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By Bryan Pfaffenberger, Ph.D.

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functions unless given startup instructions. These instructions are stored in ROM. A growing trend is toward including substantial portions of the *operating system* on ROM chips instead of on disk. See *EPROM* and *programmable read-only memory (PROM)*.

read/write The capability of a *primary* or *secondary storage* device to record *data* (write) and to play back data previously recorded or saved (read).

read/write file In *MS-DOS*, *Microsoft Windows 95*, and *Operating System/2 (OS/2)*, a file whose *read-only file attribute* is set so the file can be deleted and modified. See *locked file*.

read/write head In a *hard disk* or *floppy disk*, the magnetic recording and playback device that travels back and forth across the surface of the disk, storing and retrieving *data*.

read/write memory See *random-access memory (RAM)*.

Real Audio A *streaming audio* technology developed by Real Audio, Inc., which enables Internet users to begin hearing an audio file moments after they start downloading the file. Quality is that of an AM radio broadcast, which is sufficient for voice broadcasts.

real mode In *Intel* microprocessors, an operating mode in which memory locations are directly mapped by a limited set of registers, producing a total maximum memory size of 1M (and, in practice, 640K, due to the allocation of some of the memory for the use of peripheral devices). Processors prior to the 80286 could work only in the real mode; the 80286 and higher processors can be switched into the *protected mode*, which enables them to address much larger amounts of memory and to support the reliable execution of two or more programs simultaneously (see *multitasking*).

real time The immediate processing of *input*, such as a point-of-sale transaction or a measurement performed by an *analog* laboratory device. The computers used in your car are real-time systems.

real-time clock A battery-powered clock contained in the

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