IBM Jargon and General Computing Dictionary
Tenth Edition

Preface

This is the Tenth Edition of the IBM Jargon and General Computing Dictionary, dated May 1990. This edition follows the markup and format of the last (Ninth) edition, and has more than one hundred and seventy new entries (bringing the total to over fourteen hundred entries).

This is not only the tenth edition of the dictionary, but is also its tenth year; the first edition was compiled and distributed in 1980. At that time the use of jargon was on the increase, but I now observe that the quantity and use of jargon appears to be decreasing – perhaps as computing becomes less of a specialist discipline. Not only does this make my task as editor of the dictionary a little easier, but it might also imply that the computing industry is at last getting better at communicating with its customers!

As usual, I am indebted to the content and management reviewers for this edition: Geoff Bartlett, Ian Brackenbury, Peter Capek, Philip Cohen, Bertrand Denoix, Truly Donovan, Forrest Garnett, and Ray Mansell. Any errors that remain are, of course, entirely my responsibility.

I should also like to thank the hundreds of people who have contributed words or definitions to this dictionary. I have been especially encouraged by the diversity of the contributors, who come from more than forty countries and from all divisions of IBM. Newcomers to IBM have proved to be the most sensitive to jargon, and the old-timers (some from very high levels in the Corporation) have provided most of the history and anecdotes. Without the encouragement from readers, and, of course, the VNET communications network, this document would never have been created.

The Content of the Dictionary

The items in this dictionary have been selected from the huge vocabulary of computer-related terms used in IBM. To be included here, a word or phrase must either have originated in IBM, or (more commonly) its meaning or usage in IBM must be different from the usual. Acronyms and abbreviations are **not** included except where they are necessary for cross-references, or are used as true words in their own right (for example, "APAR").

The origin of a usage is often obscure, so a few words may have slipped in under false colours. Do please send me any corrections or background material which will improve the accuracy of this collection. You are also encouraged to send possible additions to this dictionary – words and phrases, new or old, English or not. All contributions are most welcome. If possible, please include the source and date of any usage you quote.

This dictionary is intended both to inform and to entertain. Each entry has a definition, which is usually supplemented by an explanation and an example of usage. Formal etymologies are not included, since in most cases the etymology is either unknown or disputed. In many cases, a meaning or usage is so subtle or bizarre that a light treatment is more appropriate (and conveys the sense better) than an attempt to define the term formally. As a result, this compilation is not just a source of information but is also a window on the IBM culture, as reflected in its language.

This dictionary is perhaps most useful to people new to the vocabulary of IBM. For this reason, the document in printed form is unclassified. It contains no material proprietary to IBM. The material is, however, substantially novel and is therefore protected by copyright. Producing printed copies of this document within IBM, or copying in printed form for private use is allowed, provided that reproduction is done without alteration. Permission for any other form of publication must be obtained from the editor, together with appropriate management and legal approvals.

The Format of the Items

The structure of the dictionary is formalised by the use of a generic markup language, which conforms (except for commentary) to the reference syntax of the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML, ISO standard 8879).

Each item in the dictionary starts with a *headword*, which can be a single word or a phrase. Headwords are shown in lower case, except when they are always used in a particular upper or mixed case. The headword is followed by a *pronunciation* where not obvious (or where different from normal English).

Every headword is followed by one or more *senses*. A sense starts with a *part of speech*, where appropriate, which is followed by a definition – normally a single sentence. The definition is usually followed by an explanation, which may include quotations illustrating the use of the headword. These quotations are of actual usage (with occasional minor editorial elucidations) unless introduced by the word "usage", in which case the quotation is illustrative.

Within a definition or explanation, cross-references to words or phrases defined elsewhere in the dictionary are shown in an oblique sans serif font, *thus* (or are identified by some other typographic convention, depending on the SCRIPT processor and printer used). Subsidiary headwords, defined within an item, are shown in the same font as the headwords at the start of items.

