



THE ULTIMATE COMPUTER REFERENCE

Microsoft Press



Microsoft[®] **Computer Dictionary** Fourth Edition

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A

Apple Events *n.* A feature added to Mac OS System 7 that enables one application to send a command, such as save or open, to another application. *See also* Mac OS.

Apple Extended Keyboard *n.* A 105-key keyboard that works with the Macintosh SE, Macintosh II, and Apple IIGS computers. This keyboard marks Apple's first inclusion of function (F) keys, whose absence was long cited as a shortcoming of the Macintosh compared with IBM PCs and compatibles. This feature, along with other layout changes and the addition of new keys and lights, makes the Apple Extended Keyboard quite similar in form to the IBM enhanced keyboard. *See the illustration. See also* enhanced keyboard.

Apple II *n.* The second computer introduced by the Apple Computer Corporation, in April 1977. The Apple II featured 4K dynamic RAM, expandable to 48K (with 16K chips), and used the 6502 microprocessor. The Apple II was the first computer to offer a TV video adapter as an optional alternative to a color computer monitor. It also featured sound and eight expansion slots. *See also* 6502.

Apple key *n.* A key on Apple keyboards labeled with an outline of the Apple logo. On the Apple Extended Keyboard, this key is the same as the Command key, which functions similarly to the Control key on IBM and compatible keyboards. It is generally used in conjunction with a character key as a shortcut to making menu selections or starting a macro.

Apple Macintosh *n.* *See* Macintosh.

Apple Newton *n.* *See* Newton.

AppleScript *n.* A script language developed by Apple Computer, Inc., for Macintosh computers running under the Mac OS to execute commands and automate functions. *See also* script.

AppleShare *n.* A file server software developed by Apple Computer, Inc., that works with the Mac OS and allows one Macintosh computer to share files with another on the same network. *See also* file server, Mac OS.

applet \a'plət\ *n.* A program that can be downloaded over the Internet and executed on the recipient's machine. Applets are often written in the Java programming language and run within browser software, and they are typically used to customize or add interactive elements to a Web page.

AppleTalk *n.* An inexpensive local area network developed by Apple Computer, Inc., for Macintosh computers that can be used by Apple and non-Apple computers to communicate and share resources such as printers and file servers. Non-Apple computers must be equipped with AppleTalk hardware and suitable software. The network uses a layered set of protocols similar to the ISO/OSI reference model and transfers information in the form of packets called frames. AppleTalk supports connections to other AppleTalk networks through devices known as bridges, and it supports connections to dissimilar networks through devices called gateways. *See also* bridge, frame (definition 2), gateway.

application *n.* A program designed to assist in the performance of a specific task, such as word processing, accounting, or inventory management. *Compare* utility.



Apple Extended Keyboard.

A

application program interface *n.* See application programming interface.

application programming interface *n.* A set of routines used by an application program to direct the performance of procedures by the computer's operating system. *Acronym:* API. Also called application program interface.

application shortcut key *n.* A key or combination of keys that when pressed will quickly perform an action within an application that would normally require several user actions, such as menu selections. Also called keyboard shortcut.

application software *n.* See application.

application-specific integrated circuit *n.* See gate array.

application suite *n.* See suite (definition 1).

arbitration *n.* A set of rules for resolving competing demands for a machine resource by multiple users or processes. See also contention.

.arc *n.* The file extension that identifies compressed archive files encoded using the Advanced RISC Computing Specification (ARC) format. See also compressed file.

arcade game *n.* **1.** A coin-operated computer game for one or more players that features high-quality screen graphics, sound, and rapid action. **2.** Any computer game designed to mimic the style of a coin-operated arcade game, such as games marketed for the home computer. See also computer game.

Archie *n.* An Internet utility for finding files in public archives obtainable by anonymous FTP. The master Archie server at McGill University in Montreal downloads FTP indexes from participating FTP servers and merges them into a master list and sends updated copies of the master list to other Archie servers each day. Archie is a shortened form of *archive*. See also anonymous FTP, FTP¹ (definition 1). Compare Jughead, Veronica.

Archie client *n.* See Archie.

