Dear colleges
I shall try to explain advantages and disadvantages of two different approaches about fonts or/and standards.

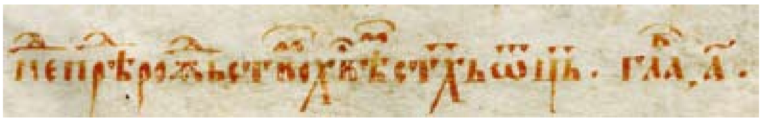
1. Official registration of OCS in Unicode

This registration is incomplete and with lot of problems with writing even a “plain text”.

– Not all possible characters, according to Unicode principles, are registered and we don’t know how many proposals follows and when it will finish. Beside the undefined time, it means changing a fonts every time the new proposal is accepted. Who will make this fonts and who will keep track about changes.

– According to D. Birnbaum explanations, Unicode will never register:
1. **All numerals** (I wish a great luck for those who will type (construct), for example ҂а҃ out of: ҂ , а and ҃ or ⓐ out of: а and ◯)

2. **Superscript letters with titlo** (according to him, Unicode will register all (when they find them, so far they found 32 out of 101) superscript letters without titlo, with offset to the left and with height for small letters). And again I wish a great luck for those who will type (construct), for example иͣ͡ out of: и, ͣ and ︠ . Let me explain procedure. It is relatively easy to get иͣ if typographer make for superscript ͣ zero width and position letter with offset to the left for the middle width of и, but after that you should somehow lift ︠ and by manually kerning (which is not possible in the Word) put the “pokritie” over the already superimposed “az”. Also, if you register superimposed letters with offset to the left only, you cannot have superscript letter between two letters, especially in the Word. The same problem is with diacritical marks and titlos written between two letters. You can do that in InDesign by manually positive kerning for each case. The things are far worst when you are consider a capital letters, because you have to lift superscript letter for the height of capital letter and to continue procedure. I suggest the authors of such ideas to try in practice to reproduce following text from gospel, out of registered characters, as a “plain text”:

a)  Original text

b) нⷺе прⷣѣ рожⷣьствⷨо хⷭвⷨѣ стⷯь ѿцⷭь. глⷡа ,а҃. — Font Hilandarski ustav, replica of original handwriting

c) нⷺе прⷣѣ рожⷣьствⷨо хⷭвⷨѣ стⷯь ѿцⷭь. глⷡа ,а҃. — Font Monah, made for scholars

d) нед[ѣлꙗ] прѣд[ь] рождьством(ь) х(ри)с(то)вѣм(ь) с(ве)т(ы)хь ѡт(ь)ць. глав(а) ,а҃. — Transcript of original text

With Unicode model we can write only transcript. Transcript is a “plain text” without any doubt but the question is does it represent OCS Script as a plain text? In my opinion it does not represent. It is description of original text but not reproduction of original script. Unicode encode scripts as they say, but present registration do not allow reproduction of original script in the practice.

Describing these things in XML is possible, but nobody read and print XML. We need to type OCS relatively easy and to print it. That is the main idea about communication for the centuries, to read what is written and to write what you read and what you see. Not more, not less.

2. Internal registration of Standard of OCS (Belgrade Model) in Unicode PrivateUseArea (PUA)

This registration will register a full Standard of OCS, without missing letters or signs. It means:

- Registration will be stable immediately;
- Registration will have reserved codes for further additions;
- Superscript letters will be registered with and without titlos, separately for small and capital letters and separately for writing with offset to the left and for writing between two letters.
- Diacritical marks and titlos written between two letters will be registered;
- All numerals;
- And if we decide we can register ligatures and even glyphs;
- Because it will be registration which is separate of present registration of Cyrillic, we can have contemporary cyrillic and old cyrillic in one font. That will allow the use Database programs which can have one font in the field with data only;
- It will allow writing a "plain text" even in Word, and freedom to make a composite characters for fine typography. To quote a Unicode statement: The relationship between appearance and content of plain text may be summarized as follows: Plain text must contain enough information to permit the text to be rendered legibly, and nothing more. What is enough information and what is legibly in the case of OCS? If we cannot type (for example ) without using PUA for making a superscript letter with titlo, is it enough information?

3. Mixture between Unicode and Internal registration

It is possible to transfer all characters from BM which are not in Unicode to PUA. The system will not be stable, we have to change that a lot of time and we cannot use that font for Data bases. In my opinion that is not a good solution, at least is not long term solution so it is wasting a time. It is a compromise between Unicode registration and our needs.

What can we do with two systems (1 and 2)?
Does the conversion from one to another is possible?
Yes, in the Word with relatively easy Macro function it is straight forward from Unicode system to Belgrade Model, because Unicode Model is subset of Belgrade Model. Reverse process is possible only for those characters in BM which are register in Unicode, not for all. The procedure is to make conversion first and then to change the font for appropriate system. Not that difficult.

What is my conclusion? As the BM is far superior than Unicode Model we shall use BM. PUA is not official Unicode but it is Unicode part. Users does not take care about systems, Unicode etc. They need a font which will cover all their needs and that is definitively BM font.

I am aware that it will be always different opinions. Some of them because of misunderstanding how OTF font function or what is Unicode and especially PUA. That's why I am preparing a proposal for the system (table of codes) which will be universal. Then anybody can find solution for himself, but in the frame of the unique system. I will post that proposal very soon.

Sincerely

Zoran Kostic, typographer