Visual Variants Guidelines

(For Section 6.1.2)

Visual variants include those pairs of code points which, while distinguishable with sufficient magnification, are indistinguishable at normal font sizes. Taken, for our purposes, to be 12-point type – that being the size typically used in printing books, newspapers, etc. An example would be the breve and caron diacritics.

Visual variants also include those pairs of code points which are distinguishable, but noticeable only to those who are sensitized to the difference. Confusion arises **“where it is possible to substitute an *unexpected* diacritic usually used in a different language so that it is accepted by users as a native character to their language.” (2 February 2019, IP Feedback to Latin GP Proposal, Document Version 4)**

To evaluate whether a difference is noticeable by a user who is not accustomed to watching for it, we consider this. Users of the Latin alphabet are accustomed to seeing fonts with and without serifs. For example: Times New Roman and Ariel. They are therefore accustomed to ignoring differences of the size of a serif, *unless sensitized to it*. For example, someone who is familiar with Italian or Kirundi will readily see the difference between Latin Small Letter I (i 0069) and Latin Small Letter I with Grave (ì 00EC), because those languages use both. Similarly, someone familiar with Vietnamese will readily see the difference between Latin Small Letter O with Circumflex and Acute above (ố 1ED1) and Latin Small Letter O with Circumflex and Hook Above (ổ 1ED3). But to anyone not sensitized, the differences will go unnoticed.

Outside the basic 26 letters used by ASCII, most code points in the Latin repertoire will be familiar only to a small subset of the user community. So as a rule of thumb, a difference smaller than or comparable to a serif, is insufficient to make a pair of code points not variant.