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Computer Dictionary

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data. Double-density disks increased that capacity to 360 KB. Double-density disks use modified frequency modulation encoding for storing data. *See also* floppy disk, microfloppy disk, modified frequency modulation encoding. *Compare* high-density disk.

double-dereference *vb.* To dereference a pointer that is pointed to by another pointer; in other words, to access the information pointed to by a handle. *See also* dereference, handle (definition 1), pointer (definition 1).

double leap year *n.* The mistaken idea that the year 2000 would have two leap days—February 29 and February 30—instead of one. In actuality, there was a potential leap year problem in 2000, but it was based on three rules for calculating leap years: (1) A year is a leap year if it is divisible by 4, *but* (2) not if it is divisible by 100, *unless* (3) it is also divisible by 400. Thus, 1900 was not a leap year, but 2000 is, although systems based on incorrect algorithms may not recognize it as a leap year and so may have difficulties functioning correctly after February 28, 2000.

double posting *n.* In newsgroup discussions, the practice of replying to one's own posts. Because it may be seen as the digital equivalent to talking to one's self, double posting is considered an undesirable practice.

double-precision *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of a number stored in twice the amount (two words—typically 8 bytes) of computer memory that is required for storing a less precise (single-precision) number. Double-precision numbers are commonly handled by a computer in floating-point form. *See also* floating-point number. *Compare* single-precision.

double-sided disk *n.* A floppy disk that can hold data on both its top and bottom surfaces.

double slash *n.* *See* //.

double-strike *n.* On an impact printer, such as a daisy-wheel printer, the process of printing twice over a word, producing text that appears darker and heavier, or bolder, than it normally appears. On dot-matrix printers, double striking with a slight offset can be used to fill in the space between the dots, producing smoother and darker characters.

double supertwist nematic display *n.* *See* supertwist display.

double word *n.* A unit of data consisting of two contiguous words (connected bytes, not text) that are handled together by a computer's microprocessor.

doubly linked list *n.* A series of nodes (items representing discrete segments of information) in which each node refers to both the next node and the preceding node. Because of these two-way references, a doubly linked list can be traversed both forward and backward, rather than in a forward direction only, as with a singly linked list.

down *adj.* Not functioning, in reference to computers, printers, communications lines on networks, and other such hardware.

downflow *n.* One of the four stages of the data warehousing process, during which stored information is delivered and archived. *See also* data warehouse². *Compare* inflow, metaflow, upflow.

downlink *n.* The transmission of data from a communications satellite to an earth station.

download *vb.* 1. In communications, to transfer a copy of a file from a remote computer to the requesting computer by means of a modem or network. 2. To send a block of data, such as a PostScript file, to a dependent device, such as a PostScript printer. *Compare* upload.

downloadable font *n.* A set of characters stored on disk and sent (downloaded) to a printer's memory when needed for printing a document. Downloadable fonts are most commonly used with laser printers and other page printers, although many dot-matrix printers can accept some of them. *Also called:* soft font.

Downloadable Sounds *n.* A standard for synthesizing wave sounds from digital samples stored in software. The DLS level 1 and level 2 standards are published by the MIDI Manufacturers Association. *Acronym:* DLS.

downsample *n.* To decrease the number of audio samples or pixels, by applying an operation such as averaging. Popular internet music formats, such as MP3, use downsampling to reduce file size.

downsizing *n.* In computing, the practice of moving from larger computer systems, such as mainframes and minicomputers, to smaller systems in an organization, generally to save costs and to update to newer software. The smaller systems are usually client/server systems composed of a combination of PCs, workstations, and some legacy system such as a mainframe, connected in one or more local area networks or wide area networks. *See also* client/server architecture, legacy system.

downstream¹ *n.* The direction in which information, such as a news feed for a newsgroup or data from an http



soft patch *n.* A fix or modification performed only while the code being patched is loaded into memory, so that the executable or object file is not modified in any way. *See also* patch¹.

soft return *n.* A line break inserted in a document by a word processor when the next word in the current line of text would cause the line to overflow into the margin—a movable line break. *See also* wordwrap. *Compare* hard return.

soft-sectored disk *n.* A disk, especially a floppy disk, whose sectors have been marked with recorded data marks rather than punched holes. *See also* index hole. *Compare* hard-sectored disk.

software *n.* Computer programs; instructions that make hardware work. Two main types of software are system software (operating systems), which controls the workings of the computer, and applications, such as word processing programs, spreadsheets, and databases, which perform the tasks for which people use computers. Two additional categories, which are neither system nor application software but contain elements of both, are network software, which enables groups of computers to communicate, and language software, which provides programmers with the tools they need to write programs. In addition to these task-based categories, several types of software are described based on their method of distribution. These include packaged software (canned programs), sold primarily through retail outlets; freeware and public domain software, which are distributed free of charge; shareware, which is also distributed free of charge, although users are requested to pay a small registration fee for continued use of the program; and vaporware, software that is announced by a company or individuals but either never makes it to market or is very late. *See also* application, canned software, freeware, network software, operating system, shareware, system software, vaporware. *Compare* firmware, hardware, liveware.

Software & Information Industry Association *n.* *See* SIIA.

software-based modem *n.* A modem that uses a general-purpose, reprogrammable digital signal processor chip and RAM-based program memory rather than a dedicated chip with the modem functions burned into the silicon. A software-based modem can be reconfigured to update and change the modem's features and functions.

software bloat *n.* A software condition caused by the addition of excessive number of possibly unnecessary features and functions as new versions of the software are released. Software bloat is generally assumed to result in long loading times and inordinate resource (memory and storage) requirements. *See also* bloatware, creeping featurism.

software conversion *n.* Changing or moving a program designed to run on one computer to run on another. Usually this involves detailed (professional) work on the program itself.

software-dependent *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or being a computer or device that is tied to a particular program or set of programs developed for it.

software development kit *n.* *See* developer's kit.

software engineer *n.* **1.** In general, one who works at the code level with software. Although such engineering can be considered to encompass everything from software design to management and testing, the term is generally considered more or less synonymous with *programmer*—one who actually writes the code. **2.** *See* developer.

software engineering *n.* The design and development of software. *See also* programming.

software handshake *n.* A handshake that consists of signals transmitted over the same wires used to transfer the data, as in modem-to-modem communications over telephone lines, rather than signals transmitted over special wires. *See also* handshake.

software house *n.* An organization that develops and supports software for its customers.

software IC *n.* *See* software integrated circuit.

software integrated circuit *n.* An existing software module that can be designed into a program, much as an integrated circuit can be designed into a logic board. *Abbreviation:* software IC. *See also* abstract data type, module (definition 1), object-oriented programming.

software interrupt *n.* A program-generated interrupt that stops current processing in order to request a service provided by an interrupt handler (a separate set of instructions designed to perform the task required). *Also called:* trap.

software package *n.* A program sold to the public, ready to run and containing all necessary components and documentation.

software piracy *n.* *See* piracy.