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Computer Dictionary

Fifth Edition

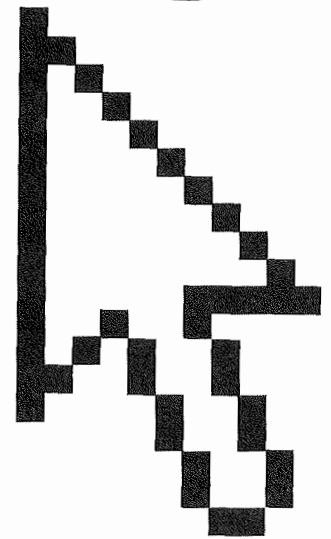
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Computer Dictionary

Fifth Edition



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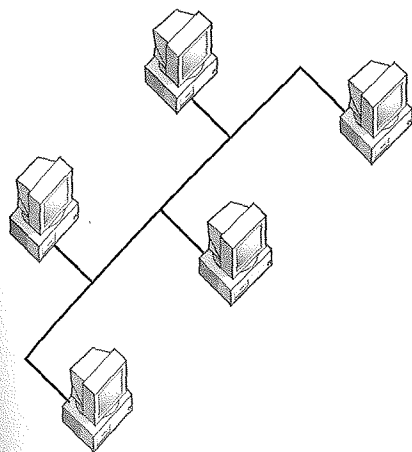
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Acquisitions Editor: Alex Blanton

Project Editor: Sandra Haynes

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Bus network. A bus network configuration.

bus system *n.* The interface circuitry that controls the operations of a bus and connects it with the rest of the computer system. *See also* bus.

bus topology *n.* *See* bus network.

button *n.* **1.** A graphic element in a dialog box that, when activated, performs a specified function. The user activates a button by clicking on it with a mouse or, if the button has the focus, by hitting the Return or Enter key. **2.** On a mouse, a movable piece that is pressed to activate some function. Older mouse models have only one button; newer models typically have two or more buttons.

button bomb *n.* A button on Web pages with the image of a bomb.

button help *n.* Help information displayed via the selection of buttons or icons. Applications such as the World Wide Web, multimedia kiosks, and computer-aided instruction often use button help icons to ease system navigation.

bypass *n.* In telecommunications, the use of communication pathways other than the local telephone company, such as satellites and microwave systems.

byte *n.* Short for **binary term**. A unit of data, today almost always consisting of 8 bits. A byte can represent a single character, such as a letter, a digit, or a punctuation mark. Because a byte represents only a small amount of information, amounts of computer memory and storage are usually given in kilobytes (1024 bytes), megabytes (1,048,576 bytes), or gigabytes (1,073,741,824 bytes).

Abbreviation: B. *See also* bit, gigabyte, kilobyte, megabyte. *Compare* octet, word.

bytecode *n.* An encoding of a computer program that a compiler produces when the original source code is processed. This encoding is in an abstract, processor-independent form that cannot be directly executed by most CPUs but is highly suitable for further analysis (for example, compiler optimization), for processing by interpreters (for example, executing Java applets within Web browsers), or for use in generation of binary instructions for the target computer's CPU. Intermediate bytecode production is a feature of the compilers for the Pascal and Java programming languages. *See also* central processing unit, compiler (definition 2), interpreter, Java, Java applet, Pascal.

BYTE Information Exchange *n.* *See* BIX.

byte-oriented protocol *n.* A communications protocol in which data is transmitted as a string of characters in a particular character set, such as ASCII, rather than as a stream of bits as in a bit-oriented protocol. To express control information, a byte-oriented protocol relies on control characters, most of which are defined by the coding scheme used. The asynchronous communications protocols commonly used with modems and IBM's BISYNC protocol are byte-oriented protocols. *Compare* bit-oriented protocol.

bytes per inch *n.* The number of bytes that fit into an inch of length on a disk track or a tape. *Acronym:* BPI.

ent for the number
ont that can fit into a
ected by two
d the width of the
asured. In monospace
th; in proportional
. Thus, measure-
r inch must be aver-
pace font, pitch

asure of the speed of a
x or an ink-jet printer.
device, such as a disk
mmunications, the
d can generally be
ation of the number of
Acronym: CPS.

acters treated as a unit
xt rather than numbers.
sequence of elements
letters, numbers, con-
II characters. *Also*
ontrol character, extended

such as boldface, italic,
o a character. Depending
m considered, the range
r might not include the
f a group of characters in