Archie server *n.* On the Internet, a server that contains Archie indexes to the names and addresses of files in public FTP archives. See also Archie, FTP¹ (definition 1), server (definition 2).

architecture *n.* **1.** The physical construction or design of a computer system and its components. See also cache, CISC, closed architecture, network architecture, open architecture, pipelining, RISC. **2.** The

data-handling capacity of a microprocessor. **3.** The design of application software incorporating protocols and the means for expansion and interfacing with other programs.

archive¹ *n.* **1.** A tape or disk containing files copied from another storage device and used as backup storage. **2.** A compressed file. **3.** A file directory on the Internet that is available by File Transfer Protocol (FTP) or an Internet directory established for dissemination of stored files.

archive² *vb.* **1.** To copy files onto a tape or disk for long-term storage. **2.** To compress a file.

archive bit *n.* A bit that is associated with a file and is used to indicate whether or not the file has been backed up. See also back up, bit.

archive file *n.* A file that contains a set of files, such as a program with its documentation and example input files, or collected postings from a newsgroup. On UNIX systems, archive files can be created using the tar program; they can then be compressed using compress or gzip. PKZIP under MS-DOS and Windows and StuffIt under Mac OS create archive files that are already compressed. See also compress¹, gzip, PKZIP, StuffIt, tar¹.

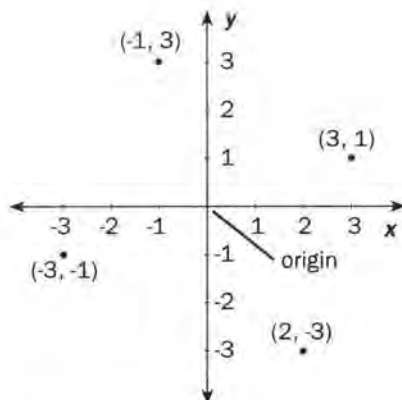
archive site *n.* A site on the Internet that stores files. The files are usually accessed through one of the following ways: downloaded through anonymous FTP, retrieved through Gopher, or viewed on the World Wide Web. See also anonymous FTP, Gopher.

ARCnet \ärk'net\ *n.* Short for Attached Resource Computer Network. A form of token bus network architecture for PC-based LANs developed by Datapoint Corporation. ARCnet relies on a bus or star topology and can support up to 255 nodes. Different versions run at speeds of 1.5 mbps, 20 Mbps (ARCnet Plus), and 100 Mbps.

ARCnet Plus *n.* See ARCnet.

area chart *n.* A graphical presentation, such as of quarterly sales figures, that uses shading or coloring to emphasize the difference between the line representing one set of data points and the line representing a separate but related set of data points. See the illustration.

area search *n.* In information management, the examination of a group of documents for the purpose of identifying those that are relevant to a particular subject or category.



Cartesian coordinates.

cartridge font *n.* A font contained in a plug-in cartridge and used to add fonts to laser, ink-jet, or high-end dot-matrix printers. Cartridge fonts are distinguished both from internal fonts, which are contained in ROM in the printer and are always available, and from downloadable (soft) fonts, which reside on disk and which can be sent to the printer as needed. *See also* font cartridge. *Compare* internal font.

cascade *n.* **1.** Additional elements displayed by a menu item or list box from which the user can choose in order to interact with other screen elements. *See* the illustration. **2.** In newsgroup articles, the accumulation of quotation marks (often angle brackets) added by newsgroup readers each time an article is replied to. Most newsgroup readers will copy the original article in the body of the reply; after several replies, the original material will have several quotation marks. *See also* article, newsgroup, newsreader.



Cascade.

cascade connection *n.* *See* pipe (definition 1).

cascaded star topology *n.* A star network in which nodes connect to hubs and hubs connect to other hubs in a hierarchical (cascaded) parent/child relationship. This topology is characteristic of 100Base-VG networks.

cascading menu *n.* A hierarchical graphical menu system in which a side menu of subcategories is displayed when the pointer is placed on the main category.

Cascading Style Sheet mechanism *n.* *See* cascading style sheets.

cascading style sheets *n.* A Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) specification developed by The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) that allows authors of HTML documents and users to attach style sheets to HTML documents. The style sheets include typographical information on how the page should appear, such as the font of the text in the page. This specification also directs the way in which the style sheets of the HTML document and the user's style will blend. Cascading style sheets have been proposed for the HTML 3.2 standard. *Also called* Cascading Style Sheet mechanism, CSS1. *See also* HTML, style sheet (definition 2).

cascading windows *n.* A sequence of successive, overlapping windows in a graphical user interface, displayed so that the title bar of each is visible. *Also called* overlaid windows.

case *n.* In text processing, an indication of whether one or more alphabetic characters are capitalized (uppercase) or not (lowercase). A case-sensitive program or routine distinguishes between uppercase and lowercase letters and treats the word *cat* as totally distinct from either *Cat* or *CAT*. A case-sensitive program that also separates capitalized and lowercased words would list *Arkansas* before *aardvark* or *anti-mony*, even though its alphabetic position follows both lowercased words.

