

ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 2/WG 2 N3818

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TITLE: Further Comments on the spelling SULPHUR vs SULFUR in FPDAM 8

SOURCE: Wally Hooper, Chymistry of Isaac Newton Project, Indiana University (forwarded by Deborah Anderson, Script Encoding Initiative, UC Berkeley)

STATUS: Liaison member contribution (from SEI/UCB)

ACTION: For consideration by WG2

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From: Hooper, Wallace Edd [mailto:whooper@indiana.edu]

Sent: Monday, March 29, 2010 3:04 PM

To: Deborah W. Anderson

Subject: RE: One more note on sulphur

Hi Debbie,

There's no question that Newton himself used 'sulphur' more often than he used 'sulfur' but he did use both. Running a concordance on all 118 of Newton's alchemical manuscripts, we find that Newton wrote out 'sulphur' or 'sulfur' and inflected forms 1020 times. Of those instances, Newton writes 'sulf-' forms 34 times in 20 documents and 'sulph-' forms 986 times in 84 documents. So 'sulph-' is certainly most common but you will find both spellings on the same page of a document and even once together on the same line. Where they both occur Newton didn't seem concerned by it.

We faced criticism in the Technical Committee meetings when we suggested using seventeenth-century spellings, so we turned to the Oxford English Dictionary and existing international standards bodies for guidance in the spirit of developing the Unicode standard/ISO 10646 in the same way.

Bill Newman and Larry Principe are certainly leading figures in study of Newton's alchemical manuscripts. Both quote Newton's spelling accurately when they quote him, whether Newton writes 'sulphur' or 'sulfur', but Bill and Larry and many others write 'sulfur' in their own work when analyzing Newton's alchemical manuscripts.

Why shouldn't WG2 agree with other international standards bodies on this and other matters?

Wally

Wally Hooper

Chymistry of Isaac Newton Project, Indiana University, Bloomington

www.chymistry.org