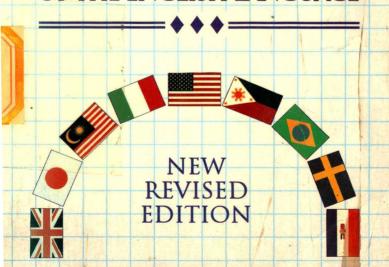
THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

WEBSTER'S VPOCKET COMPUTER DICTIONARY



THE NEW INTERNATIONAL

WEBSTER'S POCKET COMPUTER DICTIONARY

OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE



Published by Trident Press International 1997 EDITION

Cover Design Copyright © Trident Press International Text Copyright © 1997 J. Radcliffe

> ISBN 1-888-777-21-4 Deluxe Edition ISBN1-888-777-31-1 Hardcover Edition ISBN1-888-777-39-7 Paperback Edition

> > All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

A

abend abnormal ending

The termination of processing due to a program or system fault.

abort

To terminate a process before completion. Generally used in reference to a mainframe program, especially one that has gone awry. In the world of PC's, we are more inclined to *exit* a program or command with the *Escape key*.

ABS ABSolute value of n

A programming language term used by many **spreadsheet** and **database** applications to return the **absolute value** of a number.

absolute value

The value of a number without regard to its sign; most often used in a **spreadsheet** or **database** formula when the result of a calculation that may be positive or negative needs to be converted to a positive number for additional calculation.

abstract

To briefly summarize or compile; the summary or compilation so created.

ACC

See accumulator, accuracy control characters accelerator chip

The main driver of a video card, a chip that speeds the processing of graphics data.

access

To call up or activate for use. A computer system may contain a variety of programs and data files, but none are active or ready for use until called up by

access code

the operator or a program routine. In addition, the computer may require drivers or system files to access a peripheral, such as a printer or scanner.

access code

The user name or security code required to use a computer, a particular program, or certain files. Computer files protected by an access code require that the user type in his or her code before the protected files can be made available.

access time

The interval between a request for data from storage by the computer and the moment when it is available to the user.

accounting check

A routine to assure that data has been entered and processed accurately.

accumulator, accumulator register

The computer register which stores the intermediate results of arithmetical and logical operations.

accuracy control character

A special character used to signal that transmitted data is faulty or unsuited to a particular device.

acoustic coupler

A device for connecting the computer to a telephone hand set to allow transmission of computer data over the telephone lines when a more direct connection is not available

acronym

A word formed from the first letter or combination of letters of a compound name. For example, *COBOL*, a programming language, is derived from *COmmon Business Oriented Language*. See also, *BASIC*.

active document

A document that is currently available to manipulation by the user.

active file

A computer file available to the user or the computer for processing.

active matrix

A type of *LCD* computer screen display that is constantly refreshed by means of transistors embedded in the screen. Characterized by high contrast and a brilliant image, its weight and heavy power requirements make it less than ideal for portables. See also, *passive*.

active window

In a system that allows viewing of multiple documents or programs on the screen, the document or window that is currently selected and available to the user.

ACU See automatic calling unit adapter

Any hardware device or software routine that makes disparate hardware or software elements compatible.

adaptive system

A computer program that "learns" by maintaining a record of its activity and revising subsequent actions. An **OCR** or optical character recognition program, for example, may consistently fail to correctly recognize a certain character; once corrections are fed into the program, an adaptive system will adjust its matrix to properly read the character in the future.

ADC See analog to digital converter

add-on

add-on

A hardware or software supplement that serves to enhance performance of an existing program or device.

add-on card

A removable computer circuit board used to control a peripheral device such as a parallel or serial port, a game port, a scanner, or accelerated video.

address

- (1) A number used to identify a specific location in computer storage, also called an *absolute address*. When data is saved, the address of its location is recorded in the *file allocation table* so that it can be quickly found when next called up.
- (2) See relative address.
- (3) To call up data from a program or application.

addressing

A program instruction for assigning a memory location to a command or data.

addressing capacity

A reference to the memory available for running programs, accessing data, and performing other functions.

ADP See automatic data processing

advanced power management

A feature designed to save power in many newer computers that powers down the screen and, in some cases, the hard drive when input has been suspended for a set interval, such as ten minutes.

Advanced SCSI Programming Interface

A software standard that allows a **SCSI** controller to communicate with other software.

