

Caroline is on the train à grande vitesse travelling between Tours and Paris. She is travelling back to England.

Caroline has quite a lot of luggage with her. She has bought two large portfolio cases and some smaller cases as well as her original luggage. Caroline has bought various souvenirs and prints at various places, packed them carefully in the cases, and is hoping to be able to get them all home undamaged.

It is more luggage than she can realistically manage on her own. Thus far, all is well, a helpful taxi driver helped her get it all from the hotel foyer to the entrance of the railway station and a helpful member of railway station staff had helped her get it all onto the train.

Edith enters the computing laboratory.

“Good morning John.”

“Good morning.”

“We’ve received a picture postcard from Caroline. It is rather interesting and so I have put it into a transparent portfolio bag so as to conserve it for the archives - it may become historically important.”

“Oh?”

Edith places the portfolio bag, the postcard picture side up, on the bench for John to examine.

“That’s a nice picture.” says John.

“Indeed,” says Edith “but now have a look at what Caroline has written on the back!”

John carefully turns the portfolio bag over and reads.

“Ah, ....” says John “that is interesting.”

“I know that exclaim one two three is ‘Good day.’ when localized into English, and I know that exclaim nine eight seven is ‘Best regards,’ when localized into English, but I do not know what it is when localized into French.” says Edith.

“Nor me, .... I’ll try to find out.”

There is a pause.

Edith speaks. “I realize that that is just a postcard, yet do you think that that encoding could be of practical use more generally?”

John pauses.

John speaks. “Possibly .... I shall need to think about that.”

Caroline is in Paris, in a taxi heading for Gare du Nord. Train staff helped her unload her luggage when she arrived at Gare Montparnasse and a helpful member of railway station staff helped her to a taxi.

Caroline is enjoying looking at Paris from the window of the taxi.

John is talking with Edith.

“It occurred to me that the exclamation mark terminology could be very useful for encoding localizable sentences in GS1-128 barcodes for use in hospitals and care homes.” says John.

“Are you sure that an exclamation mark character can be used in a GS1-128 barcode?”

“I checked. It appears that an exclamation mark character can be used in element strings except for identifying parts and components, where only a smaller subset of characters may be used, octothorpe, hyphen, solidus, digits and twenty-six capital letters. So it is fine for our purposes.”

“Good. So please keep that encoding possibility in mind for possible use. .... I do not know if Caroline was playing when she was using it, but knowing Caroline, even if she was just playing she would have nevertheless have made sure that it was all possible - for example, she would not have used an integral sign with ordinary digit characters .... which is perhaps why she used another character as the base character: she chose an exclamation mark for some reason. I’ll ask her when she gets back.” says Edith.

“It might be useful in some contexts other than barcodes as well. Such as very basic mobile telephones where there would not be automated encoding and decoding but it might well, given printed code tables, to nevertheless be possible to use such an encoding to communicate through the language barrier.”

Caroline has arrived at Gare du Nord. The taxi driver helped her into the station with her luggage and a member of railway station staff is helping her get to the train.

John is in the computing laboratory.

He keys !123 into a text document.

‘I wonder if that will become widely used.’ thinks John.

Caroline is now on the train together with all of her luggage. She sits back and relaxes.

After a while, the train pulls out of the station on its way to England.