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Microsoft

Computer Dictionary

Fifth Edition

- Fully updated with the latest technologies, terms, and acronyms
- Easy to read, expertly illustrated
- Definitive coverage of hardware, software, the Internet, and more!



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achieve personalization and privacy concomitantly, OPS is based on the concept of a Personal Profile, which is stored on the individual's computer and contains the user's unique identification, demographic and contact data, and possibly content preferences. This information remains under the user's control and can be released wholly or in part to the requesting site. *Acronym:* OPS. *See also* cookie, digital certificate.

open shop *n.* A computer facility that is open to users and not restricted to programmers or other personnel. An open shop is one in which people can work on or attempt to solve computer problems on their own rather than handing them over to a specialist.

Open Shortest Path First *n.* *See* OSPF.

Open Software Foundation *n.* *See* OSF.

open source *n.* The practice of making the source code (program instructions) for a software product freely available, at no cost, to interested users and developers, even though they were not involved in creating the original product. The distributors of open source software expect and encourage users and outside programmers to examine the code in order to identify problems, and to modify the code with suggested improvements and enhancements. Widely used open source products include the Linux operating system and the Apache Web server.

open standard *n.* A publicly available set of specifications describing the characteristics of a hardware device or software program. Open standards are published to encourage interoperability and thereby help popularize new technologies. *See also* standard (definition 2).

open system *n.* **1.** In communications, a computer network designed to incorporate all devices—regardless of the manufacturer or model—that can use the same communications facilities and protocols. **2.** In reference to computer hardware or software, a system that can accept add-ons produced by third-party suppliers. *See also* open architecture (definition 1).

Open Systems Interconnection reference model *n.* *See* ISO/OSI reference model.

OpenType *n.* A collaborative initiative by Microsoft and Adobe to unify support for Microsoft TrueType and Adobe PostScript Type 1 fonts. The OpenType font format enables font creators and users to work with the font type that best suits their needs without having to worry about

whether the font is based on TrueType or PostScript technology. *Also called:* TrueType Open version 2. *See also* PostScript font, TrueType.

Opera *n.* A Web browser developed by Opera Software S/A. Opera is notable for its strict W3C standards support. Opera is often chosen by Web developers to test Web sites for W3C compliance. *See also* W3C, Web browser.

operand *n.* The object of a mathematical operation or a computer instruction.

operating system *n.* The software that controls the allocation and usage of hardware resources such as memory, central processing unit (CPU) time, disk space, and peripheral devices. The operating system is the foundation software on which applications depend. Popular operating systems include Windows 98, Windows NT, Mac OS, and UNIX. *Acronym:* OS. *Also called:* executive.

operation *n.* **1.** A specific action carried out by a computer in the process of executing a program. **2.** In mathematics, an action performed on a set of entities that produces a new entity. Examples of mathematical operations are addition and subtraction.

operation code *n.* The portion of a machine language or assembly language instruction that specifies the type of instruction and the structure of the data on which it operates. *Also called:* opcode. *See also* assembly language, machine code.

operations research *n.* The use of mathematical and scientific approaches to analyze and improve efficiency in business, management, government, and other areas. Developed around the beginning of World War II, operations research was initially used to improve military operations during the war. The practice later spread to business and industry as a means of breaking down systems and procedures and studying their parts and interactions to improve overall performance. Operations research involves use of the critical path method, statistics, probability, and information theory.

operator *n.* **1.** In mathematics and in programming and computer applications, a symbol or other character indicating an operation that acts on one or more elements. *See also* binary¹, unary. **2.** A person who controls a machine or system such as a computer or telephone switchboard.

operator associativity *n.* A characteristic of operators that determines the order of evaluation in an expression