

Curiology Part 2 with Various Emoji Experts

Ologies Podcast

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Oh hey, it's your building manager texting you, "So sorry to hear about the death of your praying mantis," with a cry-laughing emoji again, Alie Ward. Why the same intro? Because we're back, Part 2 of Curiology. Dual episodes on emoji, or emojis; you can say it either way. I'm not the boss of you, but we do talk about it in Part 1. So, no matter what, start with Part 1. So, last week's episode covered emoji versus emoticons, how they're actually fonts and not pictures, how they get standardized, the meanings of the more mysterious emoji, how meanings change very swiftly, and how experts keep track of them without wanting to go hide in a cave forever because it's too much work.

And now, in this episode, we get to Patron-specific questions which were submitted by the folks who support the show at [Patreon.com/Ologies](https://patreon.com/Ologies), which you can join for one shiny dollar a month. You can also support the show just by telling a friend or leaving a review, and I read all of them, including one just left by LinaTheQueen who said that they have a tiny dog with dementia who is very scared of thunder and fireworks, but somehow:

I put on a podcast, only Ologies works, and my dog slowly nods off in the blissful sleep of animal dreams and leg twitches while Alie teaches him things he will immediately forget.

LinaTheQueen, thank you for the review, it's an honor to be in his ears and also yours, and everyone's.

Okay, Curiology Part 2, let's get into it. The etymology and bios of all the guests are in the intro of Part 1, start there, it's linked right in the show notes. But for now, let's talk about how many emojis there are, who uses emojis, what emoji have to do with your sex life, introverts versus extroverts, representation in emoji, which emoji are coming up soon, the eggplant, the ghost, the bucket, and so much more, with a perfect gaggle of Emojipedia editors, past and present, Unicode members, scholars, designers, enthusiasts, and curiologists, because yes, there are three guests again, Jennifer Daniel, Keith Broni, and Jeremy Burge.

Alie: Can I ask you some questions from listeners?

Jeremy: Of course, yes! Love a listener question.

Alie: Okay, good. Adam Silk wants to know, as well as Amanda Smith, Super_Sara, Jenny Lowe Rhodes, first-time question-asker, Lena Gwen, and Steeping Films, wanted to know, in Adam's words: What was the first emoji? Steeping Films AKA Erika Houle wants to know: Are cave paintings considered the OG emojis? [*Jeremy laughs*] When do emojis start?

Jeremy: So, Emojipedia started in 2013, so we only have 2013 onwards. After a few years, it became my mission to go back to Japan; it was a good excuse to have some nice sushi and a bit of a travel around, but also to track down people who were there because these people are alive today, the people who designed some of the original sets, people who worked at these companies and track down these earliest phones. Pagers were the origin, in Japan. The first emoji that we can track back, and I'm always happy to revise this if we find earlier, but the first emoji we could track back was to a pager in 1997 which was a love heart.

Alie: [*gasps*] Really?

Jeremy: A single emoji on the whole pager, you could beep through a message and then put a heart there if you wanted to.

Alie: Augh, doesn't that say everything about what humans can be?

Jeremy: We should have stopped there. [*That's enough of that.*] [*laughs*] It's perfect.

Alie: Do you have a heart that you like? Because you know how there's a heart that's in the deck of cards, there's a red heart, there's the sparkle heart, some people just do a light white heart.

Jeremy: They do, yeah. I remember John Mayer, I think, was joking about only using the cards-based heart because it was more manly or something. But otherwise, you get people taking it— It's the internet, people take it seriously, then they mail or message Emojipedia saying, "John Mayer is over here saying this is the only alpha heart. Tell him he's wrong." [*both laugh*] He was clearly joking. It was a funny tweet.

No, I'm more than happy with the red love heart, I'm happy to share that around, I know some people feel a bit squeamish and they go, "Augh, it's a bit corporate, can't send a love heart, might send the wrong message so I'll send a blue heart." Blue heart turned out to be the corporate heart when we did an analysis at Emojipedia. Corporate brands use the blue heart more than any of the others. There's very little difference otherwise, they mostly just get a random mix where they're all popular, the black one gets some goth associations.

Alie: I get it.

Aside: Okay, this came up talking to Jennifer because y'all, I am a champion for that emoji.

Alie: I love the black heart. When the black heart came out, I was like, "*[deep breath]* Finally."

Jennifer: How do you use the black heart?

Alie: The black heart is definitely with a certain subset of friends. I feel like it's my old school friends, people I've known longer, people that I was goth with, definitely. Sometimes if I'm tweeting about a bug or a spider or an affinity for something, you know what I mean, that's a little bit more of an underdog culturally, some kind of critter, then it's definitely getting the black heart. For sure.

Jennifer: I love it. [*laughs*]

Aside: More on the chromatics of curiology in a bit. But first, which one is Jeremy's favorite? We all have a favorite heart, right? I feel like I know this in my own real heart.

Jeremy: I just like the red one. Although my favorite is the red one with a little dot underneath, it's a heart exclamation mark.

Alie: No! Is that what that is?!

Jeremy: That's what that's meant... No one knows that's what it is, but that's what it is and that's how I use it, whereas if I'm sending an excited message where I'm happy and it's something I like, I might finish it off with the heart exclamation mark at the end.

Jennifer: I've been using the pink heart with sparkles a lot lately.

Alie: Yeah, me too.

Jennifer: I really love using the hearts with other sorts of gestural emoji like, there's this explosion emoji, I think it's called Collision, it is really spikey. So, it's like a heart exploding when you put them next to each other.

Alie: Aww!

Aside: Okay, so there are well over 20 different heart emoji options, growing all the time. There are so many ways to say, “I like you,” or, “I almost love you,” or, “Wait, no, I’m obsessed with you, but in a devoted, and safe, and not possessive way,” or “Thank you for buying our sandwiches.”

Jennifer: There’s a lot of them.

Alie: And there’s a new pink one, right?

Jennifer: Yes, there are three new colored hearts: light blue, gray, and pink.

Alie: Oh wait, why the gray heart?

Jennifer: So, we did a big analysis of cross-linguistic color theory, and this is what makes the emoji work continually interesting. Okay so, if you look at literature in a cross-linguistic study, it suggests that there’s a maximum of 11 basic color terms. And as languages kind of develop, the names for these colors become present in the language. So, stage 1 would be dark-cool and light-warm; so things like black and white. And then the next phase is red, and the third phase is either green or yellow, and the fourth phase is *both* green and yellow. The next phase is blue then brown. And then the last one is purple, pink, orange, and gray.

Aside: Okay, just a color theory wormhole sidenote for context and also intrigue. All right, so a lot of things happened in 1969, such as moon landings, Woodstock, and your grandparents smoking hash, but another event was the publication of *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution*, which was written by anthropologist Overton Brent Berlin and linguist Paul Kay. Okay, this was a big deal because it was the first major global study of, “Hey, what do you call this color?” in a bunch of different languages. And essentially, Berlin and Kay found that different cultures have more or fewer words for colors, but they tend to add them in the same order, as Jennifer said.

You got two words for color? You’re probably saying black and white. You got three words for color? You probably identified red. Next colors that are added to language typically are green or yellow, then blue tends to get adopted into the language, and then your browns. And then the last major color words to be added, linguistically, are usually purples, pinks, oranges, and gray. Now, English has 11, which Berlin and Kay noted were white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange, and gray. But there are many languages that, for example, don’t make a hard line between green and blue on the chromatic spectrum and might describe the sky as a pale green color or bamboo as a shade of yellow.