AI See artificial intelligence.

algebraic expression

A formula, such as in a spreadsheet that follows the conventions for mathematical syntax. Math light-weights, have no fear; we're not necessarily alluding to complex equations. Let's say you have the house-hold budget listed in column A of a spreadsheet and your actual expense in column B. You want to know how much the actual varied from the budget, so you go to column C and enter the formula on row 1: B1–A1; one line 2: B2–A2; and so on. The results in column C will show how much over and under budget you are for each item, and B1–A1 is an algebraic expression.

algorithm

A set of precise instructions for performing a specific task and that must have a finite number of steps and a definite stopping place. Computer programs and routines are algorithms, but there are simpler examples: the IRS has often used algorithmic diagrams in literature designed to assist the taxpayer in determining what forms to use or qualification for certain benefits.

alias

A name assigned to a file or a block of data, used to address it for processing. When using a **lookup table** in a spreadsheet, for example, it's more practical to give the table an easily remembered name relating to its purpose than it is to spell out the location of the data each time it is referred to in a formula.

alignment

(1) The placement of type in a line, as flush right,

allocation

centered, justified, etc.

(2) The positioning of a *frame*, artwork, or a block of type in relation to its placement on a page.

allocation

The assignment of computer resources for a specific purpose, such as an area of memory set aside for the operation of a *TSR*.

alphameric Same as alphanumeric.

alphanumeric

Short for alphabetical/numeric; descriptive of a string that is may contain both letters and numbers.

Alternate key (Alt)

A type of control key used in conjunction with other keys to modify their actions or to execute commands.

ALU Arithmetic and Logic Unit

That part of the **CPU** that performs **arithmetic** and **logic** functions.

ambiguous

Imprecise; of a program command or formula stated in such a way that it may yield an undesirable or unreliable result.

American National Standards Institute

An organization concerned with standardization of computer elements.

American Standard Code for Information Exchange
A standardized code for representing print and control characters for the computer.

American Standards Association

The forerunner of the American National Standards Institute.

amplification

The process of increasing a signal or sound.

amplifier

A device that boosts a signal to increase its output strength.

analog

Descriptive of data represented as a continuous variable, such as sound or an electrical impulse.

analog signal

An electric signal used to transmit information, such as by a conventional telephone.

analog to digital converter

A device that converts analog signals, such as those from a telephone, to digital data that can be processed by the computer.

analysis

(1) The separation of something into its component parts so as to study it.

(2) In the world of computers, the methodical study of a program, routine, formula, etc. to explore the nature of its actions or to resolve a problem.

(3) Use of the computer to compile and examine

data, such as for the finances of a business.

analyst

(1) One experienced in identifying the source of problems and suggesting the means to correct them, especially for a computer program.

(2) One who is able to direct the compilation of business data and assess it carefully to predict trends,

potential problems, and opportunities.

anchor, anchor point

(1) The starting point for selection of a block of copy

AND operator

for editing, printing, etc.

(2) A reference point or exact position for fixing the place of extraneous matter such as graphics or sound in a document.

AND operator

A Boolean operator used to return a value of *true* if the statements it joins are both true. The *AND operator* may be used, for example, to define a selection such as for a *spreadsheet* or *database* formula that seeks to choose from a list those entries that have certain things in common—all those who are customers *and* live in a particular city; all those who are employees *and* have over ten years of service. The syntax, or precise way in which the *AND operator* is used varies depending on the program in which it is used.

annotation

(1) An explanatory note.

(2) In a computer program or routine, an annotation may be a heading or a comment explaining the function of a command or series of commands. The annotation serves as an aid to tracking a series of actions, especially for anyone working on the program in the future, and is marked in some way so that the computer will not mistake it for a command.

(3) A feature in some programs that allows commentary or corrections to be attached to a file for later review by others without changing the original document.

ANSI See American National Standards Institute.

A program or routine designed to detect any

application generator

unauthorized or undesirable alteration of a computer or its programs.

APL A Programming Language

An interactive computer programming language notably proficient in operations involving arrays.

APM See advanced power management.

append

To add, as a supplement.

APPENI

An operating system command which enables programs to open files in designated directories as though the files were included in the current directory.

application

(1) A computer program designed for a particular use, such as a word processor or spreadsheet.

