Computing Terms and Acronyms: a dictionary

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Introduction

Recent advances in information technology can be seen as offering opportunities to professional librarians in two major areas. First, they can help us to run our basic library systems more efficiently. In this respect the library is no different to any other modern organisation that employs information technology in order to introduce new systems or enhance existing ones. Indeed, the library's acquisitions, cataloguing, reference, interloan and circulation control systems all have their counterparts in the world of commerce and industry. Similarly, libraries have adopted word processing and management information systems for much the same reasons that they have been adopted by other service-oriented organisations. Although the new technology's ability to improve administrative and housekeeping routines may lead to changes in a library's internal management and staff structure, it does not substantially alter the library's basic functions.

The second area however, is potentially more exciting and challenging, because it necessitates a move away from the library's traditional role towards a more active involvement with the information industry. Current information technology offers a wealth of new patterns for the publication and dissemination of information. For example, a substantial amount of primary information is currently being created solely in an electronic form (e.g. videotex) – a form that is presently ignored by the bibliographic agencies. This is a matter of some concern, because if the national bibliographies continue to ignore this and other new publishing patterns, there is a real danger of them losing their importance as reference sources, and becoming little more than shopping lists for public libraries.

Another example of the new technology's challenge can be seen in the recent introduction of databases oriented towards the domestic market, which can be accessed by a home computer. This development represents a considerable challenge to the public library sector. Fortunately many libraries have realised that their traditional services need to be enhanced if they are to survive in the 'information society', and have begun to offer access to the new technology to supplement their traditional range of services. For example, many provide access

to videotex systems and microcomputer hardware and software.

The education of contemporary librarians is obviously going to influence the ability of the profession to meet the challenges of the new technology. Fortunately, most library schools pay considerable attention to the new technology in their full-time courses, and many offer substantial in-service education and training programmes for practising librarians.

Obviously it is essential to have a range of relevant and up-to-date reference books to accompany such programmes. My reason for starting this book was, quite simply, that to support my teaching I needed a 'quick reference' book for students; one that gave simple definitions, explained acronyms and, perhaps most importantly, covered the whole range of contemporary computer-based library activities. Despite extensive searching, I could not find one that met these criteria.

Although there were a number of dictionaries covering computing and information technology, these did not include online host systems, commercially available databases, library networks and general library applications. At the same time, whilst offering detailed explanations and employing the use of some excellent diagrams, many such dictionaries contained a high proportion of entries that referred to obsolete card-based batch processing systems, or outmoded technology. This did not seem to me to represent good 'value for money'.

I hope that you find this book to contain a high proportion of useful entries, and that you will find the definitions to be both helpful and accurate.

Acknowledgements

How to use this dictionary

A dictionary of this type has to be **descriptive** rather than **prescriptive**. In other words, it has to explain how words **are used**, rather than **how they should be used**.

This task is complicated by the fact that in addition to words that have an orthodox etymology, the vocabulary of computing is particularly rich in coined terms, borrowed terms, slang, acronyms and terms that are used synonymously.

With this in mind, the basic principle behind all entries in this dictionary is that the spelling and word form adopted for an entry is that **which appears to be used most commonly in the literature**.

The reader will note that the spelling of terms reflects the fact that many of the major developments in information technology had their origins in the United States.

The following conventions were used in preparing this dictionary:
* Cross references are given from variants to an entry term.
* The entry terms are sorted on a word-by-word basis.
* Entries are given in the singular form.
* Compound terms are preserved in their natural order and are filed by the first word. For example, **common command language** is used as an entry term rather than **command language, common**.
* The entry terms appear in lower case, unless they are acronyms, trade names or proprietary names. These are entered in upper case. An acronym is followed by the entry in its full form. Appropriate capitalisation is used to indicate the derivation of the acronym.

  For example;

  NELINET New England Library Information NETwork
* Eponyms (concepts named after a person) have their initial letter capitalised.
* Each entry term is followed either by a definition, or a cross-reference to a preferred term.

  Italics are used within a definition to indicate that a term is defined elsewhere in the dictionary. You may wish to refer to these entries for further clarification.

  The 'see' reference is used to refer from a non-preferred to a

preferred term. Synonyms are dealt with in this manner.
For example;

dot printer see *dot matrix printer*.

DBMS see *Data Base Management System*.