And why even... who is talking about this? Who cares? Well, I love a mess and there’s a big debate because of this paper in terms of the concept’s universalism and relativism. Berlin and Kay argue that humans are all biologically so similar that *of course* we would add colors in the same order; they are universalists. Others take the relativism side and say that because different cultures may not differentiate between terms the same, color perception is really a cultural phenomenon. And if you want to fall into a rainbow-colored rabbit hole, just find the Wikipedia page titled, “Linguistic Relativity and the Color Naming Debate,” because it is a hot debate and it of course influenced a bunch of emoji experts while they were drafting up new hearts.

Jennifer: So, when you’re looking at these 11 basic color terms, what we were missing were those last two, pink and gray. And so, you know, when there’s, like, how many colors exist in the world? How much can the eye perceive? You have to kind of have a constraint there, so these 11 basic color terms are a way of creating a closed set of colors, and gray was amongst them.

Alie: And is that a way for someone to express affection or maybe approval in a non-horny way because I think gray is the least horny heart. I feel like if your boss sends you a “Get well soon” with a gray heart, you’re probably not going to take it the wrong way, right?

Jennifer: I don't know. I feel like gray heart is, like, devoid of color and all love.

Alie: Oh!

Jennifer: I'd be like, "Oh, gray heart, you've been drained of everything right?" [*Alie laughs*] [*"Makes me feel nothing, I feel nothing."*] I mean, you can think of it a couple of different ways, it could be a silver kind of thing where you use it in that manner. It is also commonly found in sports team color spaces. I have to think of a sports team that has silver in it...

Alie: Like the Raiders, a Raiders would definitely be...

Jennifer: Exactly.

Alie: Right? If anyone is out there just emoji-ing about the Raiders they're like, "Yes!"

Jennifer: Because you're not going to get sports mascots within the Standard; there are no brands, there are no logos. So, the colored hearts can represent an abstraction of your affinity. It can also be used like, silver fox, like, silver heart and a fox, or something kind of goth, I'm thinking like black and white films, you know, the gray heart would work.

Alie: How do you feel about the update with at least iMessaging where you can respond via holding down the message, then you can do an exclamation, you can do a question mark? Do you feel like that stole the thunder of emojis or...? It's such a limited menu.

Jeremy: I think it's great and helpful *but* yeah, you're right, there's not enough. I need a clap at the very minimum. If someone tells you good news, thumbs up? Blah, awful. Heart, nice but still a bit like, "You're not excited for me, you're like, "That's lovely dear." [*laughs*]

Alie: Yeah, and the exclamation point can come off as incredulous, like, "You won that?!" [*"Rude."*] And you're like, "No, I'm just saying, "That is amazing!"

Jeremy: Yeah, I've literally had someone before, I've sent the exclamation mark as excited and have a friend go, "What do you mean by that?" And I'm like, "What are you talking about? Clearly, I'm happy for you, what else is this meant to mean?" [*Alie laughs*] So, you're right, there needs to be more options, clapping. And I don't like that it says, ha-ha. I know laughing-crying is cringe but, like, just give the option for all of them, there are some iOS updates coming this year allowing you to do more with the whole set, that was something announced last week. So, later in the year, there will be more options, done a bit differently but the same sort of idea.

Alie: That's so good to know! Okay, because I need that. Some people, Lee, Katie Murray, Ann Eby, and Scarlet P all asked about people who use more emojis. Lee wants to know if there are certain personality types that use them more. Katie said that they once read that people who use more emojis are more sexually frustrated. [*Jeremy laughs*] Ann read that that means you have a higher IQ.

Aside: Okay, because you needed to know, there was a 2015 study by the lauded Rutgers University anthropologist Dr. Helen Fisher, and it involved analyzing data from over 5,000 singles in America via Match.com. The TLDR is that yes, people who used emojis did the business more than non-emojitarians; 54% of emoji users had sex in the year prior while only 31% of non-emoji users did. And apparently, the more emojis used, the more sexual happened. Which ones? You're asking for a friend. Oh, the wink, the smile, and the kiss emojis got the most play. And Dr. Fisher told *Time* magazine at the time that "Emoji users don't just have more sex; they go on more dates, and they are two times more likely to want to get married." [*gasps*] What?

And if you're like, "Well, okay, that was 8 years ago, we should replicate it." Someone did, because people care, and in 2019 there was a follow-up study titled, "Worth a thousand interpersonal

words: Emoji as affective signals for relationship-oriented digital communication.” So, they analyzed more survey data and found yes indeed, past a first date, emoji use with potential partners is associated with maintaining connection and more romantic and sexual interactions, so there you go.

But what if you’re not single or not looking to mingle in the nude? So, there was another study in 2021 titled, “Tuned in on senders’ self-revelation: Emojis and emotional intelligence influence interpretation of WhatsApp messages.” And that one found that just no matter who you are or what you want, “Emoji in texts act as self-revelations instead of just merely factual exchange and that emoji may provide cues necessary to extract emotional information from texts and emotionally intelligent recipients tend to be especially responsive to that.” So, people are picking up what you are putting down, especially in emoji form. So, don’t be ashamed to use something that expresses how you feel because science says it can clear up miscommunications, it can lead to bonding, and boning, because of bonding.

Alie: Scarlet P said that they often have moments when: I really struggle to pick an emoji face that feels like it fits my current emotion. I’m neurodivergent/autistic and I wondered if my struggle to find the “correct” emoji could be related to my differences in how I feel and express emotion? Do you ever hear that different people gravitate toward emojis differently?

Jeremy: We’ve definitely had a lot of neurodivergent people appreciating Emojipedia because they liked the fact it said, “Here’s this face, and here’s what it means.” Obviously, there’s some wiggle room there but that was a popular use for it.

Alie: Who do you think is drawn to them more?

Jeremy: Right. People want to put people in a box and figure out which age group uses emojis the most, men or women? And it’s very hard to get good data on this sort of thing, especially as so much of it is in private chats that we don’t have access to. My impression is that it’s people who are better communicators, more sensitive, possibly leaning toward women, which makes sense but it’s hard to get the data to back that up. That’s my opinion having seen the types of users we get. It tends to be people who care about being clear in their emotions, they want to have it and they’re not afraid. And some tech, older men... I think it’s not as much of a thing now, but we used to get some angry older tech commentators who, I think one of them blocked us just for... I don’t know, just calling it a thing for only the kids, they get personally upset by it. And that was... I only ever saw men get upset by that. I never saw women going, “Dahhhh, emojis.” [laughs]

Alie: Yeah, that tracks.

Aside: Okay, so let’s take the 2018 paper, “Through a Gender Lens: Learning Usage Patterns of Emojis from Large-Scale Android Users.” So, researchers did see a statistical difference between how different genders used emojis to the point that given just the emoji in a message, no text, an AI could accurately predict the sender gender 81% of the time. How?! How did it do that? What’s the tell? Well, the laugh-cry emoji was the most popular emoji across all genders, but men tended to favor the streaming tears emoji more than women, and men toss in the monkey with covered eyes one more but the blushing smile less frequently than women.

What about other genders? Or just our personalities? All right, there was a 2018 publication, “Mining the relationship between emoji usage patterns and personality,” and it looked at, get this, 1.13 billion tweets, and it found that the folks using more emoji, they had to have been the loud, heart-on-sleeve, heart-eyes-on-sleeve extroverts, right? No! The people using more emojis? Introverts. And the researchers say introverted people tend to use more emoji because they

“Prefer implicit visual contexts over explicit texts where they have to express themselves more directly.” *[gasps then speaks softly]* So, introverts use more emojis.

