UTC procedures for proposed updates

To: UTC
From: Peter Constable, Robin Leroy, Ken Whistler, RMG
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1. Summary

In maintenance of technical documents owned by UTC, it is important to have careful oversight of technical changes so as not to inadvertently publish technical content that has not followed due process as required by the Unicode Technical Group Procedures (TG Procedures). At the same time, we value efficient processes that minimize overhead and optimize the value of our volunteer, technical contributors. With this in mind, this document proposes simplifying the process for the issuance of proposed updates and clarifying the process for the management of the content of proposed updates, by delegating to Working Groups the issuance and updating of a Proposed Update, and formalizing requirements to document changes made prior to UTC review.

This document does not propose a complete set of UTC procedures. It has become clear that, more generally, the procedures specific to the UTC should be formalized. This document proposes an action item for the authors to address that.

2. Background

2.1 TC Procedures

As indicated in the TG procedures (#terminology), changes to recommendations made in Unicode Technical Reports or to conformance requirements or recommendations made in a Unicode Technical Standard or in the Unicode Standard constitute a Technical Decision, which must be taken at the TC level (#TC_meetings_decisions), preferably by consensus or motion in meetings, alternatively by email polling or letter ballot between meetings.

The TG procedures (#pri) also invest the TC chairs and vice chairs with the authority to create public review issues. The creation of a public review issue is not a Technical Decision.

The TG procedures do not impose any requirements on updating draft documents, nor do they document the conditions under which the TC chairs and vice chairs create PRIs: this is up to the internal procedures of the individual TCs.

Approving the proposal set out in this document would constitute a Technical Decision as "Material changes in a Technical Group's procedures, policies, or scope"; as such a TC decision is required and proposed.

2.2 Existing practice in the UTC

2.2.1 About reports

The page About Unicode Technical Reports describes the three kinds of reports:

- Unicode Standard Annexes, which are part of the Unicode Standard.
- Unicode Technical Standards, which are independent standards.
  - These are further subdivided into synchronized UTSes, currently #10, #39, #46, and #51, which share their version numbers with the Unicode Standard and receive an update with each version of the Unicode Standard, and non-synchronized UTSes, which have their own versioning and release schedule.
- Unicode Technical Reports, which contain only informative material and are developed and published independently of the Unicode Standard.

For additional background see L2/00-118 Parts of the Standard" and decision 83-C6 (regarding Unicode Standard Annex (UAX) naming).

2.2.2 New documents

The creation of new reports follows stages:

1. Preliminary stage: A document is submitted to the UTC document register requesting that a new report be created; this recommendation will normally be accompanied by a working draft.
2. Proposed Draft stage: A document marked as a Proposed Draft UAX, UTR, or UTS is posted under unicode.org/reports, and a Public Review Issue is created.
3. Draft stage: A new revision of the document is created, marked as a Draft UAX, UTR, or UTS. Until now, a new Public Review issue has been created for this stage. In recent UTC discussion[1], it was suggested to add a subdivision within the list of feedback on the PRI originally created for the Proposed Draft.
4. Publication stage: A new revision of the document is published as an approved document.

A UTC decision is required to advance to each of the three stages past the preliminary stage. The page About Unicode Technical Reports tersely describes a Proposed Draft as being "in an early stage of development", and contrasts a Draft as having "the basic structure and content required for a new technical report". Indeed Proposed Drafts can include content that the UTC considers out of scope entirely (as in the specification of the OGSL in the initial draft of PDUTR #56, which was there to provide a coherently

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[1] Specifically, discussion of the proposals in L2/24-070, *sub* "Progression of new UTRs".

reviewable document while the OGSL editors produced their own documentation), or may be missing content that will ultimately be necessary, but that has not yet been developed.

Accordingly, editors frequently make substantial technical changes to the content of Proposed Drafts; changes to documents in the Draft stage are normally subject to more scrutiny. See, *e.g.*, decision 180-C13 approving a change to the status of the kEH_Core property documented in DUAX #57. The change was made in the draft ahead of the UTC meeting, but was approved in the meeting.

2.2.3 Updating existing documents

Unicode reports are not subject to a periodic systematic review. Instead proposals are made to update the documents, initiating a shorter process by which a Proposed Draft is posted to unicode.org/reports and a Public Review Issue created. Subsequently, the PRI is closed, and the UTC takes a decision to approve and publish the updated document.

Prior to the introduction of working groups, proposals to update proposed drafts were made to the UTC, so that a proposal for technical changes was only discussed in depth in the UTC.

2.2.3.1 Authorizing Proposed Updates

UTC practice has generally been to record a decision authorizing *Proposed Update* status. In many cases, this decision has been combined with the decision to make a technical change, with decisions to "issue/authorize a proposed update that (makes specific changes)"[2]. This has however not been consistently followed[3].