The '**see also**' reference is used at the end of a definition if there is a term or concept of particular relevance to the term defined.

* If a term has more than one meaning or usage, a number of definitions may be included with the entry. The most common usage is defined first.

For example;

translator (1) A *program* used to translate a program from one language to another. (2) A *compiler*.

a

A&I Abstracting and Indexing

A/D interface Analogue to Digital interface. A device that converts the information contained in continuous *analogue* signals into a discrete *digital* form.

AACR2 Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition. A standard for library cataloguing employed by major libraries and bibliographic agencies in most English speaking countries.

abbreviated addressing A technique for cutting down the number of characters needed to describe an *address*. This promotes more efficient processing because the computer does not have to decode the full address. See also *address space*.

ABCA American Business Communication Association

abend An abbreviation of abnormal end. The termination of processing brought about by unusual means such as an error, or a malfunction in the system.

ABI/INFORM A database produced by Data Courier, Inc., covering the literature of business, finance and management.

ABN Australian Bibliographic Network. An online shared cataloguing network established by the National Library of Australia in 1981. ABN employs the software developed by *WLN* (Washington Library Network). See also *NZBN*.

abort To terminate a processing activity – usually because the user realises that there is no chance of its successful completion and there is little to be gained in wasting the system's time on a pointless task.

abort timer A device used in *data communications* to terminate a *dial-up* connection if there is no transmission down the line within a specified period. See also *dial-up access*.

absolute address An *address* that is permanently assigned to a *storage* location by a machine's designer.

ABSTI Advisory Board on Scientific and Technical Information, Canada

abstract A summary or description of the subject content of a document. See also *informative abstract, indicative abstract*.

acceleration time The time taken for an *auxiliary storage* device to reach normal operating conditions. For example, the time taken for a *tape drive* to reach the operating speed at which data can be read or written. See also *access time*.

acceptance testing A series of standard tests run on a newly-installed computer by a manufacturer or his agent, in order to demonstrate to the customer that the system is fully functional.

ACCESS Automated Computer Communications Electronic Service System

access To acquire control either of

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a whole computer system, or parts of the system, for a period of time.

access charge The charge made to a user by a *common carrier* for providing telecommunications access to a *host system*.

access control A combination of *hardware, software* and administrative controls designed to limit *access* to a computer system, to approved users. See also *authorisation*.

access point A *data element* that is used as a means of entry into a *file* or *record* when searching a database. For example, a subject heading.

access time The time interval between the instant at which a request is made to a *storage device* for data, and the instant at which the data is delivered to the *central processing unit*. See also *acceleration time*.

accession number A unique number given to a newly-acquired document to aid subsequent identification.

accessions list A list of recent library acquisitions, giving both their bibliographic description and *accession number*.

ACCORD Acquisitions par CATTS/CATSS ORDering. The *UTLAS* acquisitions subsystem.

accordion fold The paper used on a teletypewriter or line printer comes in one continuous sheet which is divided into page lengths by perforated lines. After printing, the *printout* is retrieved by tearing along these lines. In storage the paper is folded along these perforations so that each fold is in the opposite direction to the previous one – hence the analogy to the bellows of an accordion.

account A number assigned to a customer by a computer system for the purpose of billing. If an organisation has more than one terminal, a separate account number may be assigned to each.

ACCOUNTANTS' INDEX A database produced by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, covering the literature of accountancy, business and finance.

accumulator An internal *register* or *storage device,* which stores data and records changes in its value during arithmetical or logical operations. See also *arithmetic logic unit*.

ACIA Asynchronous Communications Interface Adaptor

ACK see *ACKnowledge character*.

acknowledge character (ACK) A character transmitted down a *communications channel,* which is used to indicate either the readiness to receive data, or that data has been received. See also *acknowledgement*.

acknowledgement The transmission of *acknowledge characters* between *receiver* and *sender* in order to promote the orderly despatch and acceptance of blocks of data. The characters are used to indicate a state of readiness.

ACLS American Council of Learned Societies

ACM see *Association for Computing Machinery*.

ACOMPLINE A database produced by the Greater London Council Research Library covering the literature of urban studies.

acoustic coupler A device used in conjunction with a telephone to effect communication between a *terminal* and a computer system. It converts the *digital* signals gener-

ated by the terminal into *analogue* form – in this case an acoustic equivalent – so that they can be transmitted to the computer via the telephone handset and conventional *voice-grade* telephone lines. It also converts received analogue signals into digital form. Another coupler or *modem* is needed at the computer's end of the line ' to perform the same functions.

acoustic modem see *acoustic coupler*.