Are you an extrovert? Well, you might use them as well but go for the more positive-leaning emojis and people who score high on agreeableness in personality tests use emoji to lighten the mood and add humor. But if you’re neurotic – for example, if you’re me – we tend to use more “exaggerated and emotion-rich emojis,” which is just brutally accurate. Anyone who has received a text from me has probably gotten the anguished face one, the wailing, open-mouthed crying one. You know you’ve gotten that from me. I’m on a deadline, anguish face. Are we out of La Croix? Anguish face. Me admitting this? Anguish face plus maybe a little thumbs-up emoji, and then maybe I send one that’s a wink, like, “I’m okay.”

Alie: Scarlet P and Keaton Sant both had questions along that line. Keaton wanted to know: When will it finally be considered “professional” to use emojis in emails? Because a girl can only use so many exclamation marks before I seem insane. So, what about in corporate settings, in professional settings? Is the tide turning where it is appreciated that you send a skull, a question mark, or a shrug emoji?

Jeremy: I think people wait for the first person, *[Alie laughs]* no one wants to be the first one to send it. And once the floodgates are open, then it goes back and forth a bit. So, I’m sure it depends on your workplace, don’t put it in your contract law or whatnot, but I think we’re fine. Anyone who is getting annoyed or offended by an emoji in an email, I don’t know if I want to work with them.

Alie: Ha! That’s a very good point.

Jeremy: Yeah. Maybe you don’t have a choice. Maybe you’re in a job where you don’t have a choice, but I say, go for it and if they don’t like it, they’ll get over it.

Alie: You obviously get a pass. You *should* be using... If you send an email without an emoji, it seems like that would be an issue. But have you seen, like, any kind of corporate culture or workplace culture change toward emoji to help clear up misunderstandings? Anything like that?

Jennifer: Absolutely. Yeah, for sure. There are so many different examples that come to mind. I think it’s not a unique situation to emoji. Even if you go back just a few years, the use of punctuation could be seen as unprofessional; too many exclamation points, too many... I don’t even know, all caps. And this is again another form of policing language and telling people, like, okay, “There are rules and conventions to subscribe to,” but if you look at how people play with language, whether it be in formal settings, like maybe a work email, to informal ones, like just having a conversation, the people who play with language tend to skew female, right? So, it’s about policing how people speak, and those people who like to experiment tend to get policed more, but they’re also the ones who get to explore and try to figure things out and be authentic as well.

Alie: Augh! That’s such a good point.

Jennifer: Every time I meet someone, they always give me an example, either something they hate about emoji or something they love about emoji, but at the end of the day, I think effectively, one of the reasons they are so commonly used is because they are functional, they’re not purely decorative. So, because they provide some sort of utility, it’s hard to argue not using them because they are helpful.

The whole other space about emoji that is worth at least acknowledging in some short way which is the video use case. You and I talking right now, it is so helpful to see you nodding your head, you’re communicating to me without saying words, you’re smiling, and I know that we’re connecting on some level. If that wasn’t here, I’d be left to my imagination, *[Alie laughs]* which is

very hard on me. I'd presume that I am not communicating and that you don't get it unless I heard laughter, that would be helpful. But emoji in digital spaces are this way of backchanneling the same way as gesture does. So, when someone takes notes while you're talking, you're like, "Oh, I said something interesting."

Alie: Yeah! *[laughs]*

Jennifer: We've evolved to laugh for a reason, to connect with people, and overcome that digital divide. It's not that those have to be emoji anymore, but emoji have been with us long enough where you don't need to reinvent the wheel. And then when there's not emoji in there, I feel constipated.

Alie: *[laughs]* You're like, "What's happening here?"

Jennifer: "How do I tell this person that I like what they're saying? I have no way of doing it." Yeah, it makes a big difference.

Keith: Ultimately, this is something that researchers in the linguistics space have been trying to say about, not exclusively emojis but texting in general, is that texting is not prose, texting is an attempt to convey speech, naturalistic speech, in a written format. People are much looser with grammar when it comes to texting and there's a whole different tonal register involved. For example, in prose, of course, we're always clarifying the manner in which someone is stating something. So, "She said, quietly. She said, energetically. She said with a dour expression." Nobody dictates their emotion in a text where you would say, "Fine, he said disappointedly." People will, perhaps, use parentheses or an emoji; they'll use a variety of different paralinguistic tools to try and create a sense of emotional context within these text messages or social media posts, this version of writing, which is distinct from prose, it's much more casual.

What we're doing in those contexts is attempting to bring some of the nonverbal information that we have at our disposal when we're speaking face-to-face, or indeed a visual medium, or even when we're speaking voice-to-voice over a phone, there's so much information being conveyed by the tone of voice that someone is using or even the pauses that are utilized during a conversation. Emojis are being used as our attempt to bridge that gap or fill that gap in communication. That's not to say they're a literal one-to-one analog; no one is literally crying laughing when they're using the crying-laughing face, in the same way that no one's flesh has melted off their face when they're using the skull. But there are semantic cues that we interpret in the same way we would posture expression, tone of voice, et cetera.

Alie: Oh, I'm going to look and see if there's anyone who asked about dating apps. Now, you're married?

Jeremy: I am married. I didn't mean to say that in a sad way. *[laughs]* I am married, it's disappointing, I haven't gotten to use the dating apps.

Alie: *[laughs]* You haven't. How long have you been with your partner?

Jeremy: I've been with my partner since before dating apps. We've been together since I was 21 or so, and this is now... *[deep breath]*

Alie: 17 years?

Jeremy: Yeah, I guess so. Yeah.

Alie: So, your relationship predated, "Oh no, I used too many emojis," during courtship.

Jeremy: Yeah, we were the days of text message and phone call. Like, this is yeah, early days. So, I missed the whole scene, although definitely a big contingent of people looking up emojis... more 16-year-olds being like, "What does this mean? What does it mean when your crush sends you..." Because we get, like, logs through as well of the search field, but when people are typing in things literally

like, “What does it mean if your crush sends you this?” [Alie laughs] And you’re like, “Well, it doesn’t mean necessarily anything. They’re messaging you, that’s good!”

Alie: Yeah, that’s true. Any communication is good. Lina Brodsky and Stephanie Trout Berman wanted to know: How often do the current emojis get updated? And Stephanie says: Just “curio”... curiologist. Is it random? Or do they do, like, quarterly or yearly? Because sometimes the only thing that gets me to update my software on my phone is when I’m getting the question mark in a box emoji. I’m like, “I don’t know what the fuck you’re saying right now,” so I have to turn my phone off and update it.

Jeremy: It wasn’t even built deliberately like that, but it was a huge driver, you’re right. The social push when you get that first message where you don’t know what the emotion is. And it’s so ambiguous that... especially if you get a message that could go either way depending on the emoji. So, the committee approves one list every year and then roughly once a year, each major tech company will add the new ones and they might tweak the appearance of some existing ones.

Alie: Do you know what is coming up next? Do you hear murmurings of, like, “They’re working on a ‘this’ emoji?”

Jeremy: You know what, if you care you can look it up. The ones I have been involved in seeing come out, they are out now. The light pink heart and the light blue heart, those were released in the most recent update, those were probably the last batch that I was sort of in the committee when they were being discussed. Big fan of the pink heart coming out. Next year’s list, I think it’s in draft already and I think I glanced at it once, but I’ve been too retired to pay attention.

Alie: [laughs] Good for you!

