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functional diagram, which uses special symbols to represent the elements of the system.

functional programming *n.* A style of programming in which all facilities are provided as functions (subroutines), usually without side effects. Pure functional programming languages lack a traditional assignment statement; assignment is usually implemented by copy and modify operations. Functional programming is thought to offer advantages for parallel-processing computers. *See also* side effect.

functional redundancy checking *n.* A method of preventing errors by having two processors execute the same instructions on the same data at the same time. If the results produced by the two processors do not agree, an error has occurred. The Intel Pentium and higher processors have built-in support for functional redundancy checking. *Acronym:* FRC.

functional specification *n.* A description of the scope, objectives, and types of operations that are to be considered in the development of an information-handling system.

function call *n.* A program's request for the services of a particular function. A function call is coded as the name of the function along with any parameters needed for the function to perform its task. The function itself can be a part of the program, be stored in another file and brought into the program when the program is compiled, or be a part of the operating system. *See also* function (definition 2).

function key *n.* Any of the 10 or more keys labeled F1, F2, F3, and so on, that are placed along the left side or across the top of a keyboard (or both) and are used for special tasks by different programs. The meaning of a function key is defined by a program or, in some instances, by the user. Function keys are used in application programs or the operating system to provide either a shortcut for a series of common instructions (such as calling up a program's on-screen help facility) or a feature that is not otherwise available. *See also* key (definition 1). *Compare* Command key, Control key, Escape key.

function library *n.* A collection of routines compiled together. *See also* function (definition 2), library (definition 1), toolbox.

function overloading *n.* The capability of having several routines in a program with the same name. The different functions are distinguished by their parameter types

selects the correct version, based on parameter types and return types. For example, a program might have one trigonometric sine function that uses a floating-point parameter to represent an angle in radians, and another that uses an integer parameter to represent an angle in degrees. In such a program, sin(3.14159/2.0) would return the value 1.0 (because the sine of p/2 radians is 1), but sin(30) would return the value 0.5 (because the sine of 30 degrees is 0.5). *See also* operator overloading.

Function procedure *n.* A procedure that returns a value and that can be used in an expression. You declare a function with the Function statement and end it with the End Function statement.

fuse *n.* A circuit element that burns out or breaks when the current passing through it exceeds a certain level. A fuse protects a circuit from damage caused by excess current. It performs the same function as a circuit breaker, but it cannot be reset, so it must be replaced if it breaks. A fuse consists of a short length of wire of a specific composition and thickness; the thicker the wire, the more current it can pass before the wire melts and breaks the circuit.

fusible link *n.* A circuit component, often part of an integrated circuit, that is designed to break, or burn like a fuse, when a relatively high current is applied. Rather than protecting against excessive current flow, fusible links allow intentional circuit modification in the field. Fusible links were used in PROM chips, and they form the foundation of a kind of integrated circuit known as a field-programmable logic array. One can customize such a circuit "in the field," after it has been made in the factory, by selectively programming high current through certain fusible links and breaking them. *See also* field-programmable logic array, PROM.

fuzzy computing *n.* **1.** A computing technique that deals with vague, incomplete, or ambiguous data in a precise mathematical way while providing solutions based on the human way of thinking. The term fuzzy relates to the type of data it processes, not to the technique itself, which is very exact. Fuzzy computing is also known as fuzzy set theory or fuzzy logic, and covers fuzzy control and fuzzy expert systems, for example. **2.** A computing technology in which the computer interprets data by looking for patterns in problems while completing tasks. Using fuzzy computing, the computer is able to examine patterns in the data it receives and to make inferences based on that data, and act accordingly.