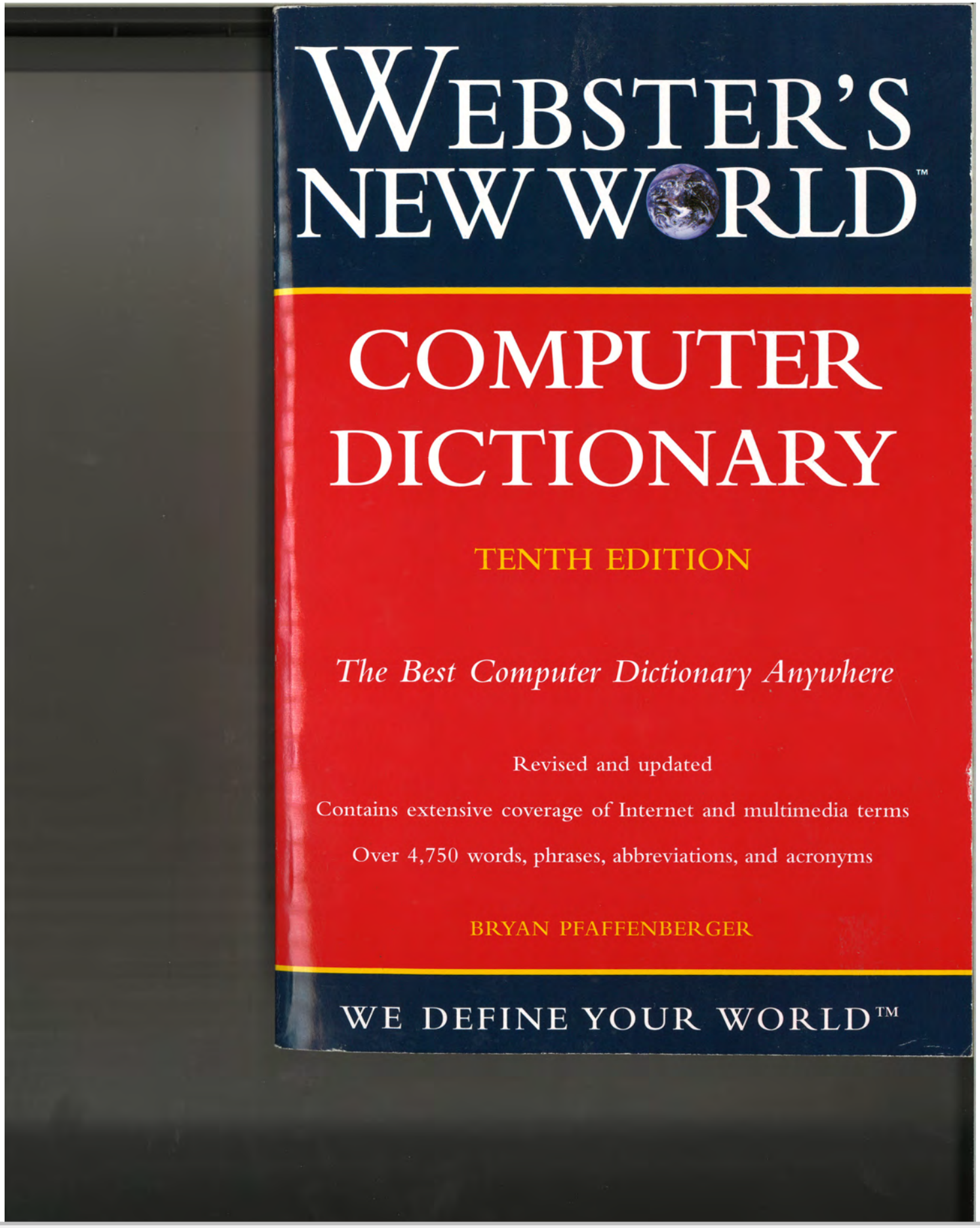

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recorded in both directions, MPEG videos can be played in reverse. See *i-frame*, *inter-frame compression*, *MPEG*, *p-frame*.