Jeremy: But if you look it up it’s called Emoji 15.1. You can google it, you find a page on Unicode or Emojipedia and it’ll say the draft list being considered.

Aside: Hell yes, I looked this up. 15.1, the list, it has the upcoming icons, and included are some cool accessibility ones like a manual wheelchair, there’s a motorized wheelchair, there’s people walking with white canes, there’s also folks kneeling, nodding, and shaking heads. There’s that phoenix bird that’s going to drop. They’ve got a lime, there’s a broken chain link coming, and also a mushroom, but a brown one, not the *Amanita* red, speckled mushroom kind.

So, these are due to come out September 2023 and if you’re listening after that, just know, I’m a person speaking to you from the past when the only emoji we had for mushroom was a hallucinogenic and toxic kind, but finally, we’re living in a world with brown mushroom emoji, which can still be extremely hallucinogenic and incredibly toxic. But mycologists, I know you’re happier.

Who isn’t happy? Probably Betsy, a patron who asked: Where are the curly ginger girls? Betsy, it’s just not our time.

Alie: Bunch of people wanted to know: When are redheads going to get their due?

Jennifer: That’s so funny. Okay so... Oh, Alie.

Alie: [laughs] I’m not a natural redhead. I’m absolutely an imposter, this is not genetic at all.

Jennifer: This is the answer that really falls short. There is a redheaded emoji.

Alie: [gasps] I didn’t know that.

Jennifer: But it doesn't apply to all the gestures. So, if you look in the people section, you've got a baldy, you've got someone with curly hair, you've got a redhead, I think you've even got a silver fox in there as well, they are more portraits.

Alie: Got it.

Jennifer: You can't make a redheaded doctor; you can't make a redheaded facepalm. And so, this is where the delineation between representation of how you look versus representation of how you feel. And when you think about how you feel, it's not that it is completely divorced from how you look because they are sometimes the same thing, but when it comes to emoji, it's a font. How many umlauts can you add to one character? And so, the amount of customization that a font can afford you really falls short when you start going into avatar land and you want to be able to make something with the gap in your teeth, or your color glasses, or your color hair.

So, I subscribe to less realism than more. And so, rather than adding more physical attributes to our keyboard— Because you can never attain actual inclusion if you pursue that route because how many people are in the world? That's how much customization would need to be on the keyboard. So, I tend to lean more toward deviating from reality and abstraction.

Jeremy: It's been talked about, it has been talked about a *lot* and the issue is those numbers, that you multiply out... If every person, right... so you have hundreds of humans already with different skin tones, and right now the skin links to the hair. You have a white person, they get dark hair; you get the next skin tone up, you get blonde hair, and you go on and on. If you wanted to have every combination with red hair, you're adding hundreds of new emojis. If you add red and curly, hundreds more again. And even though it seems like, "Oh, no big deal," because all modern platforms have filters and stuff, the way emojis are done is a font. They're kind of this old-school tech where it's loaded in memory the whole time and there are real limits on how many you can have in a practical sense. And that's all it is, is just a numbers game, and in reality, if you added white hair, curly hair, and red hair, being three big ones that people wanted to see, if you added it to every set, it would be literally hundreds, thousands even, and that's not what the platforms want.

Alie: How many emojis are there now?

Jeremy: Over 3,000.

Alie: 3,000! Nooo.

Jeremy: Yeah, over 3,000. It's over 3,500 even, I'm going to say 3,600 and something.

Aside: It's right around there, correct.

Alie: But what did the first Apple upgrade... like, I remember updating my software.

Jeremy: You would have just had a few hundred at that stage.

Alie: [*whispers*] Oh my gosh.

Jeremy: But having said that, thousands sounds really big but so many of them are skin tone variations, gender variations, every human emoji now has 18 characters because you have the little weightlifter person, you go, "That's very nice," but they're yellow and then you push and hold and you go, "Okay, I can make it a man, I can make it a woman, I can make it gender neutral, and five skin tones and the yellow one." So, 3,500-and-something does sound like a lot.

Alie: You get a lot of flavors within that.

Jeremy: You do, you do. Yeah.

Alie: And who is pushing for that kind of progress? I feel like once we start to see it on the keyboard it feels like, “Okay.” Can this affect social change?

Jeremy: There were definitely a big few years there where no one was in the wrong, everyone meant well, I will say. There was definitely this situation where you looked at the keyboard and it made no sense because it was independently made by different people in Japan. So, you’d look at it and it ostensibly was sexist. You had men in professions, you had a police officer as a man, you had a hairdresser as a woman; you had a man doing construction, you had the woman doing some kind of yoga pose. [*Alie laughs*] So, it’s obvious, you transport that out of Japan, you make it worldwide, you look at the keyboard and you go, “What is going on here?”

So then, rightly so, people complained, and they complained to Apple in particular, even though they’re one of the people on the committee, people from Apple, but also people from Google, Microsoft, me; I was on the committee for a while. Rightly so, people look at that and go, “That’s not fair, why can’t we have men and women do all the jobs?” It started a long, 5, 6, 7-year trend of trying to patch up things, which temporarily helped, but it just added more questions. You end up then with going, “Why not red hair, why not curly hair? Why should the woman have long hair? Women don’t have to have long hair, women can look like however they want to look like,” which is very valid. It’s just trying to fix a difficult beginning.

So, the end result, possibly, looking back, should have been to ditch the humans. [*“Goodbye little humans.”*] Take the humans out. There’s no way, we’re too diverse, there’s too many people. The more variations you add, the more it looks like you’re leaving someone out deliberately. And that’s fair, I get it. I’m not saying have only white men do the jobs on the list, I’m just saying that no matter how many variations you make, someone is going to get left out, and maybe in those early meetings, maybe it would have been a good idea to go, “There are only about eight humans at the moment, why don’t we bury them, no more humans.” But that’s hindsight. Flags were another issue as well, geopolitical issues that... you don’t think of it, you look at the emoji keyboard and you go, “Oh cute, where’s my flag?” But you don’t think about the difficult discussions around separatist regimes and if two different rebelling forces say, “This is the flag.” It’s just an emoji but oh, it’s complicated; it gets complicated.

Jennifer: So, when I’m part of the subcommittee thinking about what our priorities are, I look a lot at where things could be fixed, which is kind of looking backward, as a way for us to really, really advance and move forwards. So, for example, a number of years ago, I was texting someone literally in a meeting, she was standing right next to me, and obviously I was shit-talking the meeting, [*Alie laughs*] and texted her something like, “Love a good mansplain,” with a person facepalming. And I could see her phone and it rendered as a man instead of a woman. [*Alie gasps*] I know! Exactly. I was just like, “What?! Give me your phone!” So, she had an iPhone, and I had an Android, and I was like, “I don’t understand what’s happening here.” So, when I looked into it, code points, it came down to the code points. So, there was a code point for a man facepalming, a code point for a woman facepalming, and then a third code point for facepalming, gender not specified. And what some designers did was they were like, “What does that mean? I don’t know, just make it a man.”

Alie: [*groans*] Noooo.

Jennifer: And then for others, they’re like, “I don’t know, let’s make it a woman.” [*laughs*] So, this existed for a long time. So, I did a big audit and said, “Okay, where are the differences? I’m sending you a merperson and you’re seeing a merman,” and then wrote a number of proposals, lots of documentation, around the problems that was creating, and how to fix it. And that’s how we got our set of gender-inclusive emoji. The code points already existed; Paul Hunt was the original proposer of those code points. The problem was in the implementation, no one knew what to do

with that, they were like, “I don’t know what this means.” And so, now we have these gender-inclusive designs.

