

## IEEE Standards Interpretations for IEEE Std 1003.2™-1992 IEEE Standard for Information Technology--Portable Operating System Interfaces (POSIX®)--Part 2: Shell and Utilities

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### Interpretation Request #95

**Topic:** od file operand **Relevant Clauses:** 4.45.4

In subclause 4.45.4 of the description of the od utility's file operand (P371, L7342-7346), it says: "file A pathname of a file to be read. If no file operands are specified, the standard input shall be used. The results are unspecified if the first character of file is a plus sign (+) or the first character of the first file operand is numeric, unless at least one of the -A, -j, -N, or -t options is specified." Although the rationale doesn't say this, it seems obvious that the intent of the last sentence in this description was to allow implementations to provide an obsolescent synopsis form, corresponding to historic practice, along the lines of: `od [-bcCDdFfOoSsvXx] [filename] [[+]offset[.][b]]`

Unfortunately, one common command form: `od -c file 10.` is not allowed because the offset operand is identified by a numeric as the first character of the "second" file operand. Although the wording in the standard would allow the command: `od -c 10.` to treat 10 as a decimal offset (rather than as a filename), historic practice (in both System V and BSD implementations) required this to be specified as: `od -c +10.` To allow implementations to actually provide the historic forms as extensions, the phrase "first character of the first file operand" on P371, L7344-7345 should have been "first character of the second file operand". Was this wording intended to prevent implementations from supporting historic behavior, or was this an editorial mistake?

### Interpretation Response

The standard states the behavior for the file operand of the od cmd and conforming implementations must conform to this. However, concerns have been raised about this which are being referred to the sponsor.

## **Rationale for Interpretation**

None.