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Information technology — General structure for the interchange of code values —

Part 1: Identification of coding schemes

*Technologies de l'information — Structure générale pour l'échange de
valeurs de code —*

Partie 1: Identification des systèmes de codification



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

International Standard ISO/IEC 7826-1 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 14, *Data element principles*.

ISO/IEC 7826 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Information technology — General structure for the interchange of code values*:

- *Part 1: Identification of coding schemes*
- *Part 2: Registration of coding schemes*

Annex A forms an integral part of this part of ISO/IEC 7826.

Introduction

The increased use of data processing and telecommunications capabilities in commercial, governmental, and other, applications, has made possible the interchange of information in an effective machine-processable form. It is apparent that, as automated interchange increases, it becomes essential to provide the appropriate information interchange standards.

Representation of information in coded form can facilitate its processing by computer and enable it to be expressed with a precision and an independence of language that may be difficult to achieve in other forms. Consequently it is frequently used in information interchange for all types of application.

In many application areas there are ambitious programmes to develop coding schemes for data elements, coding schemes that often may be of good use outside the application they originally were specified for. Users preparing for multi-application and international information interchange are now urgently asking for ways to organize their coding schemes under a general structure.

In the development of this part of ISO/IEC 7826 it was recognized that for many categories of data it is neither feasible nor practical to adopt one single coding scheme. Thus, a member of any category can be coded under more than one coding scheme. This part of ISO/IEC 7826 recognizes the existence of these coding schemes and provides a means for systematically incorporating them in a uniform structure, for the purpose of information interchange, using an "International Coding Scheme Identifier" (ICSI).

The intention is to provide a simple mechanism allowing for existing coding schemes to be globally recognised. A couple of basic requirements may be highlighted:

- as a matter of principle, the mechanism has as the sole purpose to identify the coding scheme. Other qualities, like ownership, may be registered as attributes describing the coding scheme but they are kept separated from the ICSI value in order not to complicate its use;
- from a technical aspect the ICSI has to be short, i.e. consist of few characters, as one way of implementing coding scheme identifiers is to interchange them together with each code value.

ISO/IEC 7826 describes a general structure for the interchange of code values, specified according to registered coding schemes. Part 1 sets out the technique for the identification of such registered coding schemes. Part 2 outlines the procedure for registration of existing and new coding schemes. ISO/IEC 7826 does not provide guidance on the coding schemes for individual data elements.