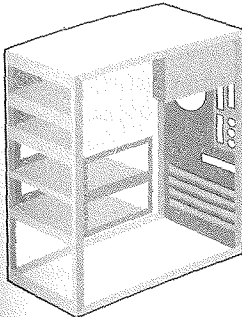
user interface that dis-
ym: CUI. *See also* user
er interface.

mic particles, which can
a positive charge. In elec-
er an excess of electrons
cy of electrons (a positive
e coulomb, which corre-

evice in which individual
connected so that the elec-
e device provides the input
component of digital cam-
a charge-coupled device.

chart *n.* A graphic or diagram that displays data or the relationships between sets of data in pictorial rather than numeric form.

chassis *n.* A metal frame on which electronic components, such as printed circuit boards, fans, and power supplies, are mounted. *See the illustration.*



Chassis.

chat¹ *n.* 1. Real-time conversation via computer. When a participant types a line of text and then presses the Enter key, that participant's words appear on the screens of the other participants, who can then respond in kind. Most online services support chat; on the Internet, IRC is the usual system. *See also* IRC. 2. An Internet utility program that supports chat. IRC has largely superseded it.

chat² *vb.* To carry on a real-time conversation with other users by computer. *See also* IRC.

chat room *n.* The informal term for a data communication channel that links computers and permits users to "converse" by sending text messages to one another in real time. Similar to the channels provided by IRC (Internet Relay Chat), chat rooms are available through online services and some electronic bulletin board systems (BBSs). Chat rooms are often devoted to a particular subject or are conducted on a certain schedule. *See also* BBS, chat, IRC, room.

Cheapernet *n.* *See* 10Base2.

cheat code *n.* In computer games, a secret keyboard sequence or code that gives a player an advantage in the game. For example, cheat codes often confer more ammunition, lives, or the ability to fly or walk through obstacles. *See also* adventure games, computer games.

check bit *n.* One of a set of bits that are added to a data message at its origin and scrutinized by the receiving process to determine whether an error has occurred during

transmission. The simplest example is a parity bit. *See also* data integrity, parity bit.

check box *n.* An interactive control often found in graphical user interfaces. Check boxes are used to enable or disable one or more features or options from a set. When an option is selected, an x or a check mark appears in the box. *See also* control (definition 2). *Compare* radio button.

check digit *n.* A digit added to an account number or other identifying key value and then recomputed when the number is used. This process determines whether an error occurred when the number was entered. *See also* checksum.

checkpoint *n.* 1. A processing juncture at which the normal operation of a program or system is momentarily suspended in order to determine its environmental status. 2. A file containing information that describes the state of the system (the environment) at a particular time.

checksum *n.* A calculated value that is used to test data for the presence of errors that can occur when data is transmitted or when it is written to disk. The checksum is calculated for a given chunk of data by sequentially combining all the bytes of data with a series of arithmetic or logical operations. After the data is transmitted or stored, a new checksum is calculated in the same way using the (possibly faulty) transmitted or stored data. If the two checksums do not match, an error has occurred and the data should be transmitted or stored again. Checksums cannot detect all errors, and they cannot be used to correct erroneous data. *See also* error-correction coding.

Cheese worm *n.* An Internet worm that patches security holes created by the Lion worm. The Cheese worm searches out and infects Linux-based systems that were previously compromised by the Lion worm, repairing vulnerabilities and closing a back door left by the earlier infection. It then uses the healed computer to scan for other vulnerable computers connected to the Internet and sends itself to them.

Chernobyl packet *n.* A form of network attack in which a data packet sent by a hacker activates every available option for the protocol in use on the receiving system. The Chernobyl packet will cause a packet storm that will eventually overload and crash the network. *Also called:* kamikaze packet.

