Unicode request for Initial Teaching Alphabet

Kirk Miller, kirkmiller, gmail

This proposal for the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) follows on L2/08-428, L2/22-286 and L2/23-102R. The 2020 draft for this proposal included casing forms. Those have been dropped from the proposal per advice of the SEW.

The ITA was used for basic literacy materials in the UK in the early to mid 1960s, from where it spread to Australia and the US. It has largely fallen out of use since the 1970s, but is still occasionally encountered. An ITA Foundation was founded in New York in 1965, and has maintained a website since 2000 (itafoundation.org). An ITA Association was founded in Melbourne in 1974 and published through at least 1987. The Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre maintains a website at *austehc.unimelb.edu.au/guides/itaa* for their collection of ITA material.

The ITA is a supplemented Latin alphabet. There is no q or x. Capital letters are merely the minuscules set in a larger font. They are illustrated in the figures but have fallen out of use and are not requested from Unicode.

Shortly after the ITA was created, a diaphonemic letter $\langle r \rangle$ was added for orthographic r that is vocalic in non-rhotic accents, though in American publications it may be restricted to the NURSE vowel. A diaphonemic 'half-a' $\langle a \rangle$ was later added for the BATH vowel, so that the same literacy material could be used regardless of how children pronounced that set of words (Daniels 2018: 27). 'Half-a' is graphically half-way between a print-style $\langle a \rangle$ and a script $\langle a \rangle$. (Figure 9.)

The ITA letters $\langle d g g \rangle$ may be distinct in shape from conventional $\langle d g g \rangle$, depending on the typeface, but the differences are equivalent to letter variation in other typefaces, such as primerstyle $\langle a g t \rangle$ in Schoolbook, Andika and (via style selectors) Gentium fonts. The ITA $\langle d \rangle$ is often designed with a slight tail to make it more distinct from $\langle b \rangle$, making it easier for dyslexics to distinguish those letters, but several ITA publications use a standard $\langle d \rangle$ and the ITA Foundation says (p.c. 2023) that ASCII *d* is an acceptable variant. The IPA letter U+0261 $\langle g \rangle$ has the shape of ITA $\langle g \rangle$. However, any typeface that provides the desired shape for $\langle g \rangle$ and other ITA letters should also have the correct ITA shape for ASCII *g*, so there is no reason to use U+0261. For the ITA letter $\langle \omega \rangle$, the SEW suggests using the Latin omega, U+A7B7, rather than the Greek omega, U+03C9, because mixing Latin and Greek scripts might cause problems.

In some ITA typefaces, the vowel ligatures $\langle x \rangle$ and $\langle x \rangle$ have a short linking stroke: $\langle x e, x e \rangle$. This suggests that all ITA vowel ligatures may be rendered with a linking stroke, but that those two were conflated with the ubiquitous Basic Latin $\langle x \rangle$ and $\langle x \rangle$. In our opinion, ITA $\langle x e \rangle$ and $\langle x u \rangle$ should

2024 December 13

be similarly conflated with U+1D6A $\langle ue \rangle$ and U+A737 $\langle ai \rangle$, with their graphic peculiarities handled by the font. However, in the opinion of the SEW, ITA $\langle ie \rangle$ should not be identified with U+AB61 'iotified e' $\langle ie \rangle$, because the left component of U+AB61 is a dotless and serifed iota rather than an *i*.

The ITA minuscule letters and ligatures are as follows, in Pitmania font with Unicode equivalents. The letter names date to James Pitman. They are included here for reference but are not taught to children and are not requested as the names of the Unicode characters.

- Characters on a grey background have the generic forms of existing Unicode characters.
- Characters on a blue background are glyph variants of existing Unicode characters, or may be glyph variants in some ITA typefaces.