One of the first things I did was this big audit, and we added a lot of new characters for it, but it didn’t stop there. When we started looking at skin tone, all the hands have skin tone except for handshake, what’s the deal with that? So, now our handshake has not a universal tone applied to it, but you can change the left hand and the right hand. We also have a number of different couples with different skin tones now, et cetera. But the one that was glaring was the family emoji.

Alie: Yes! And I love... When those came up, it was so heartening to see all these different types of families at least. I do feel like when emojis sort of go into territory that is more inclusive, I feel like it normalizes and makes the society more inclusive, and I think that’s so validating and wonderful to see.

Jennifer: Well, this is the trap that you fall into. You say, “Okay, the atomic family doesn’t exist anymore, there are many different ways to have a family, so we’re going to add a bunch of those different ways.” But the world has changed a lot since those were added just, I don’t even... less than 10 years ago, maybe around 10 years ago. And now, even then, those were not the most inclusive, well hmm... They’re just really obvious. When you talk about a family, what is a family? It doesn’t even have to include children. It can just be two people, it could be your grandparents, it could be two people and a dog, it could be one person and three cats! [*Cats, cats, and more cats!*] Your family should not be prescribed by your keyboard. And while it is an important symbol, and to your point, it’s validating to see, I just think that the diversity of those families didn’t result in inclusion of many others. And so, when I was looking at the family emoji, first I looked at how they were being used, which is to say, no one uses them.

Alie: Oh!

Jennifer: You look at the people category as a whole, at the very bottom are families and wrestlers. [*Alie laughs*] Wrestlers are also among the least frequently used emoji. So, there are a number of different things you have to then ask. Why don’t you use these? Why do you use them? Are people not using them because there’s no skin tone affordance? Is it because they’re overly specific, like, maybe your family has redheads? [*Alie laughs*] What is it? Is it because... It’s such a literal representation of family, if it can’t capture your family literally, it falls short. So, one answer to this would be, “Okay, let’s just add all the skin tones to these characters,” which would result in over 7,000 new emoji.

Alie: Ahhh, yeah. Because it’s so specific.

Jennifer: Yes! And our keyboard is already bloated with slightly over 3,000 right now and to add that many for an emoji that isn’t used very frequently is out of sync with, just, the whole mission. It’s so personal. It’s hard. So, one angle is to add all of the code points, which I proposed, with a 10-page paper and it was like, “Here, this is what they would look like,” and it was kind of meant to be like, “Hey guys, this is what we’re looking at.” And the response to that was [*hushed*] “No, that’s crazy. Font designers will be designing family emoji for the next three years if we add this many and people don’t even use them, we can’t do it.” And I was like, “Well, it’s not acceptable to have these emoji in our keyboards and they have no skin tone support.” If it looks like a person, according to the Unicode Standard, it needs to have skin tone support.

So, the next emoji released we’re actually removing all signifiers of physical representation from the emoji. So, what you’ll have is more like airport signage kind of characters, two adult-looking folks, you could say they’re bigger, and then two smaller-looking people, you could say they’re children. So, we’re making them into symbols.

Alie: Nice!

Jennifer: And I think that is far more inclusive from a font perspective, not an avatar. I think avatars are great, love me an avatar. But from a font perspective, the more detail you remove, the more you can project yourself onto it. Think about a drawing of a smiley face, I can relate to that, versus a picture of a very specific man smiling. So, leaning more into this space I really do think has more benefit to more people than the opposite angle, which really upsets every redhead.

Aside: Okay, so I'm a fake redhead so I feel like as a known imposter, I don't really get a vote on this but if they did add it, I'd give it a little thumbs up, a little heart. Or maybe I do a wow reaction, which, side note, if you've been on Facebook and hit different reactions, those are called react-jis. Facebook added those react-jis in early 2016 after Slack did it a year earlier and now all kinds of sites from Twitter to LinkedIn offer a menu of react-jis for the times when typing out, "Hey, that pisses me off!" or "Shitballs man, that sucks, I'm sorry," just takes too much of our time.

So, as World Emoji Day approaches, July 17th, you can celebrate these tiny pictures you use to avoid confusion and make someone fall in love with you. And each week we donate to a charity of the ologist's choosing, and this week it's going to the nonprofit Unicode, a group of mostly volunteers who work to make sure emojis are unified and inclusive, and accessible to all. They're linked in the show notes. And on July 17th, which is the date on the little, tiny calendar in emoji-land, you can raise a glass of something to the people who decide what the emoji glasses look like. And that donation was made possible by sponsors of *Ologies*.

[Ad Break]

Okay, back to your questions, including as promised, gossip that we can pry out of these experts.

Jeremy: I don't think the committees feel responsibility for human communication overall, but I mean, it comes up. A cockroach emoji was proposed, [Alie gasps] and it got approved but I was a bit concerned that sometimes people refer to some people as cockroaches in a poor way. You can't police how people use something, but you still have to weigh it up. Is it more useful to add it than not? There would definitely be ones that come along where you kind of think, "This is definitely intended in a good way, but can it be used in a bad way?"

Alie: Yeah, can it be weaponized?

Jeremy: Right. I mean, there's for instance, one I recall, I don't remember anyone on a committee mentioning this, but publicly people would say when we were considering proposals for a man wearing a wedding dress, for example, which has been approved. Now, there's a man in a wedding dress, a woman in a wedding dress, and an ambiguous person in a wedding dress.

Alie: Love it!

Jeremy: But some people would tell me, "I'm worried that people will make fun of the transgender community." It's a valid concern. I actually haven't seen it be used like that, thankfully, but it could have been, and you have to weigh it up.

Alie: It's so funny because it's so in the eye of the beholder. I'm like, "Sweet! That's amazing!"

Aside: I, for one, think that's wonderful but, of course, I didn't think about its misuse. Also, think about the skin tone in your emoji. Do you customize it to the color of your skin, or do you leave it as the stock color? And why is that the stock color?

Alie: Curly Fry wanted to know: Who decided to make the universal character yellow? Kind of Simpsons yellow. When that was decided what the universal tone would be, what were the discussions like?

Jennifer: Well, that predates me. I think you can reasonably assume that the yellow is referencing the classic yellow smiley face of the '60s. It's also not yellow, it's supposed to be gold. You can look at the Japanese phone carriers, those emoji actually weren't gold at all, they were, like, magenta, because it was those old Nokia phones, they were beautiful. But it was a tone that felt not realistic, abstractive, and if I was in the room, I'd be looking at legibility. Yellow's not a terribly legible color. I do think though that it was probably grounded in some convention that existed before it.

Alie: I always figured they just, kind of, poached that from *The Simpsons*?

Keith: People do feel that the yellow is a synonym for whiteness as opposed to being truly neutral. And that is, perhaps, largely informed by how in *The Simpsons*, one of the longest-running television programs of all time, yellow means white because there is representation of different race within *The Simpsons* and all those people aren't yellow; they have darker skin tones or lighter skin tones. So, that is a huge element of it as well.

