MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

October 31 19 66

Memo to F. J. Corbato' Room Ext.

I think we should give these people as detailed a reply as we can afford. I can supply all of the overview and some of the detail, but there are several questions that I cannot answer.

Can you help?

from R. G. Mills Room Ext.

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October 28, 1966

Dear Sirs:

On the basis of information published in the Communications of the A.C.M. and a private letter from Dr. L. L. Griffin of the National Bureau of standards, we are led to believe that the 7-bit ASCII code is about to become a standard for communication and computer equipment. We are writing to you, and to other users of such equipment, in order to gain more definitive information on this matter. We would be most grateful if you could provide us answers to the following questions:

1. Will ASCII become the standard for devices and software used by you? If so, when? If not, what standard are you adopting (if any), and what provisions (if any) are you making for interacting with ASCII-oriented equipment?

2. Will your devices actually pick characters from an incoming data stream and generate characters in groups of 7-bits, or will ASCII codes be a subset of codes represented by 8 or more bits? If a device reads or writes directly from or to a computer memory, is this in bytes of 7, 8, or more bits, and what provision (if any) is made for word sites not divisible by the chosen byte size?

3. If ASCII is embedded in a code based on 8 or more bits, how exactly is this done? Which are the non-ASCII bits, and do they carry parity or other information?

4. If an 8 or more bit code is used, do devices have available additional graphics or controls to correspond to non-ASCII codes?

5. Will your devices react to ASCII code extenders (SO, SI, ESC, DLE)?

We realize, of course, that some of these questions are too detailed for a general answer. What we are trying to find out is whether or not it is reasonable to start preparing for an era in which most of our devices and software will employ a common standard, and if so what that standard will be.

Sincerely Yours,

John G. Fletcher

JGF/er