BGP Acronym for Border Gateway Protocol. An Internet protocol that defines the routing of Internet data between an autonomous system (AS) and the wider Internet. This protocol replaces the older Exterior Gateway Protocol.

bibliographic retrieval service An online information service that specializes in maintaining huge computerized indexes to scholarly, scientific, medical, and technical literature. The two leading information firms are BRS Information Technologies (Latham, New York) and DIALOG Information Services (Menlo Park, California). Serving mainly corporate and institutional customers, these companies charge fees that average more than $1 per minute. Personal computer users can access, at substantially lower rates, special menu-driven night and weekend versions of these services, BRS/After Dark and Knowledge Index.

bidirectional parallel port A parallel port, capable of both sending and receiving detailed messages, that can transfer data much faster than a standard parallel port. In its standard IEEE 1284, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) established the technical rules governing bidirectional parallel ports. Both the enhanced parallel port (EPP) and the extended capabilities port (ECP) conform to IEEE 1284, and one of the two standards—probably the ECP, experts say—will replace the standard parallel port in the next few years. See *ECP*, *EPP*.

bidirectional printing Printing by means of a bidirectional parallel port, which enables bidirectional communication between the printer and the operating system. With bidirectional printing, detailed error messages appear when the printer malfunctions. See *bidirectional parallel port*.

biff A Unix utility program that notifies users of incoming mail.

Big Blue Nickname for IBM, which uses blue as its corporate color.

big-endian A philosophical orientation toward computer system and network design that favors putting the most significant (largest) digit first in numerical encoding schemes. The contrasting orientation, little-endian, favors putting the most significant digit last. Because it cannot be proven that either orientation is more efficient, the dispute between big-endians and little-endians classically exemplifies the pointless holy war, in which the various positions taken are based on irreducible pseudoreligious principles rather than reason. The terms derive from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which depicts Lilliputian wars concerning whether boiled eggs should be opened at the big end or the little end. See *little-endian*.

big iron Slang term for mainframe.

bin Common abbreviation for binary file.

binaries Two or more binary files.

binary **1.** A system with two possible states, such as a home electrical circuit (on or off). **2.** Abbreviation of binary notation.

binary-coded decimal (BCD) A method of coding long decimal numbers so that they can be processed with great precision in a computer. Each decimal digit is encoded using a 4-bit binary number.

binary-compatible In microprocessors, a high degree of compatibility such that a given microprocessor is capable of running software designed for another company's central processing unit (CPU). In software, a program will run on any microprocessor with which it is binary-compatible. See *microprocessor*.

binary file A file containing data or program instructions in a computer-readable format. Binary files are typically not readable onscreen. The opposite of a binary file is an ASCII file.

the software written to run on another computer. To be truly compatible, a program or device should operate on a given system without changes; all features should operate as intended and run—without changes—all the software that the other computer can run. See *clone*.

competitive local exchange carrier See *CLEC*.

comp hierarchy In Usenet, one of the seven standard newsgroup hierarchies; the comp.* newsgroups deal with all aspects of computing. See *Usenet*.

compiled program A program that has been transformed into machine-readable object code by a compiler. Compiled programs run significantly faster than interpreted programs because the program interacts directly with the microprocessor and does not need to share memory space with the interpreter. See *machine language*.

compiler A program that reads the statements written in a human-readable programming language, such as Pascal or Modula-2, and translates the statements into a machine-readable executable program. See *compiled program*.

Complementary Metal-Oxide Semiconductor See *CMOS*.

complex instruction set computer (CISC) A type of central processing unit (CPU) that can recognize as many as 100 or more instructions, enough to carry out most computations directly. Most microprocessors are CISC chips. The use of reduced instruction set computer (RISC) technology, however, is becoming increasingly common in professional workstations. Apple's G4 processor uses RISC technology.

component **1.** A part or module of a program or package. For example, Netscape Messenger is a component of Netscape Communicator. **2.** An object. See *object-oriented programming*.

