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EMOJI PROJECT IN-CLASS WORKSHOP TO DEVELOP NEW EMOJI

The “Big-Picture” Goals of the Emoji Project

Students will find out more about the institutions that maintain digital standards by working on a proposal to change one of those standards. In so doing, students will learn about the ability to provide feedback in a digital context.

Who runs the Internet? Independent organizations are responsible for the administration of protocols on our digital networks, ex. [ICANN](#), [W3C](#), [Unicode Consortium](#). These organizations might not be in the public spotlight, but they're important to maintaining our “smooth, yet hierarchical” digital networks. We've been discussing “who runs the Internet” since our first classes on the history of Arpanet. But now for a closer look at “who runs” another media system.

Who runs Emoji? Are they *just* pictures? Who gets to decide what they look like? Can you make a difference in what emoji you see in the world around? We'll think through these questions with our in-class workshop. This week we're going to investigate something you probably see or use everyday: emoji.

The main thing to know about the workshop: you are going to develop a proposal for a new emoji. Be creative! We'll be using the same proposal format as anyone else would to propose a new emoji.

EMOJI PROJECT TIMELINE

In our class lecture, we'll go over the history of emoji, discuss their origin as text (not image), find out who decides which emoji get approved, and why some emoji won't ever

get passed. After the lecture, we'll go over the details of the Emoji Project, including what you'll need to prepare prior to the workshop itself.

DAY ONE: EMOJI HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION TO EMOJI PROJECT

Lecture topic and slideshow: "Emoji: A Brief History"

Introduction to the Emoji Project (and Q&A for students in need of clarification)

Homework (see below)*

*Most importantly, you will need to come to the next class with at least one idea for a new emoji. If working in a group, you will need to have all members decided upon by that time as well.

DAY TWO: IN-CLASS WORKSHOP, PART I

1. During class: Fill out the Unicode Form for Emoji Proposals
 - a. In order to be complete, you will need to make sure to complete sections one through three. Due to time constraints, you do not need to fill out every single section in detail. I'll be on hand to answer any questions and to help you brainstorm as well!
 - b. Make sure to note on the form who will be responsible for the visual design of the emoji.
2. End-of-day deliverable: Turn in your in-class draft of the Unicode Form. I'll hand your draft back to you the next class session, after leaving comments on the draft, as if I were a member of the Unicode jury.

DAY THREE: IN CLASS WORKSHOP, PART II

1. During class: Review the comments left on the Unicode Form. I will discuss the comments and any lingering questions you may have about the project individually, in the second part of the class.
2. In-class: Continue revising and working on your proposal.
3. In-class: If working in a group, choose one person to present your proposal during the next class.
 - a. The presentations are short: you have just five minutes to convince the "jury" and your classmates on why they should choose your emoji!
4. End-of-day deliverable: Let the instructor know who's presenting and the title of your emoji proposal.

DAY FOUR: PRESENTATIONS AND IN-CLASS VOTING ON

1. Rapid-fire presentations of emoji!
2. You'll present in front of your class and a "jury."

HOMEWORK AND PREPARATION FOR THE EMOJI PROJECT

1. Decide whether you're working by yourself or in a group to design an emoji.
2. Start brainstorming emoji ideas.
 - a. Topics to think about: Is there anything important to you personally that isn't represented as emoji? Is there a sport that isn't represented? A country? A food? An animal? What would you want to use as an emoji that doesn't currently exist?
3. But do your homework! Make sure a current emoji doesn't already exist that's too similar to your own. Don't forget: submissions that are too similar to any other emoji will get automatically rejected!
 - Review the [Unicode Form for Emoji Proposals](#).
 - Review the current list of [emojis](#).
 - Review the [sample submissions](#)!
 - Look over [Emojination](#) for examples of current emoji projects.
 - Listen to this [podcast or look over this blog post about the process of applying for a new emoji](#).

MORE BRAINSTORMING ADVICE

- Look over your texts and chats. Which words come up most often? Would any of them need an emoji?
- Survey your friends, family, and other colleagues about which emoji they might want.
- Review the emoji currently available and ask yourself if the colors, genders, and overall visual appearance accurately reflects your sense of self, your background, or chosen community. If emoji are a “universal language,” then you can think of yourself as part of this universe; if you're not represented, then what type of emoji do you think would help to represent that?
- As a college student, what are the type of things you encounter everyday in your major or minor that don't currently have an emoji?

Background on the Unicode Consortium

The Unicode Consortium, a nonprofit organization that is responsible for, among other things, Emoji standardization, also has a larger goal. This mission is to make sure that human languages can be compatible with software platforms. They are interested in making sure that all languages can be read by different software programs.

They've worked on languages that are dying out, languages of the developing world, or character-based languages! They govern the standards that allow for text-based characters to be compatible with other platforms. They do not govern just the “visualization” of emoji — what you're most familiar with — but the text-based encoding as well.

This is important: the Unicode Standard specifies how text can be represented visually across software. And this is where we come to emoji. As emojis are an instance of a text-based “language” that can be read across operating systems (Android, Windows, Linux, iOS), the standardization of emoji falls under the Unicode Consortium's domain.

Unicode Form for Emoji Proposals (From Unicode)

Title: Proposal for New Emoji

Submitter: <name>

Date: <date>

1. **Identification.** Suggested short name and keywords for the emoji, as in the [Emoji List](#).
 1. CLDR short name
 2. CLDR keywords
2. **Images.** One sample color image and one sample black-and-white image for each proposed emoji must be included in the proposal and in an attached zip file. These are to illustrate how each character might be displayed. The format and license *must be* as specified in [Images](#).
 1. **Zip File**
 2. **License.** The proposer must certify that the images have appropriate licenses for use by the Unicode consortium, and list the type of license.
3. **Selection factors — Inclusion.** A section that addresses all [Selection Factors](#) for Inclusion, and for each one provides evidence as to what degree each of the proposed characters would satisfy that factor.
 1. Compatibility
 2. Expected usage level
 1. Frequency
 2. Multiple usages
 3. Use in sequences
 3. Image distinctiveness
 4. Completeness
 5. Frequently requested

Additional Emoji Proposal Considerations

Make yourself familiar with these aspects of the proposal. You will not be responsible for turning in any written responses to the following sections, but be aware that these are factors that will likely come up during the in-class evaluation.

4. **Selection factors — Exclusion.** A section that addresses all [Selection Factors](#) for Inclusion, and for each one provides evidence as to what degree each of the proposed characters would satisfy that factor.
 1. Overly specific
 2. Open-ended
 3. Already representable
 4. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities
 5. Transient
 6. Faulty comparison
5. **Sort location.** A proposed sort location for the emoji in [Emoji Ordering](#)

1. Category (such as [cat-face](#))
2. Emoji it should come after in that category (such as *after*  WEARY CAT FACE).
6. **Other information.** Any other information that would be helpful, such as design considerations for images.

Student Q&As

Q: What if I really like the emoji I came up with? Can I turn my in-class assignment into an actual proposal to the Unicode Consortium?

A: Of course you can continue working on a proposal after the in-class workshop. You're welcome to discuss completing a full proposal with me, or you can work continue working on the project with others.

Q: I can't draw. How am I supposed to come up with a visual example?

A: You will not be graded on whether you're a great artist. It's okay if you submit a simple design. Additionally, you can use Photoshop to come up with a mock-up. You may use pre-existing images, such as clip art, however, make sure that if you create a digital collage to credit your sources and make sure that you're NOT using copyrighted material. We can go over specifics regarding what's okay to use and what's not in class.