letter	name	code point	letter	name	code point] [letter	name	code p
a	at	0061	n	en	006E		æ	ain	00E6
a	ask	[1DF5A]	0	og	006F		au	aud	A737
α	ahd	0251	р	pee	0070		þ	chay	[1DF5
b	bee	0062	r	ray	0072		ee	een	[1DF5
с	kee	0063	Л	er	[1DF61]		іе	ide	[1DF5
d	did	0064	\mathbf{S}	ess	0073		ŋ	ing	014B
е	et	0065	Σ	zess	[1DF66]		œ	ode	0153
f	ef	0066	t	tee	0074		ơi	oin	[1DF5
g	gay	0067	u	ug	0075		Ŵ	ood	[1DFe
h	hay	0068	v	vee	0076		ou	oun	[1DF5
i	it	0069	w	way	0077		ſh	ish	[1DFe
j	jay	006A	у	yay	0079		ţh	ith	[1DF6
k	kay	006B	\mathbf{Z}	zed	007A		ťh	thee	[1DFe
1	el	006C	3	zhee	0292		ue	une	1D6B
m	em	006D	ω	oot	A7B7		wh	whee	[1DFe

• Characters on a white background require separate Unicode encoding, [in brackets].

Characters

The characters below are rendered in (1) the serif PitmanITA font, (2) the sans-serif 'Phonemic' font used by the ITA Foundation, which lacks half-a, and (3) the Gentium-based font used in the chart below. Literacy material in the figures uses both sans-serif and serif typefaces.

a	—	a	1DF5A LATIN SMALL LETTER HALF A.
þ	ტ	ch	1DF5B LATIN SMALL LETTER STRETCHED C-H DIGRAPH.
œ	æ	€€	1DF5C LATIN SMALL LETTER LUNATE EE.
ie	ie	іе	1DF5D LATIN SMALL LETTER IE.
oi	ơi	ơi	1DF5E LATIN SMALL LETTER OI DIGRAPH.
ou	σu	σu	1DF5F LATIN SMALL LETTER OU DIGRAPH.
6	യ	ဖ	1DF60 LATIN SMALL LETTER OMEGA WITH LOOP.
ſſ	r	Л	1DF61 LATIN SMALL LETTER R WITH LEFT TIE.
∫h	ſh	∫h	1DF62 LATIN SMALL LETTER ESH-H DIGRAPH.
ţh	ťh	ťh	1DF63 LATIN SMALL LETTER STRETCHED T-H DIGRAPH.
fh	th	th	1DF64 LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED T-H DIGRAPH.
wh	wh	wh	1DF65 LATIN SMALL LETTER WH DIGRAPH.
Ζ	Z	Ζ	1DF66 LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED Z.

Properties

There are no decompositions.

ITA letters

1DF5A;LATIN SMALL LETTER HALF A;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF5B;LATIN SMALL LETTER STRETCHED C-H DIGRAPH;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF5C;LATIN SMALL LETTER LUNATE EE;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF5D;LATIN SMALL LETTER IE;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF5E;LATIN SMALL LETTER OI DIGRAPH;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF5F;LATIN SMALL LETTER OU DIGRAPH;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF60;LATIN SMALL LETTER OMEGA WITH LOOP;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF61;LATIN SMALL LETTER R WITH LEFT TIE;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF62;LATIN SMALL LETTER STRETCHED T-H DIGRAPH;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF64;LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED T-H DIGRAPH;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF65;LATIN SMALL LETTER WH DIGRAPH;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;; 1DF65;LATIN SMALL LETTER REVERSED Z;Ll;0;L;;;;N;;;;

Chart

Latin Extended-G

1DF00

1DFFF

	1DF0	1DF1	1DF2	1DF3	1DF4	1DF5	1DF6	1DF7	1DF8	1DF9	1DFA	1DFB	1DFC	1DFD	1DFE	1DFF
0	fŋ	К	đţ	G	A	¥	6							¥	ದ್ದ	l
1	9	ŀ	đţ		a	¥	Л							Р	ф	n.
2	Ð	dz₅	ŧł	ħ	Ð	¥	∫h							đ	ſ	t
3	k	ł	ŧ	ф	Ē	₿	ťh							đ	Ĵ	ψ
4	Ł	ŋ	tθ	q	£	X	th							g	ţſ	ω
5	ß	ત્ર	rd	Ŗ	ኇ	У	wh							ł	ţĵ	ģ
6	K	ſ	ł	Ŗ	h	2 2	Ζ							ł	a	h
7	Ú	t∫	n	ŗ	h	r								đ	ş	ŋ
8	J	3,	r	tş	K	0								ч	D	ş
9	f	dз	rs	y	k	11 14								j	Α	z
A	l	i	r	Ş	М	a								¥	E	ć
В	∮	ę	ರ್ಶ	ß	m	ch								₩	1	ƙ
С	£	ţ	tſ	θ	m	ЕE								η	l	β
D	Ĵ	գ	đ	Xə	₽	іе							r	r	પ	đ
E	2	s	dzj	Ħ	n	σi							0	ď	પ	f
F	۵	đð	ð	₩	ŋ	συ							u	ф	ď	f