Chernobyl virus *n.* *See* CIH virus.

chiclet keyboard *n.* A microcomputer keyboard used on the first version of the IBM PCjr home computer. Chiclet keys are small and square, resembling the chewing gum

D

drop-down menu *n.* A menu that drops from the menu bar when requested and remains open without further action until the user closes it or chooses a menu item. *Compare* pull-down menu.

drop in *vb.* To read a spurious signal during a data read/write operation, producing erroneous data.

droplet *n.* **1.** An extension for Quark XPress that allows files to be dragged onto a page from the finder. **2.** A feature from Frontier that allows scripts to be embedded within an application and run when the application is double-clicked. **3.** A general name for any AppleScript program that allows files to be dragged and dropped into it for processing. *See also* AppleScript.

drop out *vb.* To lose the signal momentarily during a data read/write operation, thus producing erroneous data.

drum *n.* A rotating cylinder used with some printers and plotters and (in the early days of mainframe computing) as a magnetic storage medium for data. In laser printers, a rotating drum is coated with a photoelectric material that retains a charge when struck by a laser beam. The electrically charged spots on the drum then attract toner particles that the drum transfers to the paper as the paper passes by.

drum plotter *n.* A plotter in which paper is wrapped around a large revolving drum, with a pen that moves back and forth at the uppermost point on the drum. The paper is rolled with the drum to align the correct point on the paper with the pen. Drums take up a fraction of the space required by flatbed plotters that can handle the same paper size. They also effectively have no limit on the length of the paper they can handle, which can be an advantage in some applications. *See also* plotter. *Compare* flatbed plotter, pinch-roller plotter.

drum scanner *n.* A type of scanner where the medium being scanned, such as a sheet of paper, is rotated around a stationary scan head. *See also* scanner. *Compare* feed scanner, flatbed scanner, handheld scanner.

.drv *n.* The file extension for a driver file. *See also* driver.

dry run *n.* Running a program intended to have a dramatic effect, such as formatting a disk or printing a book, with the effect disabled, thus avoiding formatting a disk with data on it or wasting paper.

DS *n.* Acronym for **D**igital **S**ervices or **D**igital **S**ignal, a category used in referencing the speed, number of channels, and transmission characteristics of T1, T2, T3, and T4 communications lines. The basic DS unit, or level, is

known as DS-0, which corresponds to the 64 Kbps speed of a single T1 channel. Higher levels are made up of multiple DS-0 levels. DS-1 represents a single T1 line that transmits at 1.544 Mbps. For higher rates, T1 lines are multiplexed to create DS-2 (a T2 line consisting of four T1 channels that transmits at 6.312 Mbps), DS-3 (a T3 line consisting of 28 T1 channels that transmits at 44.736 Mbps), and DS-4 (a T4 line consisting of 168 T1 channels that transmits at 274.176 Mbps).

DSA *n.* **1.** Acronym for **D**irectory **S**ystem **A**gent or **D**irectory **S**erver **A**gent. An X.500 server program that looks up the address of a user on the network when requested by a DUA (Directory User Agent). *See also* agent (definition 3), CCITT X series, DUA. **2.** *See* Digital Signature Algorithm.

DSL *n.* Acronym for **D**igital **S**ubscriber **L**ine, a recently developed (late 1990s) digital communications technology that can provide high-speed transmissions over standard copper telephone wiring. DSL is often referred to as xDSL, where the *x* stands for one or two characters that define variations of the basic DSL technology. Currently, ADSL (Asymmetric DSL) is the form most likely to be provided, but even it is, as yet, available only to limited groups of subscribers. *See also* ADSL, DSL Lite, HDSL, RADSL, SDSL, VDSL.

DSLAM *n.* Acronym for **D**igital **S**ubscriber **L**ine **A**ccess **M**ultiplexer. A device in a telephone company central office that splits DSL subscriber lines and connects them to Internet network hosts and to the public telephone network. The use of a DSLAM makes it possible to provide both voice and data service through a single pair of copper wires.

DSL Lite *n.* Short for **D**igital **S**ubscriber **L**ine **L**ite. A variation of ADSL currently under development that simplifies installation but transmits more slowly, at 1.544 Mbps. *See also* ADSL, DSL.

DSO *n.* Acronym for **D**ynamic **S**hared **O**bject. An Apache HTTP server module that supports all UNIX-based platforms. DSO uses a dynamically linked shared library of resources that are loaded and executed only at run time when necessary. DSO is most commonly used with Linux and is included in most Linux distributions.

DSOM *n.* *See* Distributed System Object Model.

DSP *n.* *See* digital signal processor.