CASE \kās\ *n.* Acronym for computer-aided software engineering. A comprehensive label for software designed to use computers in all phases of computer program development, from planning and modeling through coding and documentation. CASE represents a working environment consisting of programs and other development tools that help managers, systems

channel (definition 2), communications protocol, IEEE, ISDN, ISO/OSI model, LAN, modem, network, synchronous transmission. *Compare* data transmission, telecommunications, teleprocess.

Communications Act of 1934 *n.* See FCC.

communications channel *n.* See channel (definition 2).

communications controller *n.* A device used as an intermediary in transferring communications to and from the host computer to which it is connected. By relieving the host computer of the actual tasks of sending, receiving, deciphering, and checking transmissions for errors, a communications controller helps to make efficient use of the host computer's processing time—time that might be better used for noncommunications tasks. A communications controller can be either a programmable machine in its own right or a nonprogrammable device designed to follow certain communications protocols. *See also* front-end processor (definition 2).

communications link *n.* The connection between computers that enables data transfer.

communications network *n.* See network.

communications parameter *n.* Any of several settings required in order to enable computers to communicate. In asynchronous communications, for example, modem speed, number of data bits and stop bits, and type of parity are parameters that must be set correctly to establish communication between two modems.

communications port *n.* See COM (definition 1).

communications program *n.* A software program that enables a computer to connect with another computer and to exchange information. For initiating communications, communications programs perform such tasks as maintaining communications parameters, storing and dialing phone numbers automatically, recording and executing logon procedures, and repeatedly dialing busy lines. Once a connection is made, communications programs can also be instructed to save incoming messages on disk or to find and transmit disk files. During communication, these types of programs perform the major, and usually invisible, tasks of encoding data, coordinating transmissions to and from the distant computer, and checking incoming data for transmission errors.

communications protocol *n.* A set of rules or standards designed to enable computers to connect with

one another and to exchange information with as little error as possible. The protocol generally accepted for standardizing overall computer communications is a seven-layer set of hardware and software guidelines known as the OSI (Open Systems Interconnection) model. A somewhat different standard, widely used before the OSI model was developed, is IBM's SNA (Systems Network Architecture). The word *protocol* is often used, sometimes confusingly, in reference to a multitude of standards affecting different aspects of communication, such as file transfer (for example, XMODEM and ZMODEM), handshaking (for example, XON/XOFF), and network transmissions (for example, CSMA/CD). *See also* ISO/OSI model, SNA.

communications satellite *n.* A satellite stationed in geosynchronous orbit that acts as a microwave relay station, receiving signals sent from a ground-based station (earth station), amplifying them, and retransmitting them on a different frequency to another ground-based station. Initially used for telephone and television signals, communications satellites can also be used for high-speed transmission of computer data. Two factors affecting the use of satellites with computers, however, are propagation delay (the time lag caused by the distance traveled by the signal) and security concerns. *See also* downlink, uplink.

communications server *n.* A gateway that translates packets on a local area network (LAN) into asynchronous signals, such as those used on telephone lines or in RS-232-C serial communications, and allows all nodes on the LAN access to its modems or RS-232-C connections. *See also* gateway, RS-232-C standard.

communications slot *n.* On many models of the Apple Macintosh, a dedicated expansion slot for network interface cards. *Acronym:* CS.

communications software *n.* The software that controls the modem in response to user commands. Generally such software includes terminal emulation as well as file transfer facilities. *See also* modem, terminal emulation.

communications system *n.* The combination of hardware, software, and data transfer links that make up a communications facility.