Annotations

0064 LATIN SMALL LETTER D • Optionally has a short tail in ITA fonts 0067 LATIN SMALL LETTER G • Takes the form of 0261 LATIN SMALL LETTER SCRIPT G in ITA fonts **00E6 LATIN SMALL LETTER AE** • May be a-e with a linking stroke in ITA fonts 014B LATIN SMALL LETTER ENG • Retains the bowl of the 'q' in ITA fonts 0153 LATIN SMALL LIGATURE OE • May be o-e with a linking stroke in ITA fonts 01A3 LATIN SMALL LETTER OI \rightarrow 1DF5E Latin small letter oi digraph 0223 LATIN SMALL LETTER OU \rightarrow 1DF5F Latin small letter ou digraphn **1D6B LATIN SMALL LETTER UE** • Takes the form of u-e with a linking stroke in ITA fonts A737 LATIN SMALL LETTER AU Takes the form of a kerned au in ITA fonts **1DF5A** LATIN SMALL LETTER HALF A • The form is between 0061 and 0251 **1DF5E** LATIN SMALL LETTER OI DIGRAPH \rightarrow 01A3 Latin small letter oi **1DF5F** LATIN SMALL LETTER OU DIGRAPH \rightarrow 0223 Latin small letter ou

References

Keith Brown, ed. (2005) Spelling reform proposals: English. *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. 2nd edition, Elsevier.

Peter T. Daniels (2018) An Exploration of Writing. Equinox.

Omniglot, *Pitman Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.)*. omniglot.com/writing/ita.htm. Accessed 2020.8.28. James Pitman & John St. John (1969) *Alphabets and Reading: The Initial Teaching Alphabet*.

Letter of support

On 2023 March 05, the ITA Foundation wrote a letter indicating unanimous support:



P. O. Box 12 Minnesota City, MN 55959 www.itafoundation.org

March 5, 2023

Unicode Technical Committee Unicode Consortium 611 Gateway Blvd. Suite 120 South San Francisco, CA

Dear Unicode Technical Committee:

Subject: Unicode request for Initial Teaching Alphabet letters

This letter is in support of the request from UC Berkeley Script Encoding Initiative to add letters of the Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA) to Unicode Standard. Our Foundation Board has reviewed the proposal written by Mr. Kirk Miller and is unanimously supportive of inclusion of the ITA characters in Unicode Standard.

Our Foundation Board is comprised of six educators dedicated to reading development at all levels from kindergarten to graduate teacher training and research. Our combined 122 years of experience using this phonetic alphabet has led to academic success for thousands of individuals with dyslexia from elementary children through adults. Currently, we also support programs for young children at-risk of reading failure and English learners of all ages. Our grant-funded program sites include K-12 schools, universities, and private not-for-profit organizations in six states and the territory of Puerto Rico. We also provide informational and training materials to researchers and professionals both in the United States and internationally.

Although we have a dedicated font for Foundation-produced student reading materials, we are hampered in our ability to communicate information about the linguistic and orthographic features of ITA and provide training to interested educational institutions. Work-around methods, e.g., screenshots of individual characters or words, are less than ideal and result in documents that lack a professional appearance. We are especially constrained in submissions to scholarly journals, in communications between fellow educators in K-12 schools and

universities, and in demonstration of ITA research-based materials on our Foundation and Grantee websites.

Although the ITA alphabet was used successfully in the 60s and 70s to give children a fast start to reading, it fell out of favor due to the lack of reading materials for children and training for teachers. The ITA phonetic alphabet has gained new impetus due to the current emphasis on the Science of Reading, which emphasizes the role of systematic, intensive phonics instruction for prevention of reading failure. Having the ITA characters added to Unicode Standard would facilitate communications between k-12 teachers, university teacher trainers, and researchers about the scientific evidence for using ITA to prevent and/or remediate reading failure.

