

Internet draft  
<[draft-ietf-fax-tiff-application-00.txt](#)>

Graham Klyne  
Integralis Ltd.  
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## **Some comments on the TIFF 'application' parameter**

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### Abstract

This draft attempts to clarify some misunderstandings concerning use of the 'Application' parameter with the MIME type 'image/tiff'.

It is not intended to prescribe or proscribe future use of the 'Application' parameter, but simply to indicate the intention behind its introduction.

### Internet Fax Working Group

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## **1. Discussion**

The 'Application' parameter of MIME type 'image/tiff' was defined by [1]. Some discussions in the IETF fax working group have been based on a misunderstanding of the meaning of this parameter. It has been assumed by many that this parameter was intended to indicate a minimum set of capabilities, or to otherwise define interoperability between a TIFF file writer and reader.

Glenn Parsons (co-author of the document which defines the 'Application' parameter) has it that the intent of the 'Application' parameter was simply to assist a receiver in dispatching a suitable application program to handle display or processing of the image file. In cases where the receiver has only one application available to process a TIFF file, the 'Application' parameter has no use.

This means that the application parameter generally serves to designate a broad range of TIFF image handling capabilities, and is therefore of limited value for fax sender or receiver conformance requirements or capability identification.

The following text is excerpted from [1]:

There are cases where it may be useful to identify the application applicable to the content of an image/TIFF body. As a result, an optional "application" parameter is defined for image/TIFF to identify the TIFF application of the encoded image data, if it is known.

and:

There is no default value for application, as the absence of the application parameter indicates that the encoded TIFF image is Baseline TIFF or that it is not necessary to identify the application. It is up to the implementation to determine the application (if necessary) and present the image to the user.

and:

The ability of implementations to handle all the defined applications of TIFF may not be ubiquitous. As a result, the absence of the application parameter would force implementations to decode and attempt to display the encoded TIFF image data in order to determine if it could actually be viewed.

The final extract quoted above seems to contradict the idea that the 'Application' parameter was not intended to provide capability

identification. But the intent was to make possible detection of

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situations where available applications could not handle a file, without actually having to launch an application.

For example, if a new application parameter value is received, and the dispatcher has no knowledge of any application to handle that value, it has an option to immediately display some kind of diagnostic message.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

This note is based on part of a conversation led by Steve Zilles, and involving Glenn Parsons, Dan Wing, Ritsuo Shirahama, Dave Crocker, Larry Masinter, Lloyd MacIntyre and Rob Buckley.

Thanks in particular to Glenn Parsons for confirming the intention behind the introduction of the "Application" parameter.

## **3. References**

- [1] "Tag Image File Format (TIFF)  
- image/TIFF MIME Sub-type Registration",  
Glenn W. Parsons, Nortel Technology  
James Rafferty, Human Communications  
Internet draft: <[draft-ietf-fax-tiff-reg-02.txt](#)>  
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## **4. Author's addresses**

Graham Klyne  
Integralis Ltd  
Brewery Court  
43-45 High Street  
Theale  
Reading, RG7 5AH  
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 118 930 6060

E-mail: GK@ACM.ORG

