

Syriac, Unicode, and Multilingual Computing

Sargon Hasso, Software Engineer

Abstract

Humans can not communicate directly with computers. Character Encoding was invented to achieve this. Several coding schemes existed and no two schemes were compatible. The Unicode Standard not only solved these problems, but made multilingual computing challenge a less daunting task to tackle. Syriac is now part of Unicode, and Unicode-compliant Syriac fonts are available. Any Unicode-compliant software system, in theory, should support Syriac scripts. Currently, Windows XP has the most mature support for multilingual computing by its complex scripts processor called *Uniscribe*. Syriac, in today's digital age, has all the components that are accessible to any one, and it is no more restricted to specialists and experts who used to be the primary users with access to these technologies. These technologies also make it possible to venture into new areas that, not long ago, were nearly impossible to envision. Areas such as lexicography, high-quality digital typesetting, publishing, and databases are amongst many which can benefit immediately from these technologies.