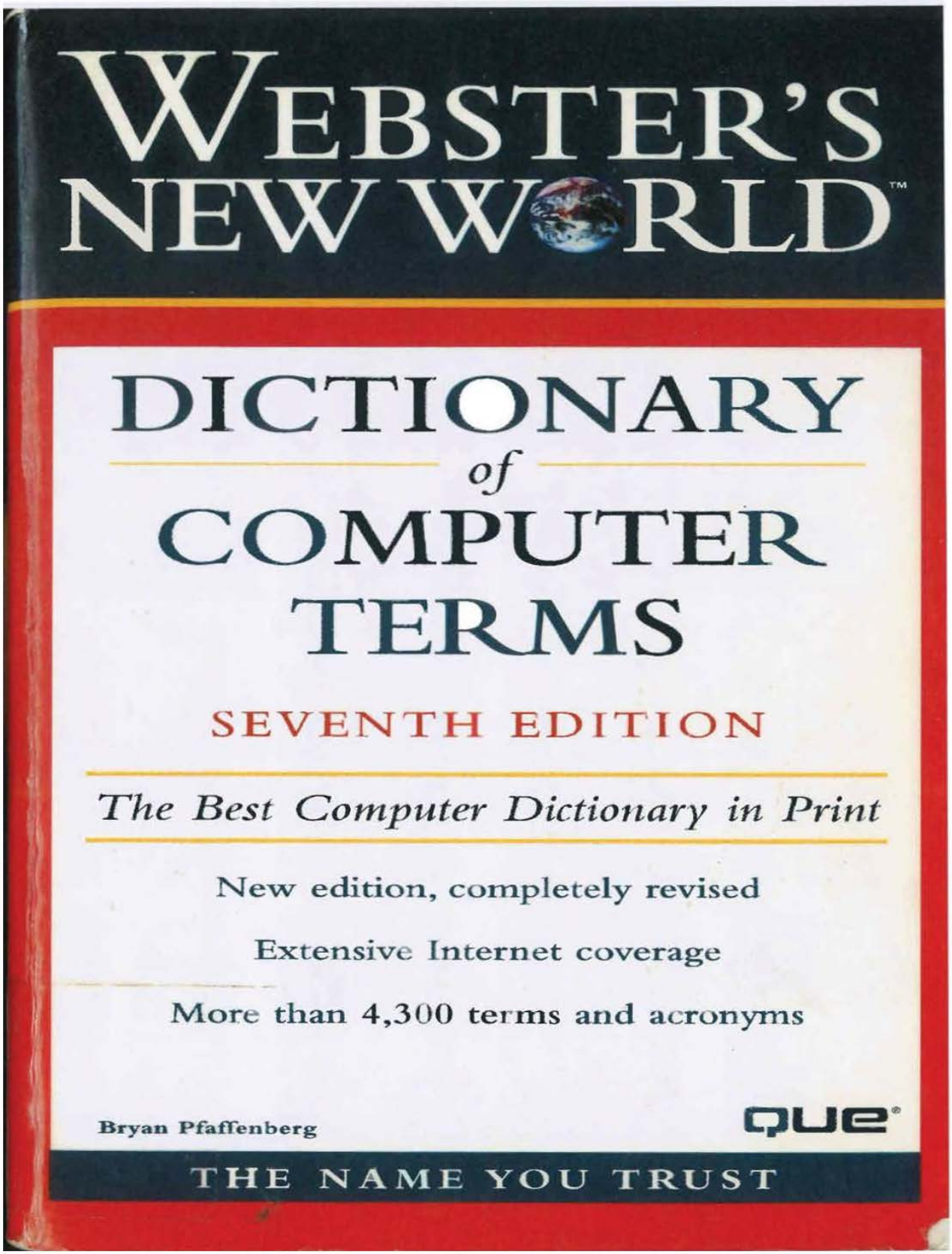

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Webster's New World™

Dictionary of Computer Terms, 7th Edition

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D

DA See *desk accessory.*

DAC Acronym for digital-to-analog converter. Synonymous with *analog-to-digital converter (A/D converter).*

daemon A program, usually on a computer running Unix, that serves some obscure function (such as routing e-mail to its recipients) and usually has a very limited user interface. There's some debate about the origins of the word, but most say it derives from the devilish spirits of Greek mythology.

daisy chain A method of connecting together several devices along a bus and managing the signals for each device. Devices that use a SCSI interface, such as a CD-ROM, hard disk, and scanner, can be daisy-chained to one SCSI port.

