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COMPUTER DICTIONARY

SECOND EDITION



THE COMPREHENSIVE
STANDARD FOR
BUSINESS, SCHOOL,
LIBRARY, AND HOME



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made by multiple processes or users. *See also* contention.

arcade game A coin-operated computer game that offers high-quality screen graphics, sound, and rapid action controlled by one or more players; more generally, any computer game developed in the style of an arcade game, such as those designed to run on the Nintendo Entertainment System. *See also* computer game.

architecture A general term referring to the structure of all or part of a computer system. The term also covers the design of system software, such as the operating system, as well as referring to the combination of hardware and basic software that links the machines on a computer network. Computer architecture refers to an entire structure and to the details needed to make it functional. Thus, computer architecture covers computer systems, chips, circuits, and system programs but typically does not refer to applications, which are required to perform a task but not to make the system run.

Many computer microprocessors have a CISC (complex instruction set computing) architecture. RISC (reduced instruction set computing) processors frequently use a pipelined architecture, which fetches new processor instructions while a current instruction is still executing. A disk subsystem that uses memory to preload and retain information from a disk may be said to have a cached architecture. *See also* cache, closed architecture, CISC, open architecture, pipelining, RISC.

archive To store copies of computer programs and data to ensure against loss in the event that the original materials are deleted or damaged. Archived files can be sent to tape, to floppy disks, or to another computer system.

archive bit A bit, associated with a file, that is used by some backup and restore utility programs to determine whether the file has been backed up. Backup utilities usually alter the state of the archive bit after backing up the file. Whether a file has an archive bit depends on the underlying file system. *See also* backup, bit.

area chart A type of business graphic that uses shading or other highlighting to visually empha-

size the difference between the line connecting one set of data points and the line connecting a separate but related set of data points. An area chart might, for example, be used to show quarterly sales figures for one region as a proportion of a company's total sales for the year. *See the illustration.*



Area chart.

area search In information management, the examination of a group of documents in order to retrieve those related to a particular subject or category.

arg *See* argument.

argument Abbreviated arg. A value or an expression used with an operator or passed to a subprogram (subroutine, procedure, or function). The program then carries out operations using the argument(s). *See also* algorithm, operator, parameter, subprogram.

arithmetic The branch of mathematics dealing with the addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of real numbers.

arithmetic expression In computing, a series of elements joined by arithmetic operators, such as + and -, that can be calculated to produce a value. An arithmetic expression can include data names (or labels) and constants as well as numbers; for example, *PRICE X TAX* is an arithmetic expression, as is 2×4 . *See also* expression.

arithmetic logic unit Abbreviated ALU. The computer's circuitry for arithmetic, comparative, and logical functions. The ALU is an integral part of the computer's microprocessor chip.

arithmetic operation Any of the standard calculations performed in arithmetic—addition,