACTER ENCODING

- Templates for script and character proposals:
 - https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2023/23104-addl-script-template-april2023.pdf
 - https://www.unicode.org/L2/L2023/23105-new-script-template-april2023.pdf
- Submitting character proposals: www.unicode.org/pending/proposals.html
- Guidelines on creating an orthography (from Unicode perspective):
 - https://www.unicode.org/notes/tn19/
- FAQs on character proposals: https://www.unicode.org/faq/char_proposal.html
- Script Ad Hoc description: https://www.unicode.org/consortium/scriptadhoc.html
- Unicode YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@unicode/about



THANK YOU

- Support for Universal Script Project (/Script Encoding Initiative) comes from NEH grant PR-268710-20 and donations.
- Script Encoding Initiative Website: http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/sei

• For questions (after this webinar): please use Unicode Feedback form:

https://www.unicode.org/reporting.html

Gunjala Gondi script