Aside: Can you imagine getting to get a PhD in the granularity of these issues? Dr. Alexander Robertson of the University of Edinburgh's School of Informatics can. So, this doc's PhD dissertation from 2022 is titled, "Expression and perception of identity through skin-toned emoji." And in addition to outlining the history of emoji, invented by Shigetaka Kurita in the late 1990s, it also includes some very recent research about TME or tone-modifiable emoji. And Dr. Robertson draws on research from their previously coauthored paper, "Black or White but Never Neutral: How Readers Perceive Identity from Yellow or Skin-Toned Emoji," which found in their surveys and their studies that the yellow-handed emoji are not in fact perceived as neutral but as white. And Dr. Robertson writes:

We suggested one possible reason is that the yellow color is more visually similar to the lighter tones associated with the White identity than to the darker tones associated with the Black identity. However, it is also possible that the association with White has less to do with the visual similarity than with the fact that the yellow emoji is the default. Within the British sociocultural context, where White is the historically dominant and default category.

And yes, we will link Dr. Alexander Robertson's paper on our website. It's fascinating.

Oh, and just as an overall note from earlier, some folks use the term Caucasian, but a lot of people don't know that the very word has pretty racist roots. So 'white' works, white gets the point across. On that note, patron Super_Sara said: I figure the yellow smiley face-themed emojis are based off the original 1960s-ish smiley face. Any reason why it was yellow or why we continue to use yellow?

Alie: Well, where did the iconic smiley face come from? I feel like that was definitely the first emoji that comes to peoples' minds, but where does that fit into human history? Is that from the '60s?

Jeremy: What I would say is that yes, there is some contest about this and there are at least two different people who claim that this is the original smiley, one of which, you say what you want about this [Alie laughs] but The Smiley Company claims that they have the origin, that they are one of the first people, they're now a big company. As far as I can see, there is a long history going back more than 100 years of smiley faces that people can find prior art in print. I think up to 200 years ago, it's just one of those things, right, in parallel, if you showed newspaper clippings from different countries, who is the inventor? I don't think there's a definitive answer.

Aside: Yeah. Okay, so this has a complex, kind of juicy history, from the very first ever found simple smiley face dating back to 1700 BC on a shard of pottery found in what's now Turkey, to smiley faces on hand-signed letters throughout the ages.

But really, what put the smiley on the map in 1963 was this New York radio station, WMCA, which printed a hand-drawn smiley face on these school bus yellow sweatshirts and then they passed them out by the thousands, and they had influencers, of the time, like Mick Jagger, wearing them. Then a year later, a guy named Harvey R Ball, who was an art designer for a Massachusetts-based insurance company, refined that image and put it on a similar yellow background, and then the round smiley face's evolution was near complete, until, of course, emojis just took it into a completely different dimension. But people still fight about the exact origin in the early 1960s. Even Harvey R Ball's archived 2001 *New York Times* obituary includes a quote from the radio station manager saying that they did it first, which... it's like, anguish face emoji already.

Alie: Gregory Hayes wants to know, very specific: Why isn't there a puppet emoji?

Jeremy: There you go. Yeah, that's always the one... Every object on Earth could be added, I think we're on a slippery slope there of every object. And it happens, you know, you add one thing, you add another thing and then people go, "There's no puppet." I think that's an okay idea, I think puppets could be fun. What type would it be though? Would it be a marionette puppet or a hand up the puppet, up the [*"I'm going to say butt."*] sock, sort of thing? I think a sock one would be fun.

Alie: A sock one would be good!

Jeremy: A sock puppet would be cute and fun.

Alie: I think you're right. Violet Sarah had a great question, should be on the board: Why are some obvious emojis missing, like a squirrel or a shovel? But other emojis have duplicates like a paper clip and two paper clips?

Jeremy: Mm, yeah. All the worst decisions were mostly inherited.

Alie: Love that. [*laughs*]

Jeremy: So, there's a weird thing where there's the first emoji set from Japan. The second batch that came in mostly came from Wingdings, the font on Windows. So, for instance, Japan might have had the one paper clip, Wingdings might have had two and they all got merged into a big set; it's why there are so many boats and trains and things, because they were used for timetables in Japan, to message them out. So, that's why there are so many useless or duplicated ones from the early days.

As to why there aren't things that you actually want and useful things? I think a spade or a shovel would be good. I think that might be on a list already, I'm not sure, I'd have to check and have a look at that one. But yeah, there's plenty you could go through. There are still lots that you could add, it's just where you draw the line.

Aside: I mean, everyone loves a garden tool, right? Everyone.

Alie: There is a bucket emoji?

Jennifer: There's a bucket emoji.

Alie: Is it your favorite? [*laughs*]

Jennifer: If you could not tell from the tone of my voice, its inclusion is not my favorite.

Alie: How did it come to be?

Jennifer: Let's just call it an experimental phase where lots of things were added to the keyboard at one point.

Alie: Well, one listener asked why there wasn't a shovel emoji. And it is frustrating that there's a bucket emoji but not a shovel. [*laughs*]

Jennifer: Shovel, but okay, I will defend a shovel over bucket because it's an action, it's a verb. And there could be more verbs in the vernacular of the emoji space. There are no really old-school GeoCities GIFs of construction, like "This site is under construction." There are some really modern, contemporary associations with a shovel, as well as just the concept of digging. We have a hole, there's a hole emoji.

Alie: Yes. [*laughs*] I enjoy that one a lot. [*"A whole lot."*] Super_Sara, Craig Collins: What's the deal with the creepy floating guy? The jumping ska man, levitating suit? What's up with that?

Jeremy: Wingdings, he came from Wingdings.

Alie: Wingdings, okay. A ghost from Wingdings.

Aside: This person, by the way, does not respond to 'jumping ska man' but rather, man in business suit levitating emoji, and was based off of this glyph from a Dingbat font that was based off the logo for 2 Tone Records, who based it off of a Jamaican reggae artist, Peter Tosh, whose birth name was Winston Hubert McIntosh and apparently he was named after Winston Churchill so he was like, "Yeah, you can just call me Peter."

But back to Wingdings, Dingbat glyphs. Okay, what in the mouthful am I saying? So, Wingdings is a font full of Dingbats, and Dingbats are ornamental glyphs, been around forever, even in the printing press. And glyphs are characters or pictograms. Now, the guy who designed the Wingdings glyph for 'jump', that has now become the man in business suit levitating emoji, is one Vincent Connare, and he is also the daddy of the font Comic Sans. And apparently, Vincent does not give a poop emoji that you hate Comic Sans because Comic Sans has been in all kinds of book covers, laminated menus, and even the Pope's photo album. And Vincent calls Comic Sans, "The greatest joke he's ever told." He also created, side note, the font Trebuchet, which I love, and I only recently found out was named after a medieval catapult. But yes, who wasn't a little horny for these tiny little pictures of history? Oh, speaking of...

Alie: So many people, Lauren, Skella Borealis, (Hi Skella!) RJ Doidge, KittyKat81, Allison Brooks, first-time question-asker wanted to know, in Allison's words: Who coined the eggplant emoji for... not eggplant? [*"Penis. Meant penis."*] And is coining an emoji a thing like it is for a phrase? When did the eggplant start meaning [*sings*] a dick?

Jeremy: Yeah, that's a great question and I don't know the answer to that, [*Alie laughs*] that happened very early on. I think that was happening pre-Emojipedia which made it very hard to trace back. It wasn't happening in Japan as far as I could see, it was an outside-Japan thing, but it was very early days. People just saw that and went, "That is phallic, we are going to use it this way. Straight up."

Alie: It's utilitarian.

Jeremy: Yes.