daisy chaining In displays, the act of linking several monitors together so they all show the same thing. Daisy chaining is convenient when large numbers of people must see the output of a computer simultaneously, such as at a convention or trade show. See *daisy chain.*

daisywheel printer An obsolete impact printer that simulates the typescript produced by a typewriter. The term daisywheel refers to the metal or plastic disk consisting of characters mounted on spokes connected to a hub, resembling a daisy. To produce a character, the printer spins the wheel until that character is in front of a hammer that strikes the character against an inked ribbon, transferring the image to paper. Daisywheel printers can print many typefaces, but changing fonts within a document is tedious, because you must change the daisywheel manually. See *impact printer.*

DARPA See *Defense Advanced Research Project Agency.*

DASD See *direct access storage device.*

DAT Acronym for Digital Audio Tape. A digital magnetic tape format originally developed for CD-quality audio recording and now used for computer backup tapes. The latest DAT storage format, DDS, specifies storage capacities of up to 24 GB.

data Factual information (such as te
images) in a form that can be processe
Although data is the plural of the Lati
"data" is commonly used to represent
In formal contexts (such as university
engineering departments), the plural (
(datum) are sometimes distinguished.

database A collection of related info
organized in a useful manner that prov
for procedures, such as retrieving infor
sions, and making decisions. Any collec
serves these purposes qualifies as a data
tion isn't stored on a computer. In fact,
of today's sophisticated business databas
on index cards and stored in file cabine
divided into data records, each with on
relational database.

database design The choice and arr
a database so that fundamental errors (s
and repeating fields) are avoided or mi

database driver A program that ena
gram to exchange data with other datab
dBASE.

database management Tasks related
organizing, and retrieving information f
manipulation.

database management program A
that provides the tools for data retrieval,
and insertion. Such programs also can c
duce meaningful output on a printer or
computing, three kinds of database mana
flat-file, relational, and text-oriented. Se

database management system (DB
that organizes data in a database, provid
organization, and retrieval capacities, so
simultaneous access to multiple databas
(relational database management). See *fl*
ment program and *relational database mana*
(RDBMS).

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- Integrity (ensuring that transmitted or stored data is not altered by unauthorized persons in a way that is not detectable by authorized users).
- Nonrepudiation (ensuring that qualified users are not denied access to services that they legitimately expect to receive, and that originators of messages cannot deny that they in fact sent a given message).

seek In a disk drive, to locate a specific region of a disk and to position the read/write head so that the computer can retrieve data or program instructions.

seek time In a secondary storage device, the time that it takes the read/write head to reach the correct location on the disk. See *access time*.

segmented memory architecture A computer memory design in which the addresses of specific locations in the random access memory (RAM) are specified by means of segments (base addresses) and offsets (the number of data elements away from the base address). The use of segments and offsets enables computer system designers to use more system memory than would be permitted by the width of the address bus.

select To highlight part of a document so the program can identify the material on which you want to perform the next operation. In addition to selecting text, you can highlight or select an item from a list box or select a check box item to toggle it on or off.

selection **1.** A portion of a document's text or graphics that has been highlighted in reverse video for formatting or editing purposes. **2.** In programming, a branch or conditional control structure. **3.** In database management programs, the retrieval of records by using a query. See *branch control structure*.

selection control structure In structured programming, a method of handling a program branch by using an IF-THEN-ELSE structure. This is much more efficient than using a GOTO statement. Also called a *conditional* or *branch control structure*.

self-extracting archive A compressed file that contains the software needed to decompress itself. Double-clicking a self-extracting archive launches the decompression portion of the program and decompresses the files.

semantic net In hypertext theory, a
the ideas in a document. To create a h
first "chunk" the document—breaking
"chunks" or units of meaning. For exa
ment on California wines might break
the following categories: wineries, win
California wine, climate of wine-grow
research on wine growing. A separate
each of these topics. Hyperlinks within
every possible connection with every
series of linked documents, which is ca
term is synonymous with web, spelled

semiconductor A material, such as
is less electrically conductive than exce
tors, such as copper, and insulating mat
wafers or chips of varying resistance ca
variety of electronic devices. In person
ductor materials are used for micropro
other circuits. See *integrated circuit*.

sendmail A Unix utility that sends e
accordance with the SMTP protocol. T
use an e-mail client such as Eudora or
is received and stored by the programs
Office Protocol (POP).

send statement In a SLIP or PPP d
guage, a statement that tells the progra
ters. Send statements follow expect stat
program to wait until the service provi
tain characters to your computer.

sensor glove In virtual reality (VR)
is worn on a hand and enables the user
virtual objects in a virtual reality enviro
display (HMD).

sequence control structure A cont
computer to execute program statemen
the statements were written. One of th
structures that govern the order in whic
executed, the sequence control structur
gramming languages. You can use loops
structures to alter the sequence.

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