



THE ULTIMATE COMPUTER REFERENCE

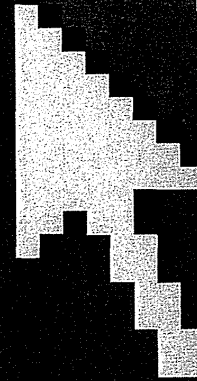
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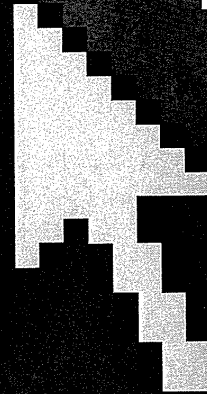
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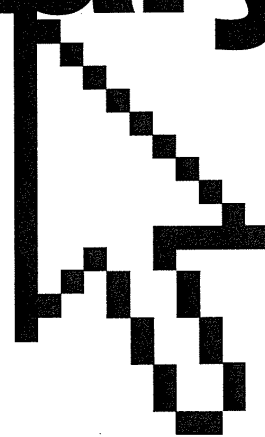
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Fourth
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Contents

Introduction
vii

Dictionary
of Computer Terms
1

Appendix A
ASCII Character Set
494

Appendix B
IBM Extended Character Set
496

Appendix C
Apple Macintosh Extended Character Set
498

Appendix D
EBCDIC Character Set
502

Appendix E
Numeric Equivalents
509

Appendix F
Internet Domains
517

Appendix G
Common File Extensions
527

Appendix H
Year 2000 Problem Reference
536

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Editio
autho
relate
includ
topic:
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jargon
and s

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point-and-click *adj.* Enabling a user to select data and activate programs by using a mouse or other pointing device to move a cursor to a desired location ("point") and pressing a button on the mouse or other pointing device ("click").

PointCast *n.* An Internet service that delivers and displays a personalized set of news articles to individual users. Unlike the World Wide Web and other Internet applications, PointCast is a *push* technology, where the server automatically uploads data without a specific command from the client. *See also* server (definition 2).

point chart *n.* *See* scatter diagram.

point diagram *n.* *See* scatter diagram.

pointer *n.* 1. In programming and information processing, a variable that contains the memory location (address) of some data rather than the data itself. *See also* address¹ (definition 1), handle (definition 1), reference¹. 2. *See* mouse pointer.

pointing device *n.* An input device used to control an on-screen cursor for such actions as "pressing" on-screen buttons in dialog boxes, choosing menu items, and selecting ranges of cells in spreadsheets or groups of words in a document. A pointing device is often used to create drawings or graphical shapes. The most common pointing device is the mouse, which was popularized by its use with the Macintosh. Other pointing devices include graphics tablets, styluses, light pens, joysticks, pucks, and trackballs. *See also* graphics tablet, joystick, light pen, mouse, puck, stylus, trackball.

point listing *n.* A database of popular Web sites categorized by topics of interest and often rated by design and content.

point of presence *n.* 1. A point in a wide area network to which a user can connect with a local telephone call. 2. A point at which a long distance telephone carrier connects to a local telephone exchange or to an individual user. *Acronym:* POP.

point of sale *n.* *See* POS.

point-to-point configuration *n.* A communications link in which dedicated links exist between individual origins and destinations, as opposed to a point-to-multipoint configuration, in which the same signal goes to many destinations (such as a cable TV system), or a switched configuration, in which the signal moves from the origin to a switch that routes

the signal to one of several possible destinations.

Also called point-to-point connection.

point-to-point connection *n.* *See* point-to-point configuration.

Point-to-Point Protocol *n.* *See* PPP.

point-to-point tunneling *n.* A means of setting up secure communications over an open, public network such as the Internet. *See also* PPTP.

Point-to-Point Tunneling Protocol *n.* *See* PPTP.

Poisson distribution \pwo-sōn' dis-trə-byōō'shən/ *n.*

A mathematical curve often used in statistics and simulation to represent the likelihood of some event occurring, such as the arrival of a customer in a queue, when the average likelihood is known. This distribution, named after the French mathematician S. D. Poisson, is simpler to calculate than the normal and binomial distributions. *See also* binomial distribution, normal distribution.

poke *vb.* To store a byte into an absolute memory location. PEEK (read a byte from memory) and POKE commands are often found in programming languages, such as Basic, that do not normally allow access to specific memory locations.

polar coordinates *n.* Coordinates of the form (r , q) used to locate a point in two dimensions (on a plane). The polar coordinate r is the length of the line that starts at the origin and ends at the point, and q (Greek theta) is the angle between that line and the positive x -axis. *Compare* Cartesian coordinates.

polarity *n.* The sign of the potential (voltage) difference between two points in a circuit. When a potential difference exists between two points, one point has a positive polarity and the other a negative polarity. Electrons flow from negative to positive; by convention, however, "current" is considered to flow from positive to negative.

polarized component *n.* A circuit component that must be installed with its leads in a particular orientation with respect to the polarity of the circuit. Diodes, rectifiers, and some capacitors are examples of polarized components.

polarizing filter *n.* A transparent piece of glass or plastic that polarizes the light passing through it; that is, it allows only waves vibrating in a certain direction to pass through. Polarizing filters are often used to reduce glare on monitor screens. *See also* glare filter.