Enhanced opportunities to communicate and share training materials extends to other Anglophone nations also. Cross-linguistic research documents that children who learn to read in transparent orthographies are much less likely to fail than those learning to read English. The US has the highest incidence of dyslexia in the world; informational and training materials on ITA as a beginner's transparent orthography would make a significant contribution to research and educational practice in Anglophone countries. We believe that having the full ITA character set represented in Unicode would encourage communication and adoption across educational and research institutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this proposal to add the ITA characters to Unicode Standard. Please feel free to contact me at sjerviss@itafoundation.org if you desire more information.

Sincerely,

Shelley Jerviss

Shelley Jerviss President ITA Foundation, Inc.

Figures

i.t.a.ª	1	and the second se							112
¹ p	³ t	$^{5}c,k$	⁷ f	°th	¹¹ S	¹³ ∫h	¹⁵ ch	²⁴ y	191
pæ	top	cat,kitten	fun	thin	sit	∫hip	church	yellœ	
² b	⁴ d	⁶ g	⁸ V	¹⁰ fh	$^{12}Z, S$	¹⁴ 3	¹⁶ j	²³ W	Sil
but	dog	gæt	vois	with	z ω, az	me3uer	jam	wet	22
20] lip	¹⁷ m man	²⁹ i it	²⁷ e egg	²⁵ a appl	⁽¹⁺⁾ a, e, i, o, u about, <i>etc</i> .	³¹ O On	³⁵ ω tωk	³⁸ ou out	ha 26 fat
²¹ r,1	¹⁸ n	³⁰ €€	²⁸ æ	³⁷ ie	³³ u	³⁴ œ	³⁶ ω	³⁹ 0i	32,
rig	not	€€(h	æbl	ies	up	œpen	mωn	b oi	
egitari iotand,	(ar ar	aur, or waurt, or	ær ær	ел er	and at at all and	€er œr	-)	⁴⁰ ue uez	25/; gra

Figure 1. Daniels (2018, p. 26, Table 2.2). A chart of the ITA. The digits cross-index another table. 'Half-a' is at bottom right.

the mock turtl sied deeply, and dr ω the back ov wun flapper across his ies. hee lockt at alis, and tried to speek, but, for a minit or t ω , sobs the det his vois. 'sæm as if hee had a bæn in his thræt,' sed the gryfon: and it set t ω wurk flæking him and punching him in the back. At last the mock turtl recuverd his vois, and, with teers running down his theeks, went on agæn:

'y ω mæ not hav livd much under the see—' ('ie havn't,' sed alis) 'and perhaps y ω wer never even introduest t ω a lobster—' (alis began to sæ, 'ie wuns tæsted—' but checkt herself hæstily, and sed, 'næ, never.') '—sæ y ω can hav næ iedea whot a delietf ω l thing a lobster kwadrill is!'

Figure 2. Daniels (2018, §2.1.4). A passage that includes all proposed lower-case characters except $\langle ou \rangle$, including the diaphonemic 'half-a' vowel $\langle a \rangle$. Several capital forms are seen as well, of which $\langle th \rangle$ and $\langle ie \rangle$ would need Unicode support. The capitals seem a bit small, but there is not actually much difference between the heights of the capital A's in the ITA $\langle alis \rangle$ seen here (2nd paragraph) and in $\langle Alice \rangle$ in the Gentium font used for the present document: Compare Pitmania $\langle aa \rangle$ and Gentium $\langle Aa \rangle$, Pitmania $\langle Ss \rangle$ and Gentium $\langle Ss \rangle$. Some ITA publications use larger capitals, reaching the stem height of $\langle b d k \rangle$ etc. Note that ITA capitals sometimes have longer descenders as well, as is slightly the case here with capital $\langle g \rangle$ vs lower-case $\langle g \rangle$ in paragraph 1 and capital $\langle y \rangle$ vs lower-case $\langle y \rangle$ in paragraph 2.

ţ	ſh	ť	Jh	wh	a	е	İ	0	U	ω		
ch urch [t∫]	sh ush [∫]	th in [θ]	then [ð]	whale [M]	at [æ]	e gg [ε]	in [I]	odd [ʊ]	и р [Л]	b oo k [ʊ]		
Long vo	Long vowels & diphthongs											
а	ae	au	€	œ	W	ue	le	O	σu	∕∩		
father	ape	all	eat	oak	ooze	use	ice	oil	ow	earm		
[a:]	[eI]	[5:]	[i:]	[00]	[u:]	[ju:]	[aɪ]	[01]	[aʊ]	[ອ]		

Figure 3. The typeface at Omniglot uses an allograph of $\langle ae \rangle$ with a short linking stroke between the *a* and the *e*, rather than the prototypical ash.

