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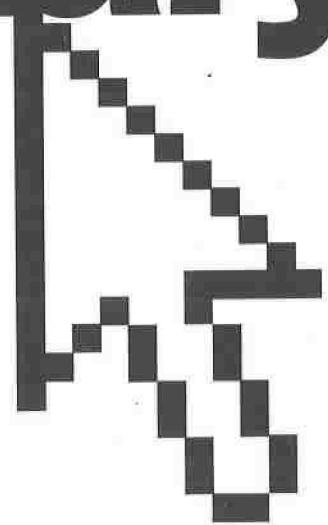
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# Computer Dictionary

Fourth  
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**bi-endian** *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of processors and other chips that can be switched to work in big endian or little endian mode. The PowerPC chip has this ability, which allows it to run the little endian Windows NT or the big endian MacOS/PPC. *See also* big endian, little endian, PowerPC.

**bifurcation** *n.* A split that results in two possible outcomes, such as 1 and 0 or on and off.

**Big Blue** *n.* The International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation. This nickname comes from the corporate color used on IBM's early mainframes and still used in the company logo.

**big endian** *adj.* Storing numbers in such a way that the most significant byte is placed first. For example, given the hexadecimal number A02B, the big endian method would cause the number to be stored as A02B, and the little endian method would cause the number to be stored as 2BA0. The big endian method is used by Motorola microprocessors; Intel microprocessors use the little endian method. The term *big endian* is derived from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in which the Big-Endians were a group of people who opposed the emperor's decree that eggs should be broken at the small end before they were eaten. *Compare* little endian.

**big iron** *n.* One or more large, fast, and expensive computers, such as a Cray supercomputer or a room-filling mainframe system.

**big red switch** *n.* The power on/off switch of a computer, thought of as a kind of interrupt or last resort. On the original IBM PC and many other computers, it was indeed big and red. Using the switch is an interrupt of last resort because it deletes all the data in RAM and can also damage the hard drive. *Acronym:* BRS.

**billion** *n.* **1.** In American usage (as is usual with microcomputers), a thousand million, or  $10^9$ . Computer terminology uses the prefixes *giga-* for 1 billion and *nano-* for 1 billionth. **2.** In British usage, a million million, or  $10^{12}$ , which is a *trillion* in American usage.

**billisecond** \bil'i-sek'ənd\ *n.* *See* nanosecond.

**.bin** \dot-bin\ *n.* A filename extension for a file encoded with MacBinary. *See also* MacBinary.

**binary**<sup>1</sup> *adj.* Having two components, alternatives, or outcomes. The binary number system has 2 as its base, so values are expressed as combinations of two

digits, 0 and 1. These two digits can represent the logical values *true* and *false* as well as numerals, and they can be represented in an electronic device by the two states *on* and *off*, recognized as two voltage levels. Therefore, the binary number system is at the heart of digital computing. Although ideal for computers, binary numbers are usually difficult for people to interpret because they are repetitive strings of 1s and 0s. To ease translation, programmers and others who habitually work with the computer's internal processing abilities use hexadecimal (base-16) or octal (base-8) numbers. *See* Appendix E. *See also* base (definition 2), binary-coded decimal, binary number, bit, Boolean algebra, byte, cyclic binary code, digital computer, dyadic, logic circuit. *Compare* ASCII, decimal, hexadecimal, octal.

**binary**<sup>2</sup> *n.* In an FTP client program, the command that instructs the FTP server to send or receive files as binary data. *See also* FTP client, FTP server. *Compare* ascii.

**binary chop** *n.* *See* binary search.

**binary-coded decimal** *n.* A system for encoding decimal numbers in binary form to avoid rounding and conversion errors. In binary-coded decimal coding, each digit of a decimal number is coded separately as a binary numeral. Each of the decimal digits 0 through 9 is coded in 4 bits, and for ease of reading, each group of 4 bits is separated by a space. This format is also called 8-4-2-1, after the weights of the four bit positions, and uses the following codes: 0000 = 0; 0001 = 1; 0010 = 2; 0011 = 3; 0100 = 4; 0101 = 5; 0110 = 6; 0111 = 7; 1000 = 8; 1001 = 9. Thus, the decimal number 12 is 0001 0010 in binary-coded decimal notation. *Acronym:* BCD. *See also* base (definition 2), binary<sup>1</sup>, binary number, decimal, EBCDIC, packed decimal, round.

**binary compatibility** *n.* Portability of executable programs (binary files) from one platform, or flavor of operating system, to another. *See also* flavor, portable (definition 1).

**binary conversion** *n.* The conversion of a number to or from the binary number system. *See* Appendix E. *See also* binary<sup>1</sup>.

**binary device** *n.* Any device that processes information as a series of on/off or high/low electrical states. *See also* binary<sup>1</sup>.

**binary digit** *n.* Either of the two digits in the binary number system, 0 and 1. *See also* bit.

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