
Dictionary of Computer and Internet Terms

Eleventh Edition

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public key

A computer program is in the public domain if it is not covered by any kind of copyright. Few substantial public-domain programs exist, but the term “public domain” is often used incorrectly to describe other kinds of freely copyable software (*see* FREE SOFTWARE). *See also* COPYRIGHT.

public key a publicly revealed password used for encoding private messages to a particular recipient. The recipient then uses his or her own secret PRIVATE KEY to decrypt the message. *See* ENCRYPTION.

public html typical name for the directory in which an individual user's WEB PAGE is stored under UNIX.

pull the process whereby the user retrieves information from a network at the user's request, as in traditional web browsing; *contrast* PUSH (definition 2).

pull-down menu a menu that appears when a particular item in a menu bar is selected. *See also* MENU BAR. *Contrast* ROLL-UP MENU.

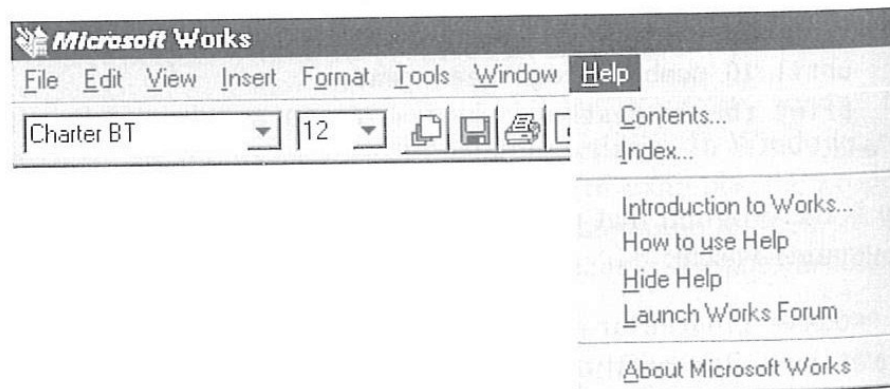


FIGURE 207. Pull-down menu

Puma version 10.1 of MAC OS X.

punched card a stiff paper card on which holes can be punched to encode data that can be read by a computer. In the 1960s, punched cards were the dominant way of feeding programs into computers, but they have now been replaced by interactive keyboards. Punched cards are still used in some voting systems. (*see* CHAD).

IBM punched cards had 80 columns, each with 12 positions to accommodate a rectangular hole, and each card corresponded to one line of a text file. Univac cards had 90 columns, with circular holes. The use of punched cards for data processing actually preceded the invention of the computer by more than 50 years. Herman Hollerith realized that it took several years to process data from the 1880 census. He calculated that, unless a faster method was found, the U.S. Census Bureau would still be working on the results from the 1890 census when it came time to start the 1900 census. Hollerith developed a system in which census data were punched on cards, and machines were used to sort and tabulate the cards. Even earlier, in 1801, a system of punched cards was

used to direct the weaving pattern on the automatic Jacquard loom in France.

Punycode an Internet standard for transforming Unicode character strings into ASCII character strings (*see* UNICODE; ASCII). The results are not intended to be readable but merely to create a unique representation from which the original Unicode can be retrieved.

The encoding consists of “xn--” followed by the ASCII characters from the original string (if any), a hyphen, and further ASCII characters whose numerical values indicate changes to be made in order to recover the Unicode. For example, *résumé* encodes as xn--rsum-bpad.

Punycode is used in order to allow non-ASCII characters in Internet domain addresses.

purge to discard data that is no longer wanted; in an e-mail reading program, to discard messages that have been marked for deletion.

push

1. to place an item on a stack. *See* LIFO; STACK.
2. to deliver information to a client machine without waiting for the user to request it. Push technology makes the World Wide Web work rather like TV; the user selects a “channel” and views whatever is being sent out at the moment. This contrasts with the way web browsers traditionally work, where the user manually selects information to retrieve from the Web. (*Contrast* PULL.) Push technology is useful for delivering information that has to be updated minute by minute, such as stock market quotes or news bulletins. (*See* RSS.) However, the user demand for push technology is not what had once been expected. Users do not want to give up control of the Internet in order to watch it passively like television.

push technology *see* PUSH (definition 2).

pushdown stack, pushdown store a data structure from which items can only be removed in the opposite of the order in which they were stored. *See* STACK.

pushing the envelope working close to, or at, physical or technological limits. *See* ENVELOPE.

PvE (Player versus Environment) a type of game where players overcome challenges given to them by the game itself rather than by other players.

PvP (Player versus Player) a type of game where players compete against each other.

pyramid scheme (Ponzi scheme) a get-rich-quick scheme in which early participants receive money from later participants. For example, you might receive a message containing a list of names. You’re expected to send money to the first person on the list, cross the first name off, add your name at the bottom, and distribute copies of the message.