DSR *n.* Acronym for **D**ata **S**et **R**eady. A signal used in serial communications sent, for example, by a modem to the computer to which it is attached, to indicate that it is

l to a specific
grade of service of
has a 99.8 percent
ified period will

colors and shades,
r, or from one shade

veloped by Palm to
sonal digital assis-
rogrammed shapes for
ation must match as
t is written directly
a stylus. The Graffiti
1 letter to the PDA's

Apple Macintosh to
its own pen size, font,
w has a grafPort, and
ics to off-screen win-

etric forms, similar to
itals are often used in
e synthetic images of
See also fractal.

accessory that checks
struction.

ige *n.* See GSL.

efinition 1).

ze generation (defini-

definition 2).

m "coarse" to "fine," of a
h as screen resolution,
ice allocation) in terms of
ixels, sets of data, or time
e coarser the granularity.

data structure consisting of
more edges, which connect
s in a graph can be con-
ne graph is said to be con-
of the nodes and edges
ected (a digraph) if each
only in one direction. A

graph is weighted if each edge has some value associated with it. *See also* node (definition 3), tree. **2.** *See* chart.

Graphical Device Interface *n.* *See* GDI.

graphical interface *n.* *See* graphical user interface.

Graphical Kernel System *n.* A computer graphics standard, recognized by ANSI and ISO, that specifies methods of describing, manipulating, storing, and transferring graphical images. It functions at the application level rather than the hardware level and deals with logical workstations (combinations of input and output devices such as keyboard, mouse, and monitor) rather than with individual devices. Graphical Kernel System was developed in 1978 to handle two-dimensional graphics; the later modification, GKS-3D, extended the standard to three-dimensional graphics. *Acronym:* GKS. *See also* ANSI, ISO.

graphical user interface *n.* A visual computer environment that represents programs, files, and options with graphical images, such as icons, menus, and dialog boxes, on the screen. The user can select and activate these options by pointing and clicking with a mouse or, often, with the keyboard. A particular item (such as a scroll bar) works the same way for the user in all applications, because the graphical user interface provides standard software routines to handle these elements and report the user's actions (such as a mouse click on a particular icon or at a particular location in text, or a key press); applications call these routines with specific parameters rather than attempting to reproduce them from scratch. *Acronym:* GUI.

graphic character *n.* Any character that is represented by a visible symbol, such as an ASCII character. A graphic character is not the same as a graphics character. *Compare* graphics character.

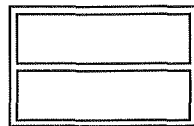
graphic limits *n.* On a computer screen, the boundary of a graphical image in a graphics software program, including all the area enclosed within the graphic. In some graphics environments the limits of a graphic consist of the smallest rectangle that can completely enclose it, called its *bounding rectangle* or *bounding box*.

graphics accelerator *n.* A video adapter that contains a graphics coprocessor. A graphics accelerator can update the video display much more quickly than the CPU can, and it frees the CPU for other tasks. A graphics accelerator is a necessity for modern software such as graphical user interfaces and multimedia applications. *See also* graphics coprocessor, video adapter.

graphics adapter *n.* A video adapter capable of displaying graphics as well as alphanumeric characters. Almost all video adapters in common use today are graphics adapters.

graphics card *n.* *See* video adapter.

graphics character *n.* A character that can be combined with others to create simple graphics, such as lines, boxes, and shaded or solid blocks. *See* the illustration. *Compare* graphic character.



Graphics character. Box built up from line graphics characters.

graphics controller *n.* The part of the EGA and VGA video adapters that allows the computer to access the video buffer. *See also* EGA, VGA.

graphics coprocessor *n.* A specialized microprocessor, included in some video adapters, that can generate graphical images such as lines and filled areas in response to instructions from the CPU, freeing the CPU for other work.

graphics data structure *n.* A data structure that is designed specifically for representing one or more elements of a graphical image.

graphics engine *n.* **1.** A display adapter that handles high-speed graphics-related processing, freeing the CPU for other tasks. *Also called:* graphics accelerator, video accelerator. **2.** Software that, based on commands from an application, sends instructions for creating graphic images to the hardware that actually creates the images. Examples are Macintosh QuickDraw and Windows Graphics Device Interface (GDI).

graphics export component *n.* A technology developed by Apple for creating, editing, publishing, and viewing multimedia content. The graphics export component provides an application programming interface that enables a QuickTime player to export still images into a variety of file formats.

graphics import component *n.* A technology developed by Apple for creating, editing, publishing, and viewing multimedia content. The graphics import component provides an application programming interface that enables a QuickTime player to import still images from a variety of file formats.

transceiver *n.* Short for **transmitter/receiver**. A device that can both transmit and receive signals. On LANs (local area networks), a transceiver is the device that connects a computer to the network and that converts signals to and from parallel and serial form.