Communications Terminal Protocol *n.* A terminal protocol that enables a user at a remote location to access a computer as if the remote computer were

database *n.* A file composed of records, each containing fields together with a set of operations for searching, sorting, recombining, and other functions.

database administrator *n.* One who manages a database. The administrator determines the content, internal structure, and access strategy for a database, defines security and integrity, and monitors performance. *Acronym:* DBA. *Also called* database manager.

database analyst *n.* One who provides the analytic functions needed to design and maintain applications requiring a database.

database designer *n.* One who designs and implements functions required for applications that use a database.

database engine *n.* The program module or modules that provide access to a database management system (DBMS).

database machine *n.* **1.** A peripheral that executes database tasks, thereby relieving the main computer from performing them. **2.** A database server that performs only database tasks.

database management system *n.* A software interface between the database and the user. A database management system handles user requests for database actions and allows for control of security and data integrity requirements. *Acronym:* DBMS. *Also called* database manager. *See also* database engine.

database manager *n.* *See* database administrator, database management system.

database publishing *n.* The use of desktop publishing or Internet technology to produce reports containing information obtained from a database.

database server *n.* A network node, or station, dedicated to storing and providing access to a shared database. *Also called* database machine.

database structure *n.* A general description of the format of records in a database, including the number of fields, specifications regarding the type of data that can be entered in each field, and the field names used.

data bit *n.* In asynchronous communications, one of a group of from 5 to 8 bits that represents a single character of data for transmission. Data bits are preceded by a start bit and followed by an optional parity bit and one or more stop bits. *See also* asynchronous transmission, bit, communications parameter.

data buffer *n.* An area in memory where data is temporarily stored while being moved from one location to another. *See also* buffer¹.

data bus *n.* *See* bus.

data cable *n.* Fiber-optic or wire cable used to transfer data from one device to another.

data capture *n.* **1.** The collection of information at the time of a transaction. **2.** The process of saving on a storage medium a record of interchanges between a user and a remote information utility.

data carrier *n.* *See* carrier (definition 1).

Data Carrier Detected *n.* *See* DCD (definition 1).

data chaining *n.* The process of storing segments of data in noncontiguous locations while retaining the ability to reconnect them in the proper sequence.

data channel *n.* *See* channel (definition 1).

data collection *n.* **1.** The process of acquiring source documents or data. **2.** The grouping of data by means of classification, sorting, ordering, and other organizing methods.

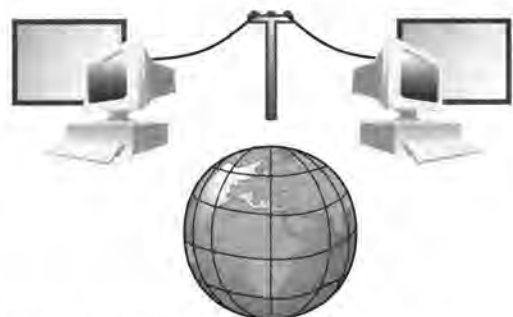
datacom *n.* Short for **data communications**. *See* communications.

data communications *n.* *See* communications.

data compaction *n.* *See* data compression.

data compression *n.* A means of reducing the amount of space or bandwidth needed to store or transmit a block of data, used in data communications, facsimile transmission, file storage and transfer, and CD-ROM publishing. *Also called* data compaction.

data conferencing *n.* Simultaneous data communication among geographically separated participants in a meeting. Data conferencing involves whiteboards and other software that enable a single set of files at one location to be accessed and modified by all participants. *See the illustration. See also* desktop conferencing, whiteboard. *Compare* video conferencing.



Data conferencing.

of the hypothetical company Apex. *Also called* name server. *See also* DNS (definition 2), IP address.

.doc *n.* A file extension that identifies document files formatted for a word processor. This is the default file extension for Microsoft Word document files.

dock *vb.* **1.** To connect a laptop or notebook computer to a docking station. *See also* docking station, laptop, portable computer. **2.** To move a toolbar to the edge of an application window so that it attaches to and becomes a feature of the application window.

docking mechanism *n.* The portion of a docking station that physically connects the portable computer with the station. *See also* docking station.

docking station *n.* A unit for housing a laptop or notebook computer that contains a power connection, expansion slots, and connections to peripherals, such as a monitor, printer, full-sized keyboard, and mouse. The purpose of a docking station is to turn the laptop or notebook computer into a desktop machine and allow users the convenience of using such peripherals as a monitor and a full-sized keyboard. *See the illustration. See also* expansion slot, laptop, peripheral, portable computer.



Docking station.

