Microsoft
Computer
Dictionary
Fifth Edition
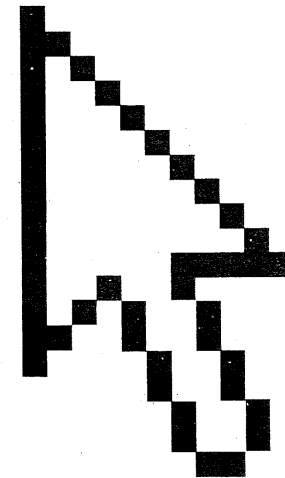
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MICROSOFT® COMPUTER DICTIONARY, 5th Ed.
by Microsoft Corporation

disk pack *n.* A collection of disks in a protective container. Used primarily with minicomputers and mainframe computers, a disk pack is a removable medium, generally a stack of 14-inch disks in a plastic housing.

disk partition *n.* A logical compartment on a physical disk drive. A single disk might have two or more logical disk partitions, each of which would be referenced with a different disk drive name. Multiple partitions are divided into a primary (boot) partition and one or more extended partitions.

disk server *n.* A node on a local area network that acts as a remote disk drive shared by network users. Unlike a file server, which performs the more sophisticated tasks of managing network requests for files, a disk server functions as a storage medium on which users can read and write files. A disk server can be divided into sections (volumes), each of which appears to be a separate disk. *Compare* file server.

disk striping *n.* The procedure of combining a set of same-size disk partitions that reside on separate disks (from 2 to 32 disks) into a single volume, forming a virtual stripe across the disks that the operating system recognizes as a single drive. Disk striping enables multiple I/O operations in the same volume to proceed concurrently, thus offering enhanced performance. *See also* disk striping with parity, input/output.

disk striping with parity *n.* The technique of maintaining parity information across a disk stripe so that if one disk partition fails, the data on that disk can be re-created using the information stored across the remaining partitions in the disk stripe. *See also* disk striping, fault tolerance, parity.

disk unit *n.* A disk drive or its housing.

dispatcher *n.* In some multitasking operating systems, the set of routines responsible for allocating CPU (central processing unit) time to various applications.

Compare distribute.

dispersion *n.* The degree to which, at any given time, data in a distributed (interconnected) system of computer is stored at different locations or on different devices.

display *n.* The visual output device of a computer, which is commonly a CRT-based video display. With portable and notebook computers, the display is usually an LCD-based or a gas plasma–based flat-panel display. *See also* flat-panel display, liquid crystal display, video adapter, video display.

display adapter *n. See* video adapter.

display attribute *n.* A quality assigned to a character or an image displayed on the screen. Display attributes include such features as color, intensity, and blinking. Users of applications can control display attributes when programs allow them to change color and other screen elements.

display background *n.* In computer graphics, the portion of an on-screen image that remains static while other elements change; for example, window borders on a screen, or a palette of shapes or patterns in a drawing program.

display board *n. See* video adapter.

display card *n. See* video adapter.

display cycle *n.* The complete set of events that must occur in order for a computer image to be displayed on the screen, including both the software creation of an image in a computer's video memory and the hardware operations required for accurate on-screen display. *See also* refresh cycle.

Display Data Channel *n. See* DDC.

display device *n. See* display.

display element *n. See* graphics primitive.

display entity *n. See* entity, graphics primitive.

display face *n.* A typeface suitable for headings and titles in documents, distinguished by its ability to stand out from

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memory. Extended
x, all versions of Win-
ws XP. *See also* EMS,
cted mode.

ı. A specification
, and AST Research
ving real-mode appli-
areas of memory not
anaged by an install-
mory Manager
e driver to access the
See also Expanded
ı.

of Video Graphics
le of displaying an
00 x 1200 pixels and
7 million (2^{24}) col-
illion colors that a
s considered a digital
ls analog television.
e *also* analog-to-digi-

ard.

In computers with
ace between the
low-level booting
face is made up of
ed information, plus
e available to the
vide a standard envi-
em and running pre-

uage or **eXtensible**
XFDL.

guage *n. See*

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eXtensible Stylesheet Language *n. See* XSL.

eXtensible Stylesheet Language Formatting Objects *n. See* XSL-FO.

Extensible Stylesheets Language-Transformations *n. See* XSLT.

extension *n.* **1.** A set of characters added to a filename that serves to extend or clarify its meaning or to identify a file as a member of a category. An extension may be assigned by the user or by a program, as, for example, .com or .exe for executable programs that MS-DOS can load and run. **2.** A supplemental set of codes used to include additional characters in a particular character set. **3.** A program or program module that adds functionality to or extends the effectiveness of a program. **4.** On the Macintosh, a program that alters or augments the function-ality of the operating system. There are two types: system extensions, such as QuickTime, and Chooser extensions, such as printer drivers. When a Macintosh is turned on, the extensions in the Extensions folder within the System folder are loaded into memory. *See also* Chooser exten-sion, QuickTime, System folder.

