



**ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 3
7-bit and 8-bit codes and their extension
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EXPERT CONTRIBUTION ON ISO 2033

This contribution is proposed for consideration in connection with the revision of ISO 2033 (Meeting Report from Iraklion; 2N3012 item 15).

In the 1997 ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2 Plenary meeting the need for a revision of the ISO 2033-1983 (Coding of machine readable characters) was briefly discussed.

That standard, which was developed in 1972 by the then-existing ISO/TC 97, dates from the times when 8-bit coding standards were comparatively new; the ISO/IEC 8859 series, for instance, was not established at the time.

Also the distinction between "characters" and "glyphs" was then not consistently observed.

The standard concerns coding, in 7-bit and 8-bit environments, of magnetic ink "characters" according to standard ISO 1004, and OCR-A and OCR-B glyphs according to ISO 1073 parts 1 and 2. The coding assigned to these characters is based on the ISO/IEC 646 IRV, but with some special characters (like CMC 7 "Symbols S" and OCR-A "Abstract symbols") also assigned to code positions. Incidentally the OCR-B glyphs outside the IRV repertoire (e.g. EΔF) are assigned to other positions in 2033 than used for those characters in ISO/IEC 8859, although the positions partly agree with ISO/IEC 6937.

Overall it appears questionable if the 2033 fills a real purpose any more. Practically all the characters covered in the standard are also included in other ISO/IEC 7-bit or 8-bit standards and/or in 10646, and it should be natural that their coding in specific applications uses one of these more common schemes. The exception is the magnetic ink "Symbols" which do not seem to exist in other standards, and the OCR-A "Abstract symbols" which are included in 10646 but not, it seems, in other 7- and 8-bit standards.

The matter however obviously needs investigation; which will require some detail studies of the possible implications for ISO 1004 and 1073 of any major revision or withdrawal of the 2033.