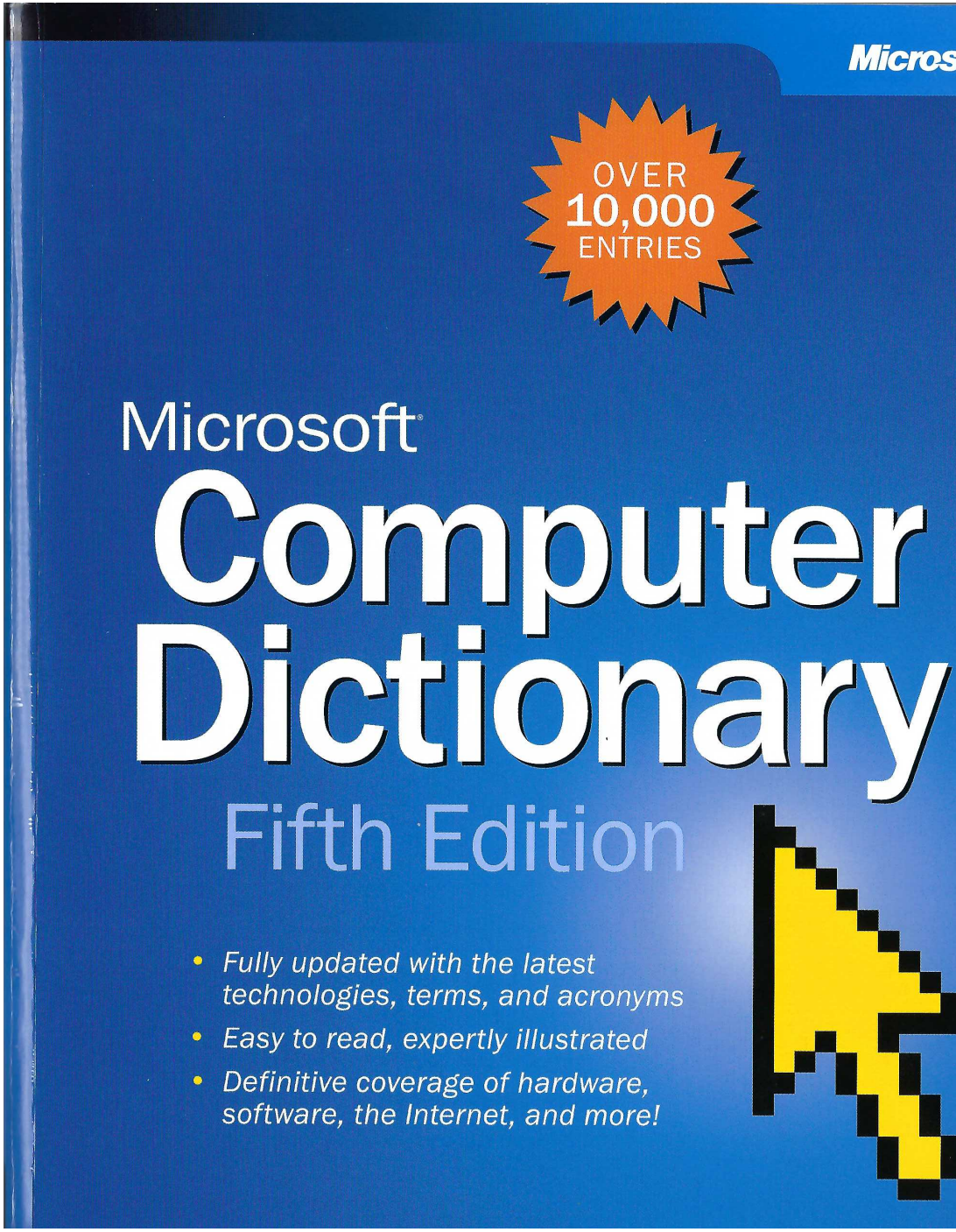

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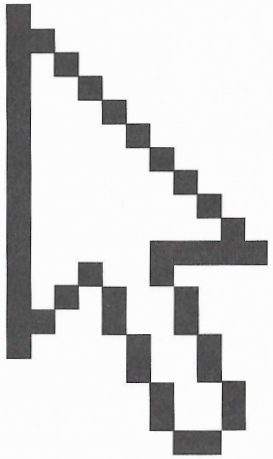

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Acquisitions Editor: Alex Blanton
Project Editor: Sandra Haynes

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erence level for its operation. **4.** In communications, a type of distortion in the length of transmitted bits, caused by a lag that occurs as voltage builds up or falls off each time the signal changes from 0 to 1 or vice versa.

bidirectional *adj.* Operating in two directions. A bidirectional printer can print from left to right and from right to left; a bidirectional bus can transfer signals in both directions between two devices.

bidirectional parallel port *n.* An interface that supports two-way parallel communication between a device, such as a printer, and a computer. *See also* interface (definition 3), parallel port.

bidirectional printing *n.* The ability of an impact or ink-jet printer to print from left to right and from right to left. Bidirectional printing improves speed substantially because no time is wasted returning the print head to the beginning of the next line, but it may lower print quality.