A number of abbreviations are used. Parts of speech may be shown as one of *n.*, *v.*, *adj.*, and *adv.*, which refer to noun, verb, adjective, and adverb respectively (these are often not the usual part of speech for the word or phrase!). Elsewhere, *cf.* stands for *confer*, compare with; *e.g.* for *exempli gratia*, for example; *etc.* for *et cetera*, and so on; *i.e.* for *id est*, that is; and *q.v.* for *quod vide*, which see.

The items that are new in the current (Tenth) edition are marked with a bar in the left margin, and the items that were new in the last (Ninth) edition are marked by dots in the left margin. Editorial asides are bracketed, [thus]. In general, British spelling and punctuation are used, though for headwords, quotations, and the expansion of abbreviations the original form (often from the USA) will be found.

Mike Cowlishaw (MFC at VENTA)
IBM UK Laboratories,
Hursley Park,
Winchester, UK

ABEND (*ab-end*) **1.** *n.* The undesirable termination of a program (or system). From "ABnormal ENDing". Invariably due to human error at some point that the system was unable to overcome or ignore. Typically results in catch-all error messages (*e.g.*, "syntax error") that rarely help determine the cause. **2.** *v.* To end abnormally. See also *crash*.

A-Box *n.* A primary storage unit: the one closest to the controller. Most 370 storage peripherals come in two flavours. The A-Box (also called head of *string*, or *Model A*) either houses the controller (*e.g.*, 3422), is the controller (*e.g.*, 3480), or connects to the controller. The B-Box (Model B) is used for extending the string. Some strings can be connected to the controller at both ends, in which case the unit at the end of the string is usually a Model D.

accept *n.* A purchased and (usually) installed product, most often used in the plural. As in: "The demand number is the marketing estimate of customer accepts...".

account situation *n.* Circumstances at a customer installation which could lead to IBM losing revenue or reputation. A "red alert" state for a branch office. See also *critical situation*.

acronym *n.* A word formed from the (or some) initial letters of other words and often printed in uppercase. Strictly speaking, if it can only be pronounced letter-by-letter then it is merely an abbreviation. An example of an acronym: "Acronyms: A Convenient Reduction Of Nomenclature Yielding Mnemonic Syllables". *acronym* is, in itself, not an IBM word, but acronyms are a way of life in the computer business; there are so many acronyms and abbreviations in use in IBM, and so many are coined each day, that this dictionary cannot attempt to list them. It must suffice to record the discovery of one of a number of three-level acronyms: **GOCB**. In this acronym, the **O** stands for **OSD**, in which the **O** stands for **OSI**. The **G** stands for **GTMOSI** (a mere two levels), and so the full expansion of **GOCB** is: "General Teleprocessing Monitor for Open Systems Interconnection Open Systems Interconnection Session Driver Control Block". See also *TLA*.

action 1. *v.* To do something, or (more commonly) to delegate to someone something that needs to be done. "We must action finishing off the documentation." **2.** *n.* An action, agreed at a meeting, that a particular person is expected to take. "I have an action to organize this year's family dinner."

action item *n.* An *action* (*q.v.*) recorded in the minutes of a meeting, or brought forward to the agenda of the next meeting.

action plan *n.* A plan. Project management is never satisfied by just a plan. The only acceptable plans are action plans. Also used to mean an *ad hoc* short-term scheme for resolving a specific and well defined problem.

added value 1. *n.* The *features* or *bells and whistles* that distinguish one product from another. As in: "This mission is strategic to our division. If we are to keep it, our proposals must have visible added value." **2.** *n.* The additional peripherals, software, support, installation, *etc.*, provided by a dealer, such as an IBM VAR (Value Added Reseller) or VAD (Value Added Dealer).

adder *n.* An increment. "These costs won't look so attractive with the burden and inflation adders." Nominated for most obnoxious neologism of 1980. The word *uplift* is now a common and equally obnoxious alternative.

address *v.* To talk about. Used when a speaker cannot answer a question, as in: "I shall address that subject another time" (this implies that, of course, the speaker has considered the subject in great depth, but sadly has not enough time now to give it the treatment it deserves). See *offline*.