The structure of the UTC meeting has changed with the appearance of working groups: the UTC now often takes decisions based on recommendations provided in working group reports; these reports are divided into sections dealing with individual issues, which are drafted independently of each other, and independently of the status of proposed updates. In these cases, it is very often the case that UTC formally approves a technical change in one of these documents[4], then assigns action items for someone to implement those changes. This implies[5] that there will be a draft update; however, the UTC has typically separately still explicitly authorized such updates, resulting in boilerplate decisions to authorize proposed updates[6]. Recently, in its report to UTC #180[7], the Release Management Working Group had reaffirmed that a proposed update with substantive changes should require an authorization decision.

The preparation of changes in working groups allows for these changes to receive some level of technical review; the granularity of the changes considered by working groups generally makes it beneficial to prepare, ahead of the UTC meeting, a consolidated, updated document incorporating changes agreed upon by the working group. However, the need to wait for a decision to authorize a proposed update is an impediment

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[2] Some examples among many: 89-M6, 98-C34, 123-C28, 125-C34, 132-C54, 170-C33, or most recently 182-C35.

[3] Examples: there is no record of an authorization of the proposed update archived as L2/11-353, and L2/25-048 was approved after being posted, by 182-C16.

[4] For example, UTC #179 separately authorized changes involving line breaking rules LB21a (179-C25), LB19a (179-C28), LB20a (179-C32), as well as LB13, LB25, LB15c, and LB15d (179-C35). In that case, a proposed update to UAX #14 had already been authorized as part of 177-C49.

[5] In some historical cases, no separate decision was taken to authorize a proposed update implied by a technical decision, e.g., 92-C23 made a technical change, and the associated action 92-A46 is to post the ensuing proposed update. However, explicit decisions to issue or authorize proposed updates has been the more common pattern.

[6] Examples of such procedural authorizations that should logically follow from prior decisions include: 177-C49, 179-C42, 181-C57, 182-C42. Note that these are "batched" authorizations, with no mention of the actual technical changes being authorized.

[7] See L2/24-168, *sub* "UTC actions to authorize proposed updates for UAXes and synchronized UTSes".

to the preparation of that consolidated document, as it must then be tracked as a working draft, independently of the approved document. Such a working draft is also not normally subject to public review in the way that a proposed update is (in principle, this could be done, but it has only rarely been done, and not since 2005).

2.2.3.2 Content of Proposed Updates

In many cases, editors have found it beneficial to add new content to existing proposed updates ahead of a UTC meeting. This is especially the case during β review, as it allows the public to further review technical changes made during—sometimes in response to—β review, instead of these changes being approved without public review by the post-β UTC. The situation is however similar with other public review periods. It has been common (but undocumented) practice for editors to accompany such changes with review notes[8] indicating that the changes in question have not yet been reviewed by the UTC, but are included for public review.

3. Proposal

We propose that the UTC take the following dispositions.

> ***[183-C___] Consensus:** The UTC delegates to its technical Working Groups the authorization to create and to post for public review proposed updates to Unicode technical reports that are maintained by the respective UTC working group, and to update such proposed updates with proposed changes, with the following conditions: Any substantial technical changes that have yet to be approved by the UTC shall be noted in a review note in the proposed update; and for technical changes that have already been approved by UTC, that should also be noted in review notes or in the "Modifications" section. For these purposes, substantive technical changes include changes requiring *technical decisions* as defined in the Unicode Technical Group Procedures. A specific decision is required to approve such changes prior to the approval of the technical report for final publication.

> **[183-N___] Note:** The working groups currently responsible for technical reports are:
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> - the CJK & Unihan Working Group, for UAX #11, UTS #37, UAX #38, UAX #45, and UAX #50;
> - the Editorial Working Group, for UAX #41;
> - the Emoji Standard and Research Working Group, for UTS #51;
> - the Script Encoding Working Group, for UAX #53, UTR #54, UAX #57, and Proposed Draft UAX #60;
> - the Properties and Algorithms Working Group, for all other reports maintained by UTC except for stabilized and superseded reports.

> ***[183-N___] Note:** The UTC is responsible for decisions about any changes to the working groups responsible for technical reports. In particular, the UTC will normally assign a working group as maintainers for any newly authorized technical report.

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[8] See L2/11-385, *sub* NS; UAX #14 rev. 52, *sub* CP; DUTS #55, *sub* Suggested Options for "Show Hidden" Modes; PD UTR #56, *sub* Sign Names.

*[183-N__] **Note:** Public Review Issues created by the working groups should have closing dates based on the UTC schedule. The UTC should define closing dates of record two meetings in advance to allow for PRIs to be created late in the cycle. The UTC retains the authority to close these PRIs, as the outcome is the advancement of a proposed draft to a draft, the authorization for final publication, or the abandonment of a proposal, all of which should be reviewed by the UTC.

*[183-A__] **Action Item for** Peter Constable, Robin Leroy, Ken Whistler, UTC: draft a document setting out the procedures for the technical work in the Unicode Technical Committee, and present it to Unicode Technical Committee meeting #184 for approval as a standing document.