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.

BIFF *n.* Short for **B**inary **I**nterchange **F**ile **F**ormat. The native file format used by Microsoft Excel.

biff *n.* **1.** A BSD utility that issues a signal when new mail has arrived. Biff was named after a University of California graduate student's dog who had a habit of barking at the mailman at the time the utility was developed. **2.** *See* B1FF.

biff *vb.* To provide notification of new (incoming) e-mail.

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

Big 5 *n.* Traditional Chinese encoding.

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.

bigint data type *n.* In an Access project, a data type of 8 bytes (64 bits) that stores whole numbers in the range of –2^63 (–9,223,372,036,854,775,808) through 2^63–1 (9,223,372,036,854,775,807).

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.

billboard *n.* A primitive inserted into a 3-D scene that is oriented so that one face is toward the viewer. A texture, usually an animated sprite, is applied to the billboard to give the appearance of a 3-D object in the scene.

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 *n. See* nanosecond.

bimodal virus *n. See* multipartite virus.

.bin *n.* A file name extension for a file encoded with MacBinary. *See also* MacBinary.

binary[1] *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

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machines and expert systems. *See also* artificial intelligence, expert system. **3.** *See* Lightweight Internet Person Schema.

liquid crystal display *n.* A type of display that uses a liquid compound having a polar molecular structure, sandwiched between two transparent electrodes. When an electric field is applied, the molecules align with the field, forming a crystalline arrangement that polarizes the light passing through it. A polarized filter laminated over the electrodes blocks polarized light. In this way, a grid of electrodes can selectively "turn on" a cell, or a pixel, containing the liquid crystal material, turning it dark. In some types of liquid crystal displays, an electroluminescent panel is placed behind the screen to illuminate it. Other types of liquid crystal displays are capable of reproducing color. *Acronym:* LCD. *See also* supertwist display, twisted nematic display.

liquid crystal display printer *n. See* LCD printer.

liquid crystal shutter printer *n. See* LCD printer.

LISP *n.* Short for **L**ist **P**rocessing. A list-oriented programming language developed in 1959–60 by John McCarthy and used primarily to manipulate lists of data. LISP is heavily used in research and academic circles and is considered the standard language for artificial-intelligence research. *See also* artificial intelligence. *Compare* Prolog.

list *n.* A multielement data structure that has a linear (first, second, third, . . .) organization but that allows elements to be added or removed in any order. Queues, deques, and stacks are simply lists with restrictions on adding and removing elements. *See also* deque, element (definition 1), linked list, queue, stack.

list box *n.* A control in Windows that enables the user to choose one option from a list of possibilities. The list box appears as a box, displaying the currently selected option, next to a button marked with a down arrow. When the user clicks the button, the list appears. The list has a scroll bar if there are more options than the list has room to show.

listing *n.* A printed copy of program source code. Some compilers and assemblers produce optional assembly listings during compilation or assembly. Such listings of code often have additional information such as line numbers, nested block depth, and cross-reference tables. *See also* assembly listing.

list processing *n.* The maintenance and manipulation of multielement data structures. This involves adding and deleting elements, writing data into elements, and traversing the list. List processing is the basis of the art intelligence programming language LISP. *See a* list, node (definition 1).

LISTSERV *n.* One of the most popular commerc ing list managers, marketed by L-SOFT Internat versions for BITNET, UNIX, and Windows. *See* mailing list, mailing list manager.

literal *n.* A value, used in a program, that is exp itself rather than as a variable's value or the resu expression. Examples are the numbers 25 and 3 character *a*, the string *Hello*, and the Boolean va TRUE. *See also* constant, variable.

lithium ion battery *n.* An energy storage devic the conversion of chemical to electrical energy i chemical cells. Despite the higher cost, the lapto is quickly adopting lithium ion batteries because increased storage capacity over both nickel cadr nickel metal hydride batteries, in response to the for greater power brought on by higher processo and the use of devices such as CD-ROM drives. nickel cadmium battery, nickel metal hydride ba

little endian *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or being a storing a number so that the least significant byt first in the number. For example, given the hexa number A02B, the little endian method would c number to be stored as 2BA0. The little endian used by Intel microprocessors. *Also called:* reve ordering. *Compare* big endian.

live[1] *adj.* **1.** Of or relating to real-world data or working with it, as opposed to test data. **2.** Of o to audio or video that is transmitted from one sit another as it is being produced, as opposed to be recorded before broadcast time. *See also* synchr transmission. **3.** Capable of being manipulated b cause changes in a document or part of a docum

live[2] *n.* Used to identify a Web site that has bee lished to a Web server and can be browsed by sit *Also called:* going live.

Live3D *n.* A Netscape proprietary Virtual Reali ing Language (VRML) plug-in for Web browse allows users to view and interact with a virtual- world. *See also* VRML.

liveware *n.* A slang term for people, to distingu from hardware, software, and firmware. *Also c* wetware.

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