

Working with non-English text

As communication and transportation technology continues to shrink our world, the demand for documents printed in multiple languages is increasing. If you have ever hired a translation service and requested the results on disk, or have tried to produce a page containing multiple languages, you may have been surprised at the complexity of the task.

There are thousands of written languages, and many of these languages use non-roman characters, and large character sets. Unfortunately, a single TrueType or PostScript font cannot contain more than 256 characters. Encoding is a computer term that refers to which character is mapped to which numeric position in a font. "ASCII" is the encoding widely used

for English. There are many languages for which no standard encoding exists. The result is that files in certain languages cannot easily be shared, since each operating system, font, or application may interpret the text encoding differently.

Two up-and-coming technologies promise to help in this regard: *Unicode* (www.unicode.org) is an international standard that specifies a standard position in the character set (encoding) for all common written languages (up to 65,536 characters in all). This will enable text typed on one Unicode compatible system to be accurately interpreted on another Unicode compatible system.

OpenType is a new font format that takes full advantage of Unicode encoding,

and offers enhanced typography features. Adobe and other font vendors are just beginning to release fonts in the OpenType format.

Windows 2000, Adobe InDesign, Microsoft Word 2000, and the upcoming Mac OS X all offer Unicode and OpenType support. For example, using the Lucida Sans Unicode typeface, Windows 2000, and Word 2000, you could produce a single document containing English, Greek, Russian, and Spanish text.

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