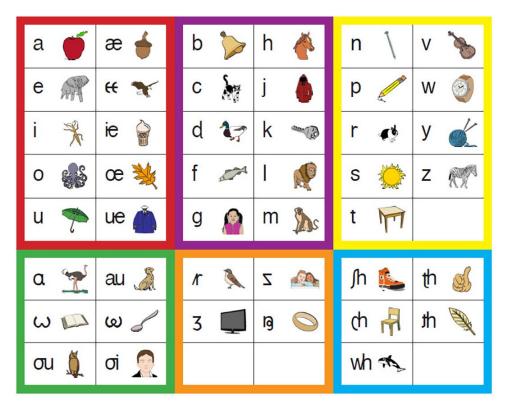


Figure 4. The typeface used since 1993 by the ITA Foundation in New York. From itafoundation.org/about-us/what-is-i-t-a/. Note that $\langle au \rangle$ and $\langle wh \rangle$ are simple juxtapositions.

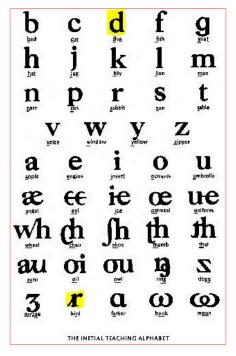


Figure 5. The typeface used by the ITA Foundation in the 1960s. It has a standard $\langle d \rangle$ and a more organic shape to the $\langle r \rangle$. Compare the slightly distinctive $\langle d \rangle$ in the previous figure.

wun satirdæ kathe wuz in thu bak yard striggig bædz twgethr tw mæk u neklus. In ewrkt on it foer u laung tiem, uezing beeds uv menee culrs-red, yelce, blw, green, blak, and goeld.

Figure 6. Jane Flynn Anderson (2017: 1) ITA Linguistic Readers, b ∞ k 5. Capital letters are not used at all in recent material such as this.

mie dad and ie wæk up rle in thu mærning two gæ two wrk. we gæ on farmz two get thu milk. ie trie two ca(h u (hiken. ie ried on u bæbe bwl. ie pet couz that ar not ufræd. ie gæ in thu cremre two help mie dad wo/h hiz truk. when he runz out uv caufe he gets mær. we gæ in this plæs whær ie get trets and pop.

Figure 7. A sample text sent by the ITA Foundation. Note the use of $\langle x \rangle$ for the syllabic *r* in *creamery* in the third line.

i.t.a. Keyboard This diagram demonstrates where to find the i.t.a. symbols on your computer keyboard. Generally, depressing the shift for capital letters activates the unique i.t.a. symbols. However you will notice that the X key results in /3/ whether you activate the lower or upper-case key whet *r* thy ue ie ce p au е r t yui o p w æſhdωωţhjoiou asdfghjkl z z (h v b ŋ m z z c v b n m

Figure 8. The character assignment of the 'phonemic' font currently used by the ITA Foundation. Because capital letters are not used, they have been reassigned to other ITA letters, similar to many non-Unicode IPA fonts. 'Q' and 'x' are not needed and have also been reassigned. The older 'pitmanita' font has capital letters and a very different character assignment for the other letters.

(rather than casl) do not say pam for *palm* (rather than pam). To overcome this difficulty, an "in-between" a (a, a, a) has been adopted. When reading in i.t.a. those who say bath associate the a with a, while those who say bath associate the a with a, while those who say bath associate it with a. This character, being a compromise between two already closely related shapes, involves too sophisticated penmanship for practical use in the classroom. It is intended for use only in print or in typewriting; moreover, it is desirable that teachers should encourage the child to interpret it as a or a according to his or the particular regional pronunciation. At any rate it has been found to be workable and it enables

Figure 9. Pitman & St. John (1969: 138). Explanation of the 'half-a' $\langle a \rangle$ as being between $\langle a \rangle$ and $\langle a \rangle$ in shape, with a shorter hook and larger bowl than $\langle a \rangle$.

