

Whereas computing in its first few decades was extremely English-centered in its standard character sets, and computer engineers and programmers had little interest in the needs of multilingual and multi-script texts, the introduction of the Macintosh in 1984 inaugurated a new era for those who wanted to use fonts for specialized scripts. Like most of these early special fonts, the fonts developed with the GreekKeys-encoding relied on an ad hoc solution: pretending that the font was organized as a standard Macintosh Roman font, but in reality placing other characters in the 256 positions available in fonts at that time.

Separate from the issue of the font is that of keyboard input. A special font is of little help if there is not a convenient way to enter the characters and symbols. In terms of human interface design, the input scheme should be a service incorporated at the operating system level rather than in subsidiary applications or in macros (programmed shortcuts) within a single application.

The great advantage of the original GreekKeys scheme was that it worked immediately in the 1980s and relatively well for many years. The disadvantage was that a polytonic Greek encoding of this kind is private, not known to or authorized by the people developing operating systems, applications, and printers. With the passage of time, various incompatibilities have emerged. As applications like Microsoft Word became more sophisticated or bloated, the masquerading performed by the font conflicted with features of the program, so that, for instance, Word no longer knew where the word boundaries were in Greek text and could no longer search accurately for particularly accented vowels. And with the emergence of Unicode as the basis of the internal communication within modern operating systems, incompatibilities have emerged that are not simply inconvenient, but fatal to the continued use of private encodings.

The gradual acceptance of Unicode and its incorporation into modern applications means that the time has arrived for Classicists to embrace this standard in their everyday work. The process of transition is not without some inconveniences and even risks, and not all problems have been solved in a way that leads to true compatibility across platforms and applications. But many aspects of Greek on the web and Greek in the publication process should become much easier.

This presentation will close with a short tutorial on the use of GreekKeys Unicode input and of Unicode-based Greek fonts, including conversion of Greek in an old document from a non-standard encoding to Unicode.