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Dictionary of
Computer and
Internet Terms

Eighth Edition

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... ii
... iv
-565
... 1
... 4
... 5
..39
..69
.123
.156
.185
.214
.225
245
267
.275
.279
301
.332
.347
.359
.403
.406
.435
.485
.516
.528
541
.557
.562
.564
-569
-572

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interpreter a program that executes a source program by reading it one line at a time and doing the specified operations immediately. Most Perl and Python systems are interpreters. *Contrast* COMPILER.

interrupt an instruction that tells a microprocessor to put aside what it is doing and call a specified routine. The processor resumes its original work when the interrupt service routine finishes. Interrupts are used for two main purposes:

1. to deal with hardware events such as a key being pressed or a character arriving through a serial port. These events cannot be ignored; the incoming data must be either processed immediately or stored in a buffer.
2. to call subroutines that are provided by the hardware or operating system. On the PCs, most DOS and BIOS services are called through interrupts rather than through the ordinary instruction for calling a subroutine. OS/2 and Windows services, however, are called as ordinary subroutines.

These correspond to the two main ways of causing an interrupt: by receiving a signal from outside the microprocessor (a hardware interrupt) or by executing a machine instruction (a software interrupt).

interrupt service routine *see* INTERRUPT.

intersection the set of elements that are in both of two other sets. For example, the intersection of $\{a, b, c\}$ with $\{c, b, r\}$ is $\{b, c\}$.

interword spacing the spacing between words, sometimes called WORDSPACING.

in the loop (*jargon*) involved in decision-making or control, like an automatic control system that uses feedback. *See* LOOP (definition 2).

intranet the opposite of INTERNET; a network confined to a single organization (but not necessarily a single site). Intranets often include web pages, so a web browser can be used to view the content. This makes the intranet appear just the same as part of the World Wide Web; the only difference is that it is not accessible to those outside the organization. Keeping it separate from the outside world is essential if it carries confidential data, such as internal business records. *Contrast* EXTRANET.

Intuit a leading producer of personal financial software (the program Quicken). Web address: www.intuit.com.

intuitive obvious without conscious thought. The operation of a piece of software is said to be *intuitive* if the operation fits the task so well that the user can guess how to perform common operations without consulting manuals or pausing to figure things out. *Compare* USER-FRIENDLY.

invalid media disks or tapes that cannot be used because of physical