Component Object Model See *COM*.

component reusability In programming, the capability of creating a program module that can perform a specific task and be used in another program with little or no modification.

component video A video recording and playback technique that employs separate channels for chrominance (hue and saturation) and luminance (brightness). Component video produces higher resolution and better quality images than composite video. See *composite video*, *NTSC*, *PAL*.

compose sequence A series of keystrokes that allows one to enter a character not found on the computer's keyboard. See *ASCII character set*, *extended character set*.

composite See *comp*.

composite color monitor A monitor that accepts a standard video signal that mixes red, green, and blue signals to produce the color image. Display quality is inferior to that of RGB monitors. See *composite video*.

composite video A method for broadcasting video signals in which the red, green, and blue components, as well as horizontal and vertical synchronization signals, are mixed together. Regulated by the U.S. National Television Standards Committee (NTSC), composite video is used for television. Some computers have composite video outputs that use a standard RCA phono plug and cable, such as on the backplane of a hi-fi or stereo system. See *composite color monitor*, *NTSC*, *RGB monitor*.

compound data type In a high-level programming language, a class of data types that enable more than one value to be stored in a variable. Compound data types include arrays, collections, and objects. See *array*, *collection*, *data type*, *object*, *scalar data type*, *value*, *variable*.

compound device In multimedia, a device such as a MIDI sequencer that reproduces sound or other output that one recorded in a specific media file.

on developing distributed operating systems. See *operating system (OS)*, *Plan 9*.

distributed processing system A computer system designed for multiple users that provides each user with a fully functional computer. In personal computing, distributed processing takes the form of local area networks (LANs), in which the personal computers of the members of a department or organization are linked by high-speed cable connections. Distributed processing offers some advantages over multiuser systems. If the network fails, a person can still work. One also can select software tailored to his or her needs. One can start a distributed processing system with a modest initial investment because he or she needs only two or three workstations and, if desired, a central file server.

distribution **1.** In Usenet, the geographic area throughout which one wants his or her post to be distributed. With most systems, a person can choose from world distribution (the default in most systems), his or her country, his or her state, his or her local area, or his or her organization. One must choose a distribution that is appropriate for his or her message, unless he or she really wants a "Dinette Set for Sale in New Jersey" post to be read in Wollongong, Australia. **2.** A list of users to whom one is sending the same e-mail message. **3.** Synonymous with Linux distribution.

distro Slang term for Linux distribution.

dithering In color or grayscale printing and displays, the mingling of dots of several colors to produce what appears to be a new color. With dithering, one can combine 256 colors to produce what appears to be a continuously variable color palette, but at the cost of sacrificing resolution; the several colors of dots tend to be mingled in patterns rather than blended well.

DLL Acronym for dynamic link library. The file name extension attached to a collection of library routines in Microsoft Windows and Windows-compatible applications.

DMA Acronym for direct memory access. A bus standard that enables compatible devices to access the computer's main memory directly, without the CPU's intervention. The older DMA standard, called third-party DMA, is closely associated with the ISA and is not widely used in newer computer systems. More recent versions, called Ultra DMA, provide superior performance. They are based on a principle called bus mastering, in which the peripheral using the bus becomes its "master," obviating the need for a controller unit. Ultra DMA is also said to use the first-party DMA principle in that it is directly controlled by the active peripheral. See *bus master*, *DMA channel*, *DMA conflict*, *first-party DMA*, *third-party DMA*, *Ultra DMA*.

DMA channel A circuit that enables a peripheral device to access the computer's memory directly instead of going through the processor. Each peripheral must be assigned its own unique DMA channel to avoid a DMA conflict.

DMA conflict A problem that results when two peripherals try to use the same DMA channel. A DMA conflict usually causes a system crash and can be solved by assigning one of the conflicting peripherals a new DMA channel. See *Plug and Play (PnP)*.

DMA controller A chip that controls the flow of data through the DMA channels. By handling the work of regulating data flow through the channels, the DMA controller frees the microprocessor to do other work.

DMI See *Desktop Management Interface*.

DMTF See *Desktop Management Task Force*.

DNS See *domain name system*.

DNS server A program that runs on an Internet-connected computer system and provides an automatic translation between domain names (such as watt.seas.virginia.edu) and IP addresses (such as 128.143.7.186). The purpose of this translation process, called resolution, is to enable

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