Aside: Okay, when this aubergine emoji made its grand debut on Japanese keyboards in 2007, it was an instant classic. It then wiggled its way into global keyboards a few years later, but it's just very hard to trace the first use of it as a dong, or the peach as a butt. Although, Emojipedia has noted that the eggplant emoji is popularly paired with the peach emoji which is often used to represent buttocks or female genitalia, which on one hand, I'm like, a vulva is not butt cheeks. With all these emojis, can't we differentiate the two? But on the other hand, I think it's kind of a nice, sweet, universal symbol for bottoming, which you can explain all of this to your aunt on Facebook. But she's probably not shocked, she probably smoked hash watching the moon landing, nothing matters.

Also, this research did lead me to a 2019 linguistics paper called “Emoji as Digital Gestures” that learned me that the okay sign emoji does not immediately connote positivity and in Greece, Turkey, and southern Italy it means asshole so I’m like, “Ooh, that could be a buttohole emoji,” but no, it’s been co-opted by fascists, and I hate that. So, there goes our universal buttohole emoji. Harumph! Oh, on that topic.

Alie: Michael Swords, Slayer, and Jen wanted to know about unintended meanings and Slayer asked: What do they do when certain emojis (cough, purple vegetables, cough) develop meanings beyond their intended? Michael Swords wrote that the gay community has started to use the eggplant and peach to identify their sexual roles, and drug communities have used ice cream to suggest that they’re looking for meth. Did you know that? I didn’t know that about ice cream.

Jennifer: I have not heard the ice cream one before.

Alie: I didn’t know that. But when it comes to Unicode talking about the eggplant, how often does the eggplant and the peach come up for butts and dicks? How often is that talked about? Because we all know that that’s what that... *[laughs]* Like, I bought my husband a pair of Crocs and I got him Croc charms that were peach and eggplant, of course. But how acknowledged is that behind the scenes?

Jennifer: You know, this is the thing about people taking an image and giving it meaning. Peaches haven’t always meant butts.

Alie: Right, yeah right.

Jennifer: Because it was drawn in such a specific way that you’re just like, “That’s a butt.” Also, it is from a place of need. You want... People are sexting, people are saying nasty... *[Alie laughs]* They’re saying the things that they’re saying and there’s no butt emoji... I mean, you could do the ASCII butt: (`_*_`) which is verbose for texting. *[Alie laughs]* Who wants to find all those symbols? So, you take something, and you give it new meaning and that is language. That is just minds interacting with each other and I think that’s amazing. Same for eggplant. It’s like, “I need something really long.”

Alie: *[laughs]* Not the cucumber, depending on the context.

Jennifer: Well, exactly. Can’t use a cucumber now. *[Alie still laughing]* Certainly, trying to mitigate risk is something that any designer who is working in tech holds themselves accountable to. I don’t think sex and drugs are a reason... we’re not going to abolish the letters W, E, and D because of weed. You can’t suppress people in that way. So, from a Unicode perspective, we are looking at multiple uses, we are anticipating use and sequences, and we are looking at how it’s used conventionally throughout history. But just because it wasn’t used a thousand years ago that way, doesn’t mean it won’t be used in the future. And I don’t know, I think I love that, honestly.

Alie: Earl of Greymalkin: Who came up with the emojis of cat faces having emotional reactions to things and how do I thank them for creating the most valuable emojis? Why do cats get expressions, but dogs don’t?

Jeremy: Yeah, not dogs. Japan.

Alie: Or raccoons or possums.

Jeremy: The original Japanese creators just liked the cat ones, they had faces and no one wanted to open the door to have every face as every raccoon or dog.

Alie: That makes sense. Jenny Lithvall: What’s the black box about?

Jeremy: Black box was just there as an early character as a symbol, a placeholder, and now there are colored boxes as well, so you can make, like ASCII art but with colors.

Alie: What about the ones that look like a mochi ball or a rice ball then they have a black box in them? Have you seen these?

Aside: Okay, so if you go to your emoji keyboard, hit the food section, that looks like a burger, and then scroll a few rows in and next to the gyoza and raw oyster, there's a white triangle and a brown circle and both have black boxes on them. But when you type them as a singular message, they get bigger and it's finally clear that...

Jeremy: Those are snacks, those are little Japanese treats, that's some seaweed, the black thing at the bottom is there is the little seaweed wrapper like you have around your sushi.

Alie: Well, there we go. Buddy Freakin' Guyerson, first-time question-asker, Katie Hultman, Michael Wegman, TaySamps, first-time question-asker, BeckytheSassySeagrassScientist, and Aurel Chaoul Pelleg wanted to know: What's the future? Buddy wanted to know: At what point will our history be represented solely in poop emojis and eggplants? Where do you see it going?

Jeremy: Emojis as we have them today, I think they're stabilizing in a good way. I think we're kind of done. I feel like we're kind of, tie a bow around it, add a few more useful ones, go, "That's the set," cat faces only, no dog faces, smiley poo, just finish it off.

Alie: *[laughs]* Pink heart.

Jeremy: Yeah, finish it off. Pink heart was one of the last ones that I felt like really needed to get over the line and yeah, you just go, "Great, we've got 3,600 or so emojis, call it a day, that is text." We're moving into a video virtual, augmented reality world so let's see what happens over there.

Alie: Well, evolution is inevitable, and that's part of the magic of emojis is that they don't always mean what they meant six months ago and that's what keeps them exciting.

Jeremy: Yes, could be a new meaning for one for centuries to come. Emojis are permanent, once they're approved, they stick around forever so there's 3,000 or so to change the meaning of whenever you like.

Aside: And Katie Murray had a quick question: Could an emoji be part of someone's legal name? Does that happen?

Keith: Oh, I do not believe that is the case. I mean, it will really vary depending on jurisdiction of course, but I do not believe that an emoji could be used as an element of someone's legal name. That's not to say that those rules couldn't change in one jurisdiction but, you know, that's by and large fine when you're trying to enter your name into a digital text input field but if you have to sign a document, dear lord, *[laughs]* you have to get very, very artistic every time you want to sign a receipt for example.

Aside: Pauline Gaynesbloom asked: Will we ever see emojis become commonplace in literature and at what point is it just part of our language? Emojipedia is just part of the OED? Actually, in 2015, the Word of the Year was the laugh-crying emoji. So, will emojis be commonplace in literature?

Keith: I personally don't see emojis becoming commonplace in literature. I think they're going to become more common as a playful reflection of the contemporary world. Definitely, I have no idea what the number is, but I'd say there have been thousands of books published in the last, say, five years, that when they're representing text messages, they're going to contain an emoji within the text. Beyond that, I only really envision them entering into the prose space as a kind of creative project. And this, of course, will never really be the norm for the majority of written pieces of literature. There are a couple of books out there that I do know of that have played with this concept. One of the go-

to's is the "emoji translation" of Moby Dick called Emoji Dick, which again, was a creative project, it was an exercise in crowd-sourcing "translations" to represent a variety of different and somewhat complex sentences in the English language. So, I don't see them entering the literature place in a serious, commonplace manner.

Alie: How should people celebrate World Emoji Day on the 17th?

Jeremy: Find an emoji, make a new sex meaning for an existing emoji. [*Alie laughs*] I think we haven't had a new sex emoji for a long time now. Find an obscure one and find a way to make it somehow a bit dirtier than it's meant to be and make that a thing. I think that should be a job this year.

Alie: And you start it in the private chat, don't launch it in Slack.

Jeremy: Oh no! Soft launch in a private chat, start there. Possibly it should never make its way to the workplace, or you know you've had a success when you use it at work and people go, "I don't think you should be using that one, I heard it's got another meaning."

Alie: [*laughs*] That's such a good point.

