



RANDOM HOUSE  
WEBSTER'S

# COMPUTER & INTERNET DICTIONARY

THIRD EDITION



- Over 3,000 Computer Terms Clearly Explained
- Covers the Latest Technology Including the World Wide Web

**Philip E. Margolis**  
Creator of [www.pcwebopaedia.com](http://www.pcwebopaedia.com)

*Random House Webster's Computer & Internet Dictionary, Third Edition*

Copyright © 1999 by Philip E. Margolis

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without the written permission of the publisher. All inquiries should be addressed to Random House Reference & Information Publishing, Random House, Inc., 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022-7703. Published in the United States by Random House, Inc., New York and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited.

The Random House Living Dictionary Database™, is a trademark of Random House, Inc.

**Trademarks**

A number of entered words which we have reason to believe constitute trademarks have been designated as such. However, no attempt has been made to designate as trademarks or service marks all terms or words in which proprietary rights might exist. The inclusion, exclusion, or definition of a word or term is not intended to affect, or to express a judgment on, the validity or legal status of the word or term as a trademark, service mark, or other proprietary term.

This book is available for special purchases in bulk by organizations and institutions, not for resale, at special discounts. Please direct your inquiries to the Random House Special Sales Department, toll-free 888-591-1200 or fax 212-572-4961.

Please address inquiries about electronic licensing of reference products, for use on a network or in software or on CD-ROM, to the Subsidiary Rights Department, Random House Reference & Information Publishing, fax 212-940-7370.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Margolis, Philip E.

Random House Webster's computer & internet dictionary / Philip E.

Margolis. -- 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Rev. ed. of: Random House personal computer dictionary. 2nd ed.  
c1996.

Includes biographical references and index.

ISBN 0-375-70351-9

1. Microcomputers--Dictionaries. 2. Computers--Dictionaries.

I. Margolis, Philip E. Random House personal computer dictionary.

II. Title.

QA76.15.M37 1998

004.16'03--dc21

98-45280

CIP

[www.randomwords.com](http://www.randomwords.com)

Typeset and printed in the United States of America.

1999 Third Random House Edition

0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

January 2000

ISBN: 0-375-70351-9

New York Toronto London Sydney Auckland

**Micro Channel Architecture (MCA)** A bus architecture for older PCs. It is called a bus *architecture* because it defines how peripheral devices and internal components communicate across the computer's expansion bus. Introduced by IBM in 1987, MCA was designed to take the place of the older AT bus, the architecture used on IBM PC-ATs and compatibles. For a variety of reasons, however, the industry never accepted the new architecture.

⇒ See also AT BUS; BUS; LOCAL BUS.

**microcode 1.** The lowest-level instructions that directly control a microprocessor. A single machine-language instruction typically translates into several microcode instructions.

In modern PC microprocessors, the microcode is hardwired and can't be modified. Some RISC designs go one step further by completely eliminating the microcode level so that machine instructions directly control the processor. At the other end of the spectrum, some mainframe and minicomputer architectures utilize *programmable* microcode. In this case, the microcode is stored in EEPROM, which can be modified. This is called *microprogramming*. **2.** Some people use *microcode* as a synonym for *firmware*.

⇒ See also INSTRUCTION; MACHINE LANGUAGE; MICROPROCESSOR.

**Microcom Networking Protocol** See MNP.

**microcomputer** Same as PERSONAL COMPUTER.

**microcontroller** A highly integrated chip that contains all the components making up a controller. Typically this includes a CPU, RAM, some form of ROM, I/O ports, and timers. Unlike a general-purpose computer, which also includes all of these components, a microcontroller is designed for a very specific task—to control a particular system. As a result, the parts can be simplified and reduced, which cuts down on production costs.

Microcontrollers are sometimes called *embedded microcontrollers*, which just means that they are part of an embedded system—that is, one part of a larger device or system.

⇒ See also CONTROLLER; EMBEDDED SYSTEM; MICROPROCESSOR.

**microfloppy disk** An old name for the small, 3.5-inch floppy disks. PCs support two types of microfloppies:

- Double-density microfloppies hold 720K (kilobytes).
- High-density microfloppies can store 1.44MB (megabytes).

For Macintosh computers, which have always used microfloppies, there are three sizes:

- **Single-sided** standard microfloppies hold 400K.
- **Double-sided** standard microfloppies hold 800 K.