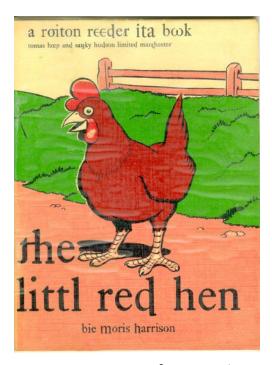


Figure 10. the littl red hen, bie moris harrison. illustrated bie jorj Cropper. a roiton reeder ita book, tomas heep and Sanky hudson limited manchester.
Note how 'ITA' and the capitals of 'Moris Harrison' extend slightly below the baseline as well as above x height. The title itself is not capitalized.



Figure 11. John Downing (1963: 1) cum heer jet, the douning recders – book 5. Initial Teaching Publishing Co., UK.

Here also, the capital C and S extend as much below the baseline as they do above x height.

ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 2 PROPOSAL SUMMARY FORM TO ACCOMPANY SUBMISSIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO THE REPERTOIRE OF ISO/IEC 10646. ¹ Please fill all the sections A, B and C below.								
Please read Prin	nciples and Procedures Document (P & P) from <u>http:</u> , and details before b	//std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/princip filling this form	les.html_ for guidelines					
	se ensure you are using the latest Form from _http:// See also _http://std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/	/std.dkuug.dk/JTC1/SC2/WG2/docs/summar	/form.html					
A. Administrative	e							
1. Title:	Initial Te	aching Alphabet						
2. Requester's nam		Kirk Miller						
	(Member body/Liaison/Individual contribution):	individual						
4. Submission date	e: erence (if applicable):	2024 December 13						
6. Choose one of th								
	complete proposal:		yes					
(or) More	information will be provided later:							
B. Technical – Ge								
1. Choose one of th								
	oosal is for a new script (set of characters):							
	osed name of script: osal is for addition of character(s) to an existing b							
	e of the existing block:	Latin Extended-G						
	acters in proposal:		13					
	ory (select one from below - see section 2.2 of P&P	document):						
A-Contempora	ry B.1-Specialized (small collection)	B.2-Specialized (large collection	n) <u>x</u>					
C-Major extinc		E-Minor extinct						
	oglyphic or Ideographic	G-Obscure or questionable usage symbol	ols					
	ncluding character names provided? e the names in accordance with the "character na	ming guidolinos"	yes					
	nnex L of P&P document?	lining guidelines	yes					
b. Are the cl	haracter shapes attached in a legible form suitable	e for review?	yes					
5. Fonts related:								
a. Who will	provide the appropriate computerized font to the		ne standard?					
h Idontify t	he party granting a license for use of the font by t		rite_etc.):					
0. Identify t	SIL OFL		site, etc.).					
6. References:								
a. Are refere	ences (to other character sets, dictionaries, descri	ptive texts etc.) provided?	yes					
b. Are publi of proposed	shed examples of use (such as samples from news characters attached?	papers, magazines, or other sources)						
7. Special encoding								
	oposal address other aspects of character data pro n, sorting, searching, indexing, transliteration etc		1105					
presentatio	in, soliting, searching, indexing, transiteration etc	. (If yes please enclose information):	<u>yes</u>					
8. Additional Infor	mation:							
	vited to provide any additional information about	Properties of the proposed Character(s)	or Script that					
will assist in corre	ect understanding of and correct linguistic process	sing of the proposed character(s) or scrip	ot. Examples of					
	re: Casing information, Numeric information, Curr							
	s etc., Combining behaviour, Spacing behaviour, E Up contexts, Compatibility equivalence and othe							
	at <u>http://www.unicode.org</u> for such information							
http://www.unico	ode.org/reports/tr44/) and associated Unicode Te	echnical Reports for information needed						
by the Unicode Te	chnical Committee for inclusion in the Unicode St	candard.						

^{1.} Form number: N4502-F (Original 1994-10-14; Revised 1995-01, 1995-04, 1996-04, 1996-08, 1999-03, 2001-05, 2001-09, 2003-11, 2005-01, 2005-09, 2005-10, 2007-03, 2008-05, 2009-11, 2011-03, 2012-01)

C. Technical - Justification

yes
yes
ion.org
yes
pedagogical
yes
entirely
no
ves
no
no
no
<u>no</u>
no
no