transceiver cable *n.* A cable that is used to connect a host adapter within a computer to a LAN (local area network). *See also* AUI cable, LAN.

transducer *n.* A device that converts one form of energy into another. Electronic transducers either convert electric energy to another form of energy or convert nonelectric to electric energy.

transfer¹ *n.* **1.** The movement of data from one location to another. **2.** The passing of program control from one portion of code to another.

transfer² *vb.* To move data from one place to another, especially within a single computer. *Compare* transmit.

transfer rate *n.* The rate at which a circuit or a communications channel transfers information from source to destination, as over a network or to and from a disk drive. Transfer rate is measured in units of information per unit of time—for example, bits per second or characters per second—and can be measured either as a raw rate, which is the maximum transfer speed, or as an average rate, which includes gaps between blocks of data as part of the transmission time.

transfer statement *n.* A statement in a programming language that transfers the flow of execution to another location in the program. *See also* branch instruction, CALL statement, GOTO statement, jump instruction.

transfer time *n.* The time elapsed between the start of a data transfer operation and its completion.

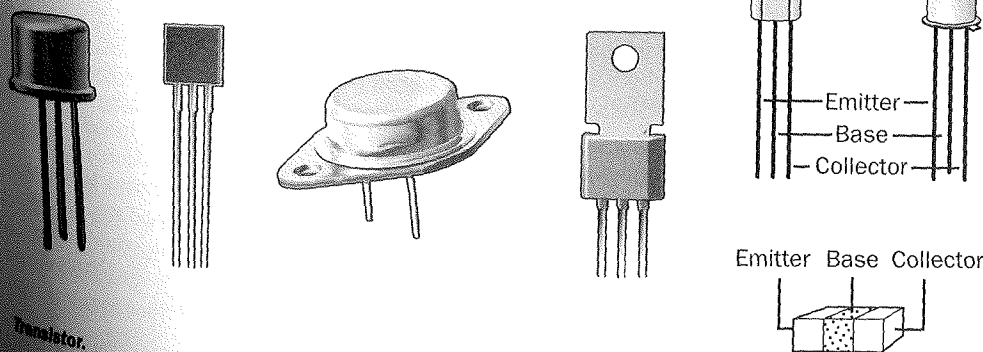
transform *vb.* **1.** To change the appearance or format of data without altering its content; that is, to encode information according to predefined rules. **2.** In mathematics and computer graphics, to alter the position, size, or nature of an object by moving it to another location (translation), making it larger or smaller (scaling), turning it (rotation), changing its description from one type of coordinate system to another, and so on.

transformer *n.* A device used to change the voltage of an alternating current signal or to change the impedance of an alternating current circuit.

transient *adj.* **1.** Fleeting, temporary, or unpredictable. **2.** Of or pertaining to the region of memory used for programs, such as applications, that are read from disk storage and that reside in memory temporarily until they are replaced by other programs. In this context, *transient* can also refer to the programs themselves. **3.** In electronics, of or pertaining to a short-lived, abnormal, and unpredictable increase in power supply, such as a voltage spike or surge. *Transient time* is the interval during which a change in current or voltage is building up or decaying.

transient suppressor *n.* A circuit designed to reduce or eliminate unwanted electrical signals or voltages.

transistor *n.* Short for **transfer resistor**. A solid-state circuit component, usually with three leads, in which a voltage or a current controls the flow of another current. The transistor can serve many functions, including those of amplifier, switch, and oscillator, and is a fundamental component of almost all modern electronics. *See the illustration. See also* base (definition 3), FET, NPN transistor, PNP transistor.



or characteristic of com-
out the use of intercon-
y radio, microwave, or

WAP *n.* A specification for a
tal cellular phones and
Internet and other infor-
application Protocol, or
ation known as WAP
bers as Motorola, Nokia,
met. The goal of the
ard that works with differ-
ym: WAP.

ommunication between a
r device without wires.
ion provided as part of the
nfrared light to transmit
y cellular and cordless
ireless communication.
infrared port.

n. See WID.

the Internet designed for
held devices with small
, and slower data transmis-
puter. Most wireless Inter-
xt with limited graphics.

area network) that sends
ired optical signaling, or
not require a physical
odes and the hub. Wire-
ce or factory settings
le computer from place to

n. See WML.

n. See WMF (definition 2).

at operates by means of
ection. A base station
gnal to a wireless carrier's
to another wireless phone

component *n.* A component
carrier to configure and
tion acquisition/encoding/
te a data stream to be trans-
ie server component builds

on an open architecture to allow new server components to
be installed in any part of the stream at any time.