Extension Manager *n.* A Macintosh utility developed by Apple that allows the user to determine which extensions are loaded when the computer is turned on. *See also* exten-sion (definition 4).

extent *n.* On a disk or other direct-access storage device, a continuous block of storage space reserved by the oper-ating system for a particular file or program.

exterior gateway protocol *n.* A protocol used by routers (gateways) on separate, independent networks for distrib-uting routing information between and among them-selves—for example, between hosts on the Internet. *Acronym:* EGP. *Also called:* external gateway protocol. *Compare* interior gateway protocol.

external command *n.* A program included in an operat-ing system such as MS-DOS that is loaded into memory

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also gateway, router.

external gateway protocol *n. See* exterior gateway protocol.

external hard disk *n.* A free-standing hard disk with its own case and power supply, connected to the computer with a data cable and used mainly as a portable unit. *See also* hard disk.

external interrupt *n.* A hardware interrupt generated by hardware elements external to the microprocessor. *See also* hardware interrupt, internal interrupt, interrupt.

external modem *n.* A stand-alone modem that is con-nected via cable to a computer's serial port. *See also* internal modem.

external reference *n.* A reference in a program or rou-tine to some identifier, such as code or data, that is not declared within that program or routine. The term usually refers to an identifier declared in code that is separately compiled. *See also* compile.

external storage *n.* A storage medium for data, such as a disk or tape unit, that is external to a computer's memory.

external viewer *n.* A separate application used to view documents that are of a type that cannot be handled by the current application. *See also* helper program.

extract *vb.* **1.** To remove or duplicate items from a larger group in a systematic manner. **2.** In programming, to derive one set of characters from another by using a mask (pattern) that determines which characters to remove.

extra-high-density floppy disk *n.* A 3.5-inch floppy disk capable of holding 4 MB of data and requiring a special disk drive that has two heads rather than one. *See also* floppy disk.

extranet *n.* An extension of a corporate intranet using World Wide Web technology to facilitate communication with the corporation's suppliers and customers. An extra-net allows customers and suppliers to gain limited access

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itics, an infinite series
he sum of the two
e, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13,
named for the thir-
rdo Fibonacci of Pisa.
e used to speed binary
of data into groups in
r pairs of numbers in
?, a data set of 34
ip of 21 and another
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ie type of data (for

field-programmable logic array *n.* An integrated circuit containing an array of logic circuits in which the con-nections between the individual circuits, and thus the logic functions of the array, can be programmed after manufacture, typically at the time of installation in the field. Programming can be performed only once, typi-cally by passing high current through fusible links on the chip. *Acronym:* FPLA. *Also called:* PLA, program-mable logic array.

field separator *n.* Any character that separates one field of data from another. *See also* delimiter, field (definition 1).

FIFO *n. See* first in, first out.

fifth-generation computer *n. See* computer.

fifth normal form *n. See* normal form (definition 1).

file *n.* A complete, named collection of information, such as a program, a set of data used by a program, or a user-created document. A file is the basic unit of storage that enables a computer to distinguish one set of information from another. A file is the "glue" that binds a conglomera-tion of instructions, numbers, words, or images into a coherent unit that a user can retrieve, change, delete, save, or send to an output device.

file allocation table *n.* A table or list maintained by some operating systems to manage disk space used for file storage. Files on a disk are stored, as space allows, in fixed-size groups of bytes (characters) rather than from beginning to end as contiguous strings of text or numbers. A single file can thus be scattered in pieces over many separate storage areas. A file allocation table maps avail-able disk storage space so that it can mark flawed seg-ments that should not be used and can find and link the pieces of a file. In MS-DOS, the file allocation table is commonly known as the FAT. *See also* FAT file system.

file attribute *n.* A restrictive label attached to a file that describes and regulates its use—for example, hidden, sys-

its location on a disk, and a pointer that marks the user's current (or last) position in the file. *Acronym:* FCB.

file conversion *n.* The process of transforming the data in a file from one format to another without altering the data—for example, converting a file from a word proces-sor's format to its ASCII equivalent. In some cases, infor-mation about the data, such as formatting, may be lost. Another, more detailed, type of file conversion involves changing character coding from one standard to another, as in converting EBCDIC characters (which are used pri-marily with mainframe computers) to ASCII characters. *See also* ASCII, EBCDIC.

file extension *n. See* extension (definition 1).

file extent *n. See* extent.

file format *n.* The structure of a file that defines the way it is stored and laid out on the screen or in print. The for-mat can be fairly simple and common, as are files stored as "plain" ASCII text, or it can be quite complex and include various types of control instructions and codes used by programs, printers, and other devices. Examples include RTF (Rich Text Format), DCA (Document Con-tent Architecture), PICT, DIF (Data Interchange Format), DXF (Data Exchange File), TIFF (Tagged Image File For-mat), and EPSF (Encapsulated PostScript Format).

file fragmentation *n.* **1.** The breaking apart of files as they are stored by the operating system into small, sepa-rate segments on disk. The condition is a natural conse-quence of enlarging files and saving them on a crowded disk that no longer contains contiguous blocks of free space large enough to hold them. File fragmentation is not an integrity problem, although it can eventually slow read and write access times if the disk is very full and storage is badly fragmented. Software products are available for redistributing (optimizing) file storage to reduce fragmen-tation. **2.** In a database, a situation in which records are not stored in their optimal access sequence because of accu-mulated additions and deletions of records. Most database

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