ACRL Association of College and Research Libraries

ACS Advanced Communications Service. An *AMERICAN TELE-PHONE & TELEGRAPH COMPANY data communications network*.

action frame see *response frame*.

active An adjective used to describe a bibliographic record that is stored *online*, and thus available for immediate retrieval.

active file In contrast to a *closed file*, a file that is in current use, i.e. one to which new *records* can be added, or one whose existing records can be modified.

activity The percentage of records in a file that are altered during *processing*.

ACTSU Association of Computer Time Sharing Users, US

ADA A *high-level programming language* used widely in the US Department of Defense. It is named after Ada, Lady Lovelace, who prepared the coded instructions for Babbage's 'computers' and as a result has come to be regarded as the first programmer.

ADABAS A *database management system* used mainly on IBM computers.

ADAPSO Association of DAta Processing Service Organisations, US and Canada

adaptive routing The ability of a *communications network* to choose the most efficient routes for the communication of messages at a given point in time, given the level of activity in the network and the availability of *channels*. See also *packet switching*.

adaptor In *viewdata* systems, a device that enables a television receiver to act as a viewdata terminal.

added entry A bibliographic record in a catalogue that is not a *main entry*.

address (1) The identification used by a computer to describe the location of each item of data in storage. A useful analogy is to the addresses of houses in a town – each house has its unique address. See also *address space*. (2) The location of the *source* or *receiver* of a message.

address bus A *bus* which transmits *address* identification data.

address space The number of storage locations provided by a *storage device*. See also *address*.

ADI American Documentation Institute

adjacency (1) The sought proximity of two words in a *search statement*. In contrast to the facilities offered by a *word proximity operator*, the term is normally used to indicate that the words should be adjacent to each other. (2) See *adjacency listing*.

adjacency listing When searching a database it is often useful to be able to examine an alphabetical listing of the terms that appear in the database, in order to anticipate possible variations in word forms

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or spelling. For example, the suffixes -s and -ing which indicate the plural and gerund forms. An adjacency listing is a list of a fixed length giving alphabetically adjacent terms. See also *dictionary file*.

adjust To indent the left hand margin of a column of text.

ADONIS A system being developed by European publishers for the storage and retrieval of *full-text* documents.

ADP (1) A European *host system* based in London, specialising in economic and financial statistics. (2) Automatic Data Processing

ADPE Automatic Data Processing Equipment

ADPS Automatic Data Processing System

ADRS Automatic Document Request Service. A *BLAISE* service that allows users to order documents found in BLAISE-LiNE databases from the British Library Lending Division. Users can also use the service to order items that are not contained in the databases.

ADTRACK A database produced by Corporate Intelligence, Inc., covering the literature of advertising and marketing.

ADVANCED TEXT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ATMS) A *database management system* developed by *AUSINET*.

AECT Association for Educational Communications and Technology, US

AFIPS American Federation of Information Processing Societies

AFR (1) Automatic Field Recognition (2) Automatic Format Recognition

AGLINET AGricultural Libraries Information NETwork

AGRICOLA A database produced by the US Department of Agriculture, covering the literature of agriculture, food and nutrition.

AGRIS AGRicultural Information System. A database produced by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, covering agriculture and related subjects.

AI see *Artificial Intelligence*.

AIM/ARM A database produced by the National Center for Vocational Education, covering the literature of vocational and technical education.

ALA American Library Association

ALA print train American Library Association print train. A set of alphabetical characters, numerals and symbols employed in the preparation and searching of *bibliographic databases*.

ALCOHOL USE/ABUSE see *DRUGINFO and ALCOHOL USE/ABUSE*.

ALGOL ALGOrithmic Language. A *high-level programming language* used for scientific and mathematical problem solving.

algorithm A set of well-defined rules for solving a problem in a finite number of steps.