Wireless Transaction Protocol *n.* A lightweight
request/reply transaction protocol for devices with limited
resources over networks with low to medium bandwidth.
It is not called the Wireless Transport Protocol or the
Wireless Transfer Protocol. *Acronym:* WTP.

Wireless Transport Layer Security *n.* See WTLS.

wire-pin printer *n.* See dot-matrix printer.

wire-wrapped circuits *n.* Circuits constructed on perfor-
ated boards using wire instead of the metal traces found
on printed circuit boards. The stripped ends of insulated
wires are wrapped around the long pins of special wire-
wrapped integrated circuit sockets. Wire-wrapped circuits
are generally handmade, one-of-a-kind devices used for
prototyping and research in electrical engineering. *Com-
pare* printed circuit board.

wiring closet *n.* A room or location in a building where
telecommunications and/or networking equipment such as
hubs, switches, and routers are installed. *Also called:* data
closet, telecom closet, telecommunications closet.

wizard *n.* **1.** Someone who is adept at making computers
perform their "magic." A wizard is an outstanding and cre-
ative programmer or a power user. *Compare* guru, UNIX
wizard. **2.** A participant in a multiuser dungeon (MUD)
who has permission to control the domain, even to delete
other players' characters. *See also* MUD. **3.** An interactive
help utility within an application that guides the user
through each step of a particular task, such as starting up a
word processing document in the correct format for a busi-
ness letter.

wizywig *n.* See WYSIWYG.

WLAN *n.* See wireless LAN.

WMA *n.* Acronym for Windows Media Audio. *See* Win-
dows Media Audio.

.wmf *n.* A file extension that identifies a vector image
encoded as a Microsoft Windows Metafile.

WMF *n.* **1.** *See* Windows Metafile Format. **2.** Acronym for
Wireless Multimedia Forum. A consortium of technology
companies formed to promote open standards for wireless
streaming products. WMF members include Cisco Systems,
Intel, and the Walt Disney Internet Group. *See also* ISMA.

WMI *n.* *See* Windows Management Instrumentation.

WML *n.* Acronym for Wireless Markup Language. A
markup language developed for Web sites that are
accessed with microbrowsers on Wireless Application
Protocol (WAP)-enabled devices. A Web site written with
WML would be viewable on handheld devices with small
screens, such as cell phones. *See also* markup language,
microbrowser, Wireless Application Protocol.

WMLScript *n.* A scripting language derived from the
JavaScript language for use in the development of Wire-
less Markup Language (WML).

WMM *n.* *See* Windows Movie Maker.

word *n.* The native unit of storage on a particular machine.
A word is the largest amount of data that can be handled by
the microprocessor in one operation and also, as a rule, is
the width of the main data bus. Word sizes of 16 bits and
32 bits are the most common. *Compare* byte, octet.

Word *n.* Microsoft's word processing software, available
for the Windows and Macintosh platforms. In addition to
extensive editing, formatting, and customization features,
Word provides such tools as automatic text completion and
correction. The most recent version, Word 2002 (part of
Office XP) adds Web functionality—for example, the abil-
ity to save documents in HTML format. The first version,
Microsoft Word for MS-DOS 1.00, was introduced in 1983.

word-addressable processor *n.* A processor that cannot
access an individual byte of memory but can access a
larger unit. In order to perform operations on an individual
byte, the processor must read and write memory in the
larger unit. *See also* central processing unit.

WordPerfect Office *n.* A suite of business application
programs from Corel Corporation. The basic (Standard
Edition) WordPerfect Office suite includes the WordPer-
fect word processor, Quattro Pro spreadsheet, Corel Pre-
sentations presentation software, CorelCENTRAL
personal information manager, Microsoft Visual Basic for
Applications scripting tools, and Trellix Web publisher. A
home and small-business package, the Voice-Powered Edi-
tion, adds speech recognition and publishing products; a
business and corporate package, the Professional Edition,
adds database and Internet tools to all of the preceding.

word processing *n.* The act of entering and editing text
with a word processor. *Acronym:* WP.

word processor *n.* An application program for creating
and manipulating text-based documents. A word processor
is the electronic equivalent of paper, pen, typewriter, eraser,
and, most likely, dictionary and thesaurus. Depending on

W

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