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STANDARD DICTIONARY OF COMPUTERS AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

REVISED
SECOND EDITION

MARTIN H. WEIK

HAYDEN BOOK COMPANY, INC.
Rochelle Park, New Jersey

To my wife and children, whose patience with me was often tried during the years of preparation, and to the many wonderful friends with whom I have worked in many vocabulary efforts.

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Prefa

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fractional part of the number may be held within a given range, still permitting the expression of numbers of greater magnitude. (Contrast with *point, fixed* and with *point, variable.*)

point, index—In punch-card machines containing rotating machinery driven by a main shaft, one of the equally spaced rotational reference positions of the main shaft. The equally spaced reference positions are usually chosen to be those at which successive card rows or columns are at the sensing or punching station of the card reader or punch. Extra index points may be required to allow for a gap between cards while they are traversing the card track. The index point may be labeled according to the row or column, if any, to which it corresponds.

point, interchange—A location, usually in a data network, where interface signals are transmitted between equipment by means of planned electrical interconnection.

point, load—A marked position on magnetic tape that is positioned under the recording head when the reel is mounted in a tape station. Reading and writing begin and end at this point. A metallic strip may be used to mark the load point, indicating to both the operator and the machine where to start or stop reading or writing.

point, radix—Same as *point, arithmetic.*

point, reentry—In a computer program, the instruction at which the program is reentered from another program, routine, or subroutine. The reentry point is usually designated by the address or the label of the instruction that is designated as the reentry point.

point, rerun—A location or a point in a computer program at which all information required to repeat the program from the last rerun point is available either to the program itself or to a restart routine. This permits repeating the routine from the last rerun or checkpoint in the event of an error or a malfunction. The rerun points may be only three to five minutes apart, so that instead of returning to the beginning of a program in the event of an error, it is only necessary to return to the last rerun point. All information pertinent to a rerun is available in stored or recorded form during the whole time from one rerun point to the next. One purpose of a checkpoint is to permit the rerunning of the program from the checkpoint; thus, a checkpoint may serve as a rerun point. In any case, a computer run may be reconstituted and run again from a rerun point or a checkpoint. (Synonymous with *restart point,* and with *rescue point.*)

point, rescue—Same as *point, rerun.*

point, restart—Same as *point, rerun.*

point, variable—A radix numeration system in which each number is represented by a numeral; that is, a set of digits, with the arithmetic point explicitly indicated by a character placed among the digits by the writer according to the magnitude of the number desired to be expressed; for example, 85.96, 8.596, or 859P6. Usually the point is a dot or period, and its position separates the coefficients of the negative powers of the radix from the coefficients of the positive powers of the radix, being just to the right of the coefficient of the zero power of the radix; that is, just to the right of the units position. (Contrast with *point, floating* and with *point, fixed.*)

point, zero-level transmission reference—An arbitrarily chosen physical point in a circuit to which all transmission levels, such as current, voltage, and power levels, are referred or referenced, and so are measured from. The transmission level at the transmitting switchboard is frequently taken as the zero-level transmission reference level, and thus the transmitting switchboard becomes the zero-level transmission reference point.

point-through—The transfer of a recorded signal from one layer of magnetic tape to adjacent layers when the tape is wound on a hub or reel.

point-to-point connection—See *connection, point-to-point.*

pointer—An identifier or indicator of the location of data; for example, an address, an algorithm for generating an address, a keyword, a code for generating an address, or a destination or source designator.

pointer, stack—The address of the first one of a sequence of storage locations that are used for a pushdown storage. The address is usually held in a preassigned register. (Synonymous with *stack indicator.*)

polarization diversity—See *diversity, polarization.*

polarized dipole modulation recording—Same as *recording, polarized return-to-zero.*

polarized return-to-zero recording—See *recording, polarized return-to-zero.*

Polish notation—See *notation, Polish.*

poll—**1:** In switching networks, to request a station to send data. **2:** In a computer operating system, to periodically interrogate a device to determine if an interaction is required between the device doing the polling and the device that is being polled. **3:** To interrogate a set of devices sequentially; for example, to interrogate each of a set of terminals sharing a communication channel periodically to determine if it requires use of the channel.

polymorphic—Pertaining to a mode of computing system organization, configuration, or arrangement of major component parts in a manner such that all components at a given installation are held in a common pool, and, as each program to be executed is selected, a specific set of components is chosen from the pool, electrically connected, used to execute the program, and, upon completion, returned