DOCSIS \dok'sis\ *n.* Acronym for **Data Over Cable Service Interface Specification**. The International Telecommunications Union standard (ITU Recommendation J.112) that specifies functions and internal and external interfaces for high-speed, bidirectional transfer of digital data between cable television networks and subscribers. DOCSIS-compliant equipment ensures interoperability between cable modems and the cable television infrastructure, regardless of manufacturer or provider. Initially developed by a group of cable television providers, including Time Warner and TCI, DOCSIS was designed to support data, video, and rapid Internet access. Data rates are 27 Mbps or 36 Mbps downstream (from the cable

network) and 320 Kbps to 10 Mbps upstream (to the cable network). *See also* cable modem. *Compare* IEEE 802.14.

doctype \dok'tip\ *n.* A declaration at the beginning of an SGML document that gives a public or system identifier for the document type definition (DTD) of the document. *See also* SGML.

document¹ *n.* Any self-contained piece of work created with an application program and, if saved on disk, given a unique filename by which it can be retrieved. Documents are generally thought of as word-processed materials only. To a computer, however, data is nothing more than a collection of characters, so a spreadsheet or a graphic is as much a document as is a letter or report. In the Macintosh environment in particular, a document is any user-created work named and saved as a separate file.

document² *vb.* To explain or annotate something, such as a program or a procedure.

documentation *n.* The set of instructions shipped with a program or a piece of hardware. Documentation usually includes necessary information about the type of computer system required, setup instructions, and instructions on the use and maintenance of the product.

document-centric *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or characteristic of an operating system in which the user opens document files and thus automatically invokes the applications (such as word processors or spreadsheet programs) that process them. Many graphical user interfaces, such as the Macintosh Finder, as well as the World Wide Web, are document-centric. *Compare* application-centric.

Document Content Architecture *n.* *See* DCA (definition 1).

Document Content Description *n.* *See* DCD (definition 2).

document file *n.* A user-created file that represents the output of a program. *Also called* data file. *Compare* program file.

document image processing *n.* A system for storing and retrieving information for an enterprise in the form of bitmapped images of paper documents input with a scanner rather than in the form of text and numeric files. Document image processing takes more memory than purely electronic data processing, but it more readily incorporates signatures, drawings, and photographs and can be more familiar to users without computer training. *See also* paperless office.

types, and variables, that usually performs a single task. A procedure can usually be called (executed) by other procedures, as well as by the main body of the program. Some languages distinguish between a procedure and a function, with the latter (the function) returning a value. *See also* function, parameter, procedural language, routine, subroutine.

procedure call *n.* In programming, an instruction that causes a procedure to be executed. A procedure call can be located in another procedure or in the main body of the program. *See also* procedure.

process¹ *n.* A program or part of a program; a coherent sequence of steps undertaken by a program.

process² *vb.* To manipulate data with a program.

process-bound *adj.* Limited in performance by processing requirements. *See also* computation-bound.

process color *n.* A method of handling color in a document in which each block of color is separated into its subtractive primary color components for printing: cyan, magenta, and yellow (as well as black). All other colors are created by blending layers of various sizes of halftone spots printed in cyan, magenta, and yellow to create the image. *See also* color model, color separation (definition 1). *Compare* spot color.

processing *n.* The manipulation of data within a computer system. Processing is the vital step between receiving data (input) and producing results (output)—the task for which computers are designed.

processor *n.* *See* central processing unit, microprocessor.

Processor Direct Slot *n.* *See* PDS (definition 1).

Processor Input/Output *n.* *See* PIO.

Prodigy Information Service *n.* An online information service founded by IBM and Sears. Like its competitors America Online and CompuServe, Prodigy offers access to databases and file libraries, online chat, special interest groups, e-mail, and Internet connectivity. *Also called* Prodigy.

product *n.* **1.** An operator in the relational algebra used in database management that, when applied to two existing relations (tables), results in the creation of a new table containing all possible ordered concatenations (combinations) of tuples (rows) from the first relation with tuples from the second. The number of rows in the resulting relation is the product of the number of rows in the two source relations. *Also*

called Cartesian product. *Compare* inner join. **2.** In mathematics, the result of multiplying two or more numbers. **3.** In the most general sense, an entity conceived and developed for the purpose of competing in a commercial market. Although computers are products, the term is more commonly applied to software, peripherals, and accessories in the computing arena.

production system *n.* In expert systems, an approach to problem solving based on an "IF this, THEN that" approach that uses a set of rules, a database of information, and a "rule interpreter" to match premises with facts and form a conclusion. Production systems are also known as rule-based systems or inference systems. *See also* expert system.

Professional Graphics Adapter *n.* A video adapter introduced by IBM, primarily for CAD applications. The Professional Graphics Adapter is capable of displaying 256 colors, with a horizontal resolution of 640 pixels and a vertical resolution of 480 pixels. *Acronym:* PGA.