ALIS (1) Advanced Library Information System. A *bibliographic software* package marketed by Systems Control, Inc. (2) Automated Library Information System. A *bibliographic software* package marketed by DataPhase Systems, Inc.

alphageometrics A method used in *videotex* systems to create the characters or graphics to be displayed on a screen. The images

are built up from a basic collection of geometrical shapes such as lines and circles. See also *alphamosaics*.

alphameric see *alphanumeric*.

alphamosaics A method used in *videotex* systems to create the characters or graphics to be displayed on a screen. The images are built up using dots in a series of matrices. The resulting effect is rather like a mosaic pattern; there are no curves, only right angles. See also *alphageometrics*.

alphanumeric In the form of either a letter, numeral or a symbol.

alphanumeric character set A set of characters that contains letters, numerals, symbols, *control characters* and *special characters*.

alphanumeric keyboard A keyboard used in *videotex* systems by *information providers* for editing the *frames* put into the system. The keyboard can also be used to exploit the opportunities offered by the system for *electronic mail*. See also *key pad*.

alphanumerics set The 96 characters that make up the set of *display characters* used in *videotex* systems.

alphaphotographic A method used in *videotex* systems to create the characters and picture quality graphics to be displayed on a screen. The images are created from a collection of stored picture elements. See also *PICTURE PRESTEL*.

ALS Automated Library Systems

alternate routing The alternative *communications channels* that may be employed in the event of the normal one becoming unavailable.

ALU see *Arithmetic Logic Unit*.

AMDAHL An American computer manufacturer.

AMDS see *Australian MARC Distribution Service*.

AMERICA: HISTORY AND LIFE A database produced by ABC-Clio, Inc., covering American history, politics and political science.

AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN OF SCIENCE A database produced by R. R. Bowker, giving the biographies of scientists working in the physical and biological sciences.

AMERICAN STATISTICS INDEX see *ASI*.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH COMPANY (AT&T) The major *common carrier* in the United States, AT&T also owns a number of subsidiaries involved in the research, development and marketing of computer, telecommunications and data communications hardware.

AMIGOS An American library network based in Dallas, whose members use the services of *OCLC* for *online processing*.

AMRS see *Australian MARC Record Service*.

analogue A direct correspondence between the properties of two different physical systems. For example, the speed of rotation of the wheels of a car corresponds with the position of the needle on the car's speedometer.

analogue computer A computer that deals with data in the form of continuously variable quantities as opposed to a *digital computer* which deals with discontinuous data encoded into a digital form. The data for a wide range of applications can be encoded into digital form, and so digital computers are used almost universally in data

processing. Analogue computers tend to be used for specialised scientific applications. See also *analogue*.

analyst see *systems analyst*.

and A *logical operator* used in *Boolean algebra*. In the logical operation X AND Y a result is only achieved if both variables X and Y are present. This logic may be applied to any procedure in which there are two or more inputs and one output. See also *or* and *not*.

X	Y	RESULT	X AND Y	
0	0	0		
1	0	0	0 = absence	
0	1	0	1 = presence	
1	1	1		

and not see *not*.

ANSI American National Standards Institute

answering time see *response time*.

ANTIOPE l'Acquisition Numerique et Televisualisation d'Images Organisees en Pages d'Ecriture. A French organisation specialising in *videotex* systems, which markets both a broadcast (*teletext*) system ANTIOPE-DIDON, and an interactive (*viewdata*) system ANTIOPE-TITAN. The latter is better known by its trade name TELETEL.

APILIT A database produced by the American Petroleum Institute, covering the literature of energy sources, petroleum refining and the petrochemical industry.

APIPAT A database produced by the American Petroleum Institute, covering petroleum industry patents.

APL A Programming Language. A *high-level programming language*.

APPLE An American manufacturer of microcomputers.

applications The tasks to be accomplished by a computer system. For example, statistical analysis, word processing or information retrieval. See also *applications programmer*.

applications program A *program* written to meet a specific user need.

applications programmer A *programmer* employed by a computer manufacturer, or attached to a computer installation, whose task is to create *programs* or adapt existing *software* to meet the specific needs of users of the computer. See also *systems programmer*.

APTIC Air Pollution Technical Information Center. A database produced by the US Environmental Protection Agency, covering the sources, effects and control of air pollution.

AQL Acceptance Quality Level. A specification listing the expected performance of hardware components under normal working conditions.

AQUACULTURE A database produced by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, covering the literature on marine, brackish and freshwater organisms.

AQUALINE A database produced by the UK Water Research Centre, covering water resources and the aquatic sciences.

AQUATIC SCIENCES AND FISHERIES ABSTRACTS (ASFA) A database produced by Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, covering the life sciences of marine and freshwater environments.

