ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2
Coded Character Sets
Secretariat: Japan (JISC)

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Title: Liaison Report from SC35 to SC2

Source: Alain LaBonté, liaison officer from SC35 to SC2
and SC35 Project editor for the following projects:
·ISO/IEC 9995 series (keyboards – 8 parts)
·ISO/IEC 14755 (basic input methods to enter UCS characters with a keyboard)
·ISO/IEC TR 19764 (Cultural and Linguistic Adaptability evaluation)

Status: Bona-fide-provided data, not approved formally by SC35, but reflecting the current situation, as per the perception of the author to this date

Action: For information

Date: 2002-11-27

SC35 now has 6 working groups:
WG1 on keyboards and input methods
WG2 on system user interface
WG3 on symbols
WG4 on interfaces for communication devices
WG5 on cultural and linguistic adaptability
WG6 on interfaces for persons with special needs

Of particular interest for SC2 this year:

WG1

The full ISO/IEC 9995 series (8 standards) is under revision. So far, 4 parts have been republished, of which part 3 (supplementary multi-lingual layouts) and part 7 (symbols to represent functions) are of interest to SC2 as they deal with characters. Although part 3 is developed independently of coding, it supports the repertoire of ISO/IEC 7937, plus the EURO sign, all characters that can be encoded with the UCS indifferently. Part 3 also introduces practically the notion of keyboard groups, which allows to enter characters from scripts other than the Latin script in different keyboard layers.

Part 7 documents symbols to represent keyboard functions, most of which are encoded in the UCS.

A new issue that will perhaps interest SC2 more particularly this year comes from the outside. While part 8 (published in 1994 – allocation of letters to the digits of a numeric keypad [used mainly on telephones and ATMs], a part that was the object of a long controversy from 1991 to 1994 between the banking in the telephone industries) was about to be routinely either reconfirmed or republished almost as is, ETSI came out with a new project, to assign national characters for communication devices entry, with different dangers of lack of interoperability. Furthermore the same ETSI project deals with character ordering to be done within the same communications devices. ISO/IEC 9995-8 republishing then has been stopped as per my recommendation, and in the meanwhile bridges have been established with ETSI to make sure that development be done in an appropriate manner, taking into account SC2, SC22/WG20 and SC35 project development in harmony, as far as possible.

WG4, WG2 and WG3

WG4 was about to issue an NP on keytop symbols and icons for communications devices (combined PDAs with portable telephone technology). I indicated to this group, that in addition with the traditional

"conflict" between industrial symbols and icons in ISO, many symbols are already encoded as characters in the UCS. This raised the issue that there was perhaps a need, like was done in SC2 for the character-glyph model, for a framework for the use of symbols, icons and characters. This is still under the hood in SC35 development. It indeed came as a shock to some WG4 and WG3 members that many sacro-sanct symbols (registered in ISO 7000, among others) are indeed used as characters, with the possibility that their shape proportions not be respected on output (something that is absolutely normal in SC2, which considers glyph variants as usual) but which is perhaps a bit heretic in ISO TC 145, which is responsible for ISO 7000 and which liaises with SC35.

In WG3 or WG2 (project assignment to one of these groups is under discussion), an NP is under ballot on "Icon symbols and Functions for multimedia link attributes" in which different action states would be indicated on some icons (kind of icon grammar primitives for the use of icons). As these states and icons should in some circumstances be candidates for searching in texts, some would also potentially be candidates for character encoding. I informed the project leader about the UCS notion of combining characters, of which he was not aware. As the several fixed states (six states, if my memory is good, so far) will be the same for all icons, and create variant shapes in fact for each one of these icons, any proposal for icon characters should be centered on the creation of combining characters for these several states, and then proposals for the other base icons should be made separately. The project editor of this NP will have a look into the UCS in order to understand more adequately that notion.

WG5

Project TR 19764, the start of which has been approved at the SC35 2002 Spring Plenary, is ongoing and a first working draft is about to be sent to National member bodies by the SC35 secretariat, following a resolution of the SC35 2002 Fall meeting. This project is about the evaluation of cultural and linguistic adaptability (CLA) in I.T. products. As one may imagine, this project will indeed talk, among many other things, about character encoding, and should of course make a very big place to the UCS to remind interoperability issues that are also very important for adequate CLA.

WG6

WG6 which is in its first steps, currently has projects related to icon accessibility for people with special needs. There is currently no SC2-related issue that I can report for this WG.

End of this liaison report

/ALB