(2) A particular use to which a program is applied, as for compiling financial transactions or inventory records.

application development

The process of combining and arranging computer routines to create a program designed for a particular use. Application development programs or systems complete with standard routines are designed to simplify the process of creating applications, eliminating the need to program each new application from scratch.

application generator

A feature in some computer programs that assists the user with a program designed to create custom applications. In some cases, the application can be made a stand-alone utility that does not require the

application program

full program to run.

application program

A computer software package used to perform a variety of related tasks such as for accounting, word processing, desktop publishing, etc.

approximation

A value which is only nearly correct; a number that has been rounded or truncated.

architecture

The design of a computer that defines such things as type of processor, transfer speed, bus size, etc.

archive

- (1) A file *attribute* assigned automatically by the computer system each time a computer file is saved. The *archive attribute* is often used in incremental backup routines—the program copies only those files with the archive flag set and deletes the flag after the file is backed up.
- (2) A collection of files seldom if ever used, but that are saved because they may of value at some future date

area

A segment of computer storage set aside for a particular purpose and that cannot be moved or used for any other purpose, such as for virtual memory.

argument

A value or variable in a formula, as in 2+4, wherein + is the **operator**, and both 2 and 4 are arguments.

arithmetic

Concerning or involved with mathematics; the addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of numbers.

arithmetic and logic unit See ALU. arithmetic expression

A formula that uses a mathematical operator and returns a numeric value.

arithmetic processor See math coprocessor.

An expression that uses a mathematical operator to show the relationship between two values, such as = (equal to), \neq (not equal to), < (lesser than), or > (greater than).

arrangement

The way in which items are located or displayed in a set or array.

array

An ordered group of like elements: a one dimensional array may be a list of numbers representing total expense for each department in a company; to show expense by type, a two dimensional array is necessary, with a column for each department and rows for each type of expense; a three dimensional array may be prepared with layers to represent similar data for other periods.

art

Any computer element that is not text. See graphics, object, picture.

artificial cognition See OCR.

artificial intelligence

Descriptive of the ability of a computer to simulate human intelligence, as by recording corrections to its output and adjusting for future transactions. See also, **adaptive system**.

artificial language

artificial language

A computer programming language with a distinct set of rules and vocabulary.

art program See draw program.

ASA American Standards Association

The forerunner of the American National Standards Institute.

ASAD

Association of Shareware Authors and Distributors ascending sort

An alphabetical or numerical arrangement that pro-

gresses from lowest to highest.

ASCII See American Standard Code for Information Exchange.

ASCII file

A text document that contains only the printed and control characters as defined by the ASCII standard and none of the more sophisticated formatting such as for special fonts, styles, tabs, etc. provided by most word processing or desktop publishing programs. Despite the efforts of software vendors to achieve at least limited compatibility with others, not all text files can be read by other programs. ASCII bridges that gap—a file saved in ASCII format from one program can be read by another (sans special formatting, of course), or even exchanged across platforms.

ASK

A programmed query, requesting input from the user; often used for directing a batch file or inputting information to a database. When the ASK command is executed, the program is paused to wait for

input from the user.

aspect ratio

The relationship or proportion of the horizontal to the vertical measurement as of a computer monitor screen or of a graphics element.

ASPI See Advanced SCSI Programming Interface. assemble

To translate or convert computer program instructions from an *artificial language* or *programming language* into *machine language* that can be understood directly by the computer.

assembler

A type of program that translates a **programming language** into simple instructions that are understood directly by the computer.

It's time someone told you the truth—the computer is stupid! Really stupid! It operates basically with millions of microscopic flip-flops (think of them as switches) that can be set to either of two states (such as open or closed—computer programmers refer to them as 0 or 1). Each command to the computer requires passage through sets of flip-flops arrayed in a variety of ways to recognize and execute the command.

Consider what an action as simple as striking a letter on the keyboard requires:

- >that the CPU be alerted that something has happened,
- > that it record what happened,
- > that it determine what it means,
- > that it look up instructions for output (print to screen or directly to a printer for example),

assignment statement

> that it form and display it on screen, etc.

—all conveyed through yes/no, true/false, or 0/1 instructions.

Consider, too, that early programmers had to set up instructions to the computer in this 0/1 language and refine or debug those programs by sifting through reams of printed 0/1 data.

As programs increased in complexity you can imagine how unwieldy all of this became. Gradually, ever more sophisticated systems were developed; systems that permitted programming in something approximating "normal" language and arithmetic notation. While still somewhat arcane, these computer programming languages nevertheless ease somewhat the difficulty in developing complex programs. But, alas, the computer can't learn those new language and so a translator, the assembler or compiler, is necessary to produce a translation after the program is written and before it can be executed.

assignment statement

A command that assigns the value of an expression to a variable name, as A=A+1, in which the value of A increases by one for each iteration of the command. Such a command may be used in a routine to step through the records in a database—once the routine (such as a search for records in a particular zip code) has been executed for one record, the assignment statement is invoked to reset the variable (in this case a record number); the variable is then increased by one and the routine is again executed.

asynchronous communication

The recognition and transmission of data as it