AQUILA A *text retrieval* software

package marketed by Kent-Barlow Associates.

architecture The design structure or *configuration* of a computer system.

archival tape A *magnetic tape* used for the storage of *files* which are not required for immediate use by a user. See also *archive.*

archive *Backing storage* containing information that is not required for immediate processing. Archive *files* are usually held *off-line* on *magnetic tape* and have to be loaded into an *auxiliary storage device* before they can be *read.*

ARDIC–CIDA Association pour la Recherche et le Developpement en Informatique Chimique. A European *host system* based in Paris, specialising in chemical information.

arithmetic logic unit (ALU) The part of the *central processing unit* in which the arithmetic and logical operations generated by an *input* command are performed. Unlike the *arithmetic unit,* the ALU is capable of supporting both mathematical and logical operations, and also has an *accumulator* for storing *operands* and results.

arithmetic unit The part of the *central processing unit* that contains the circuitry responsible for the mathematical functions of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and comparison. The arithmetic unit is usually incorporated into a unit that can handle both arithmetic and logical functions – the *arithmetic logic unit.* See also *control unit.*

ARPANET Advanced Research Projects Agency NETwork. A US Department of Defense computer network.

array A set of data items presented in an ordered fashion. The set may be either one-dimensional, as in the form of a list, or two-dimensional, as in the form of a matrix. The position of a data item can be encoded, e.g. A(3) represents the third item of data in the list A; B(2,4) represents the fourth item of data in the second row of a matrix B.

ARTBIBLIOGRAPHIES MODERN A database produced by ABC-Clio, Inc., covering 19th and 20th century art and design.

ARTEMIS Automatic Retrieval of Text through European Multipurpose Information Services

artificial intelligence (AI) The ability of a computer to perform tasks that require a capacity for deductive logic – tasks normally associated with human intelligence. In such situations the ability to learn through experience and adapt behaviour as a result of that experience is essential.

ASCA Automatic Subject Citation Alert. A *current awareness* service offered by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI).

ASCII American Standard Code for Information Interchange. A code based on the binary digits 0 and 1, which is used to represent *alphanumeric* characters in digital form. For example, the letter A is encoded as 1000001. ASCII-based systems usually employ 7 information bits and a bit that can be used for *parity checking.* See also *start bit, stop bit.*

ASCII code see *ASCII.*

ASD Automated Services Department (of the British Library)

ASFA see *Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts.*

ASI American Statistics Index. A database produced by the Congressional Information Service, covering statistical data collected by the US Government.

ASIS American Society for Information Science

ASLIB Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux

ASR Automatic Send/Receive

ASSASSIN A System for Storage And Subsequent Selection of INformation. A *text retrieval* software package developed and marketed by ICI.

assembler A program that assembles a *machine language* program from a *source program* written in a *low-level programming language*. See also *compiler*.

assembly language A symbolic *programming language* in which the programmer uses symbols and mnemonics to create statements which correspond to *machine language* instructions.

Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) A professional and technical association concerned with the promotion and advancement of computer-based information processing.

Association of Viewdata Information Providers (AVIP) A trade association of organisations involved with *viewdata* systems.

asynchronous Not occurring at the same time, or without regular reference to time. See also *synchronous*.

asynchronous transmission A mode of transmission in which each character, or block of characters, is preceded by a *start bit* and followed by a *stop bit*. The function of these *bits* is to synchronise the

sending and receiving devices, thus promoting orderly and reliable transmission. See also *synchronous transmission*.

AT&T See *American Telephone & Telegraph Company*.

ATLAS Automatic Tabulating, Listing And Sorting system. A *bibliographic* software package marketed by Data Research Associates, Inc.

ATMS see *Advanced Text Management System*.

ATS Application Technology Satellite. A US *communications satellite* system.

ATT see *American Telephone & Telegraph Company*.

attenuation The reduction in the strength of a signal during its transmission.

atto- A prefix denoting one million-million-millionth.

AUSINET AUStralian Information NETwork. An Australian *data communications network*.

AUSMARC see *AUStralian MAchine Readable Catalogue*.

AUSTRALIAN BIBLIO-GRAPHIC NETWORK see *ABN*.

Australian Machine Readable Catalogue (AUSMARC). A standard for *machine-readable* catalogue records produced by the National Library of Australia.