adjective *v.* To use a word as an adjective modifying some other word which in fact modifies the adjectived word. This avoids the normal use of prepositions and dependent clauses, as in "user effects" (instead of "effects on users" or "effects caused by users"). Another example is "That is a documentation hit" (rather than "That is a hit on the documentation"). See also *verb*.

administrivia *n.* Any kind of bureaucratic red tape or paperwork, IBM or not, that hinders accomplishment of one's objectives or goals. Often, anything with a routing slip attached.

adtech *n.* Advanced Technology. Time put aside for a risky project, not necessarily directly related to a product. May mean: **a)** Play time (when someone else is doing it), or **b)** Exciting, innovative system design with no product deadlines (when speaker is doing it).

aeroplane rule, airplane rule 1. *n.* "When you are lost, climb and confess". **2.** *n.* Complexity increases the possibility of failure; a twin-engine aeroplane is more expensive and has twice as many engine problems as a single engine aeroplane. When applied to large computing systems, the analogy is that two power supplies (even though running at overrated current output) driving two boards of logic are much more reliable than four power supplies of correct value with each pair driving each of two logic boards. When reliability is the stronger consideration a different design will result than when availability (with concurrent maintenance) is the major criterion. See *fence out*.

aggressive 1. *adj.* Optimistic, vigorous, very active. In IBM, implies an element of risk: "We are moving into the new technology on a very aggressive schedule." **2.** *adj.* Over-ambitious. As used on a foil: "1988 plan was very aggressive", which actually meant "we did not make target" and "the forecasters got it wrong again".

air movement device *n.* A mechanical rotating component with angled blades, used in the IBM PC family and in the 4341 processor for cooling purposes. When used in the (now defunct) IBM Copiers, it was known as an **air cooling device**. [Even earlier, it was known as a "fan"; the term has been abbreviated for convenience.]

alarm *v.* To fit with an alarm device. Observed on doors in San Jose and elsewhere: "This door is alarmed". [Soothe, soothe...]

all-blue *adj.* Of a customer: having purchased all major computing equipment from IBM. "An all-blue account." See also *true blue*.

all cycles to list *expression.* Nothing new. Old-timer's response to "How are you"? This was the standard "just list" invocation, wired on an accounting machine panel. See also *CI to C*.

all-elbows *adj.* Of a resident PC program: unsociable. Used to describe a program that bluntly steals the resources that it needs without regard to others.

all hands meeting *n.* A meeting, called by upper management, which everyone working on a given project is required to attend. Probably from the nautical "All hands on deck!" Since most of these meetings are called to announce changes in the

management tree, there is some evidence that the intended reference is to shuffling the deck.

alphameric *n.* Alpha-Numeric. Used to describe those characters that are either alphabetic or numeric. The alphamerics are often restricted to a single case of alphabetic, and rarely include any non-English alphabetics.

Amber *n.* The master disk of a public *conferencing facility.* This refers to Roger Zelazny's *Nine Princes In Amber* fantasy series. Amber is (sort of) the real universe; other apparent realities are (in some sense) incomplete copies of Amber (they are called "shadows" of Amber). See *master.*

American tourist *n.* A VIP (Visiting (*sic*) Important Person) from the USA. A breed of corporate manager or staff assistant that suffers from an urge to visit European locations (usually within driving distance of the Mediterranean) during the months of July or August, thus preventing employees from taking their vacations when they would like to. 1986 (the year of the Libyan affair and the Paris bombings) was a nice quiet year for Europeans.

angel dust *n.* Another name for *green lightning* (*q.v.*). Refers to the slang name for a drug [phencyclidine] that is said to result in hallucinations and psychotropic effects similar to the flashing streaks known as Green Lightning.

announce *n.* The time at which a new product is described to customers. Before this time a product is known by a *code name*, and specifications are strictly confidential. At announce, the product is assigned a number instead of a name, with the result that not even the developers know what it is any more. See also *