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Subject: Angstrom Symbol Nonsense

Posted by [davidf](#) on Thu, 30 Jan 1997 08:00:00 GMT

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Folks,

As if I don't have problems enough on this newsgroup, now I am getting a slew of mail about angstrom symbols. Typical of the mail I am getting is this one from Dr. Watson (or someone like him, I can't remember):

> Ok, if nobody else is going to do it, then I will: what the hell  
> are you doing here? (ang = '<string-of-greek>') Please enlighten  
> me.

It's elementary, my dear Watson. What I wrote was this:

```
ang = '!6!sA!r!u!9 %!6!n'
```

Take out your Geek to English dictionary. You can find it in Chapter 9 of the IDL User's Guide. This sentence is easily parsed:

```
!6 -- Complex Roman font, of course, what else could it be?  
!s -- According to the dictionary it's "save position". This  
      means, well, it means... Well, skip this for now.  
A -- Capital A, splendid, Watson!  
!r -- "restore position". You see, you didn't need to worry about !s.  
!u -- Shift to upper subscript. We're going to write something  
      above the A.  
!9 -- special symbol font. We need a tiny circle.  
% -- This is how you draw a tiny circle, Watson. Pay attention!  
!6 -- Well, what did it mean *before* Watson!  
!n -- Back to normal text level (from subscripting).
```

As I say, Watson, elementary!

Holmes

P.S. Thanks to Andy Nichols at the Naval Research Lab for supplying this hieroglyphic in a post some time ago.

Also, does anybody know how to produce an angstrom symbol in a reliable way with hardware fonts? How about in PostScript? Inquiring minds want to know! :-)

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