Australian MARC Distribution Service (AMDS) A subscription service offered to libraries by the National Library of Australia for the provision of the *machine-readable* equivalent of the Australian National Bibliography.

Australian MARC Record Service (AMRS) A service of the National Library of Australia, which offers Australian libraries

MARC records from the Library of Congress, the British Library and the National Library of Australia.

authentication Confirmation that a bibliographic record entered onto a database has been reviewed and found to meet the bibliographic standards laid down for that particular database. The record is then referred to as an authoritative record.

authorisation Permission given to the user of a computer system to perform certain operations. For example, some users may be authorised to add to or modify (*write*) data held in a file, but others may only be allowed to *read* it. See also *user code*.

authorisation code see *user code*.

authorisation number see *user code*.

authorised file A file that a user is entitled to search. Compare with *unauthorised file*.

authoritative record see *authentication*.

authority control The procedures involved in the establishment, maintenance and use of an *authority file*.

authority file A *file* of authority records, i.e. records that give the authorised forms for *access points* to the bibliographic records contained in a database. The files cross-reference from variants to preferred forms, from obsolete to current terms, and between terms at different generic levels.

authority record A record of an individual heading in an *authority file*.

autodialler A device that automatically dials pre-specified numbers in a telephone network. It may thus be used for accessing a range of *host systems* without having to resort to repetitious manual dialling.

automatic abstracting A technique whereby an *abstract* of a document can be produced automatically by employing techniques that exploit word frequency counts. The document is scanned for sentences which contain high-frequency substantive terms, and these sentences are subsequently printed out. The resulting 'abstract' is thus a listing of key sentences rather than a conventional abstract.

automatic carriage return In *word processing*, some systems have the ability to automatically perform the execution of a *carriage return* after the last word that will fit unbroken is entered onto the current line. Such systems employ a temporary buffer in which a potential last word is stored whilst the system decides whether the word is to be placed on the current or next line. See also *wraparound*.

automatic centring In *word processing*, the ability of the system to centre a word or block of text in accordance with the predefined settings for line length.

automatic data processing (ADP) *Data processing* performed by a machine rather than by a human. When a *digital computer* is employed to do this work the term *electronic data processing* is preferred.

AUTOMATIC DOCUMENT REQUEST SERVICE see *ADRS*.

automatic file sort The automatic sorting of files into a specified order. See *sort*.

automatic indexing The pro-
duction of an index for a set of
documents in *machine-readable*
form. The index is formed by the
extraction and sorting of substan-
tive terms that appear frequently
in the documents. See also *auto-
matic abstracting, stop list.*

automatic logon A procedure
whereby a user with an *intelligent
terminal* can *log it* on to a *host system*
automatically. The terminal
contains a *program* with the appro-
priate dialling instructions, *user
codes* and *passwords* needed for
logging on.

automatic restart The ability of a
computer system to automatically
return to normal operating
conditions following a power
failure or equipment malfunction.
See also *initial program load.*

automation see *library automation.*

auxiliary An item of equipment
that is not under the direct or
continuous control of the *central
processing unit.* See also *peripherals.*

auxiliary memory see *auxiliary
storage.*

auxiliary storage *Storage* that
supplements the *main storage.* It is
usually provided in units that are
separate from the computer and
which tend to be accessible at
lower speeds than *main storage.*
Magnetic tape is a common
auxiliary *storage medium.*

available time The periods of time
during which a computer system
can be accessed. See also *uptime,
down time.*

AVIP see *Association of Viewdata
Information Providers.*

AVLINE AudioVisual onLINE. A
database produced by the US
National Library of Medicine,
which covers audiovisual and other
non-print teaching materials used
to support education in the health
sciences.

AVMARC Audio Visual MAchine
Readable Cataloguing. A database
covering audiovisual and non-book
materials, which is produced by
the British Library's Bibliographic
Services Division in collaboration
with the Inner London Education
Authority.

b

B/NA Blackwell/North America

babble The aggregate effect of
crosstalk between *communications
channels.*

backfile (1) An older segment of a
database that is not available
online, and can only be searched
off-line. (2) A 'closed' file that
covers records from a particular
period of time. e.g. 1975–77.

background The processing of
tasks to which a low priority has
been assigned. Preference is given
to tasks that have a high priority.
These are processed in the *fore-
ground.*

background noise Meaningless
data generated by interference with
a signal during transmission.

background region The region in

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