Professional Graphics Display *n.* An analog display introduced by IBM, intended for use with their Professional Graphics Adapter. *See also* Professional Graphics Adapter.

profile¹ *n.* *See* user profile.

profile² *vb.* To analyze a program to determine how much time is spent in different parts of the program during execution.

Profiles for Open Systems Internetworking Technology *n.* *See* POSIT.

program¹ *n.* A sequence of instructions that can be executed by a computer. The term can refer to the original source code or to the executable (machine language) version. *Also called* software. *See also* program creation, routine, statement.

program² *vb.* To create a computer program, a set of instructions that a computer or other device executes to perform a series of actions or a particular type of work.

program card *n.* *See* PC Card, ROM card.

program cartridge *n.* *See* ROM cartridge.

program counter *n.* A register (small, high-speed memory circuit within a microprocessor) that contains the address (location) of the instruction to be executed next in the program sequence.

wristwatch but which, unlike those items, is interactive, responds to commands, and carries out instructions. A wearable computer may be used like a conventional computer for data collection, storage, and retrieval, but without tying the user to a stationary location while operating the computer. The earliest wearable computers were clandestine devices used in the mid-1960s to predict the performance of roulette wheels. Today, wearable computers are used for such applications as inventory and express package tracking.

web *n.* A set of interlinked documents in a hypertext system. The user enters the web through a home page. *See also* World Wide Web.

Web *n.* *See* World Wide Web.

Web address *n.* *See* URL.

Web author *n.* A person who creates content for the World Wide Web. A Web author might be a writer who produces text for a designer to include in a Web page, or such an author might be a Web designer who writes the text and also adds graphic elements and prepares the HTML code.

Web-Based Enterprise Management *n.* *See* WBEM.

Web browser *n.* Software that lets a user view HTML documents and access files and software related to those documents. Originally developed to allow users to view or "browse" documents on the World Wide Web, Web browsers can blur the distinction between local and remote resources for the user by also providing access to documents on a network, an intranet, or the local hard drive. Web browser software is built on the concept of hyperlinks, which allow users to point and click with a mouse in order to jump from document to document in whatever order they desire. Most Web browsers are also capable of downloading and transferring files, providing access to newsgroups, displaying graphics embedded in the document, playing audio and video files associated with the document, and executing small programs, such as Java applets or ActiveX controls included by programmers in the documents. Helper applications or plug-ins are required by some Web browsers to accomplish one or more of these tasks. *Also called* browser. *See also* ActiveX control, helper application, hyperlink, Internet Explorer, Java applet, Lynx, Mosaic, Netscape Navigator, plug-in.

webcasting *n.* Popular term for broadcasting information via the World Wide Web, using push and pull

technologies to move selected information from a server to a client. An emergent technology in 1997, webcasting was developed to provide users with customized content—for example, sports, news, stocks, and weather—that can be updated both regularly and automatically. Webcasting gives users the ability to specify the type of content they want to see, and it gives content providers a means of delivering such information directly to the user's desktop. *See also* pull, push (definition 2).

WebCrawler *n.* A World Wide Web search engine operated by America Online. *See also* search engine.

Web development *n.* The design and coding of World Wide Web pages.

Web directory *n.* A list of Web sites, giving the URL and a description of each. *See also* URL.

Web index *n.* A Web site intended to enable a user to locate other resources on the Web. The Web index may include a search facility or may merely contain individual hyperlinks to the resources indexed.

Webmaster or webmaster *n.* A person responsible for creating and maintaining a World Wide Web site. A Webmaster is often responsible for responding to e-mail, ensuring the site is operating properly, creating and updating Web pages, and maintaining the overall structure and design of the site. *Also called* webmistress, webweaver.

webmistress *n.* *See* webmaster.

Web page *n.* A document on the World Wide Web. A Web page consists of an HTML file, with associated files for graphics and scripts, in a particular directory on a particular machine (and thus identifiable by a URL). Usually a Web page contains links to other Web pages. *See also* URL.

Web phone *n.* *See* Internet telephone.

Web rage *n.* 1. Anger or frustration related to the use or operation of the Internet. 2. An intemperate, rude, or angry posting on the Internet; a flame. 3. The latest fad to gain popularity among Web users.

Web server *n.* *See* HTTP server.

Web site *n.* A group of related HTML documents and associated files, scripts, and databases that is served up by an HTTP server on the World Wide Web. The HTML documents in a Web site generally cover one or more related topics and are interconnected through hyperlinks. Most Web sites have a home page as their starting point, which frequently functions as a table