Keith: It's a very, very exciting World Emoji Day. We've been hosting World Emoji Day for 10 years now. This will be its 10th annual celebration on, of course, July 17th, the date that is shown on the majority of the calendar emoji designs. It's also going to be the 10th anniversary of the founding of Emojipedia. The earliest set we have on the site is 1997 from one of the Japanese vendors. So yeah, there's a lot to celebrate after 10 years in this emoji biz.

Aside: And the thing closest to Jennifer's various different colored hearts?

Jennifer: I love Emoji Kitchen! I love it so very much. One of the things that sucks about working with conventional Unicode emoji is that you can't experiment. Like I said, you can't remove an emoji later. So, with Emoji Kitchen, it's a way to experiment, and be playful, and do things you can't do with standard emoji. So, you can type in octopus and coffee, and it combines and creates an octopus holding a bunch of coffees! [*Alie exclaims*] I love the octopus because it has this gesture and it's like, "How was work today?" [*stifled tone*] "It was octopus." [*Alie laughs*] I can be like, "How was work today?" "It was octopus and I had lots of caffeine and it was what it was."

Alie: [*laughs*] Now you need a weighted blanket.

Jennifer: Now, I need a different type of drink. And there are lots of different ways you can combine it, which I really... It's all grounded in what I learned from Unicode around how you can combine two emoji next to each other, like, cartwheeling person next to a hole for a nervous breakdown. [*Alie laughs*] Or like, poop and tornado, you know, like a shitstorm. So, for Emoji Kitchen, there are a number of different ways you can combine things. So you can combine the colored hearts with an emoji, and it changes its color. So, if you wanted a goth heart eyes, so black heart eyes instead of red ones, you could do black heart and then heart eyes and it creates goth heart eyes. Or if you want your pineapple to be a really nerdy pineapple, you're going to go, face with glasses plus pineapple and it puts glasses on the pineapple.

Alie: Ah! It's like portmanteau-jis.

Jennifer: Well, it also is, kind of, what I'm trying to do with it is say, you don't have to just add how we look, this is a feeling. I don't know what I want to have for dinner... burger shrug. Burger shrug, that's the feeling. I don't want to have to be forced to pick how I look when really what I want to convey is how I feel, and I can't change Unicode on that level. I can't say [*deep breath*] "Okay, we're going to start over from scratch." But what I can do with Emoji Kitchen is be somewhat provocative about

how we convey and project ourselves and want to be perceived. So, you can use it on Android devices primarily and it just combines when you put two emoji next to each other.

Alie: Is there anything for if you're an Apple or a different type of phone user, is there a website that you can go and grab that emoji at all?

Jennifer: Only illegal ones.

Alie: Ahh! *[laughs]* Good to know, good to know. I think that seems like an amazing part of your job, but what is your favorite thing about the job? About being a curiologist?

Jennifer: Oh, I just love, I really love talking to people about how they use emoji. *[Alie laughs]* It really is the best part because it doesn't matter how old you are, where you are, everyone has used them, everyone has an opinion on them, even if it's self-deprecating, "Augh, I'm so boring, I just use the same old emoji." There are so many stories that flash to my head *[laughs]* but everyone has stories. Even after our conversation, I'm going to be thinking about your black heart anecdote. *[Alie laughs]*

Keith: It's such a fascinating space to be working in, I genuinely consider it my greatest professional pleasure to have meandered away from psychology and ended up in this incredibly versatile field that straddles so many academic disciplines. But also, it's a great personal pleasure to be researching how they're evolving over time. Provided that we are continuing to communicate in text-based formats, emojis are here to stay. It's gone beyond the keyboard and they're now some of the most recognizable symbols in human history.

Jeremy: I mean, they'd alleviate the need to exclamation mark, they do make it easier to communicate. It's fun, you can be playful, you can quickly send your heart, send your thumbs up, and it's so much easier to get what you want across. And yeah, I think it's interesting and fascinating, I've always liked the whole shared experience thing, and I love the fact it's just such a weird set of characters with all these questions and that it doesn't really make sense when you look at it as a whole but I just like the fact that the human race, we came together, we invented this in Japan, we standardized, we made committees and boardrooms because that's what we do, we put it on billions of devices and now we're just, kind of, stuck with it. I think that's fun.

Alie: I love it. Thank you so much for doing this. if I could react with a clapping applause emoji reaction to this exchange, I definitely would.

Jeremy: I'd send you a party-blowing face. *[laughs]*

Alie: *[laughs]* I do love a party horn.

Jeremy: Yeah, that is fun.

So, ask several very smart people colorful questions because there's a whole little, tiny world of little details and big meanings to discover and isn't that just life? So, thanks for coming along on this curiological journey, it's really such a big deal for me to cover it on this podcast because it's the reason this podcast exists. Thank you to Jennifer, Jeremy, and Keith for their expertise. You can find links to them and their work in the show notes and a link to our website where we list so many other links, resources, and studies.

We are @Ologies on Twitter and Instagram, I'm @AlieWard on both. Thank you to Erin Talbert for adminning the *Ologies* Podcast Facebook group with assists from Boni Dutch and Shannon Feltus. Merch is available at OlogiesMerch.com, we've got hats, and totes, and visors, and all kinds of things. Thank you to Susan Hale for handling that as well as making sure everyone gets paid, she does everything. Noel Dilworth does our scheduling and some socials and is the best. Emily White of The

Wordary makes professional transcripts, and you can find those linked in the show notes. *Smologies* are also available, they're shorter, kid-friendly versions of classic episodes, those are linked at AlieWard.com/Smologies. Thank you to Jarrett Sleeper and Zeke Rodrigues Thomas of Mindjam Media for editing those alongside the wonderful Mercedes Maitland. Kelly R. Dwyer works on the website. Nick Thorburn made the theme music. Lead editors and producers of the past few episodes are, of course, the one employee I'd send an eggplant emoji to because we are legally married, Jarrett Sleeper of Mindjam Media, and the platonically loved, Mercedes Maitland of Maitland Audio.

If you stick around until the end of the episode, you know I tell you a secret. I've been kind of crawling my way through the last few weeks because of some speaking engagements and travel and also the anniversary of my dad's death, which was not easy. But this *Ologies* team is just the best and I couldn't do any of this without them so that is one not-secret, is just get great help when you need it and tell them how amazing they are y'all are so great.

The other secret is that sometimes I glue tiny magnets onto rocks so that I can arrange the rocks in different orders, color orders, on a magnetic whiteboard in my office because it's, like, the lowest stakes puzzle ever and it's just rocks. And honestly, I think my perfect day would probably involve some kind of ice-blended, and a botanical garden or a hike, sketching leaves and critters, and maybe crafting some rock magnets. But people, the last few times I treated myself to gluing magnets on rocks, my computer didn't recognize my biometrics for days because I don't know how not to superglue my fingers together. But anyway, I hope you sit somewhere and picture your perfect day and then just go do as many of those things as you can, just don't fuck up your fingers because that's a real pain. Oh also, did you know that there's an empty jar emoji? I just discovered it like 10 minutes ago... I was like, "What is this? What the fuck?" There's also one with a piece of cheese under a box like a booby trap. Oh, and there's a yerba maté gourd. So many, go stare at them. Okay, berbye.

Transcribed by Aveline Malek at TheWordary.com

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 [Emojipedia](#)

 [#WorldEmojiDay 7/17/23](#)

 [Emoji Kitchen](#)

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[Shigetaka Kurita, NTT DOCOMO. Emoji \(original set of 176\). 1998-99 via MoMA](#)

[Evolution of Color Terminology by Melissa Bollbach](#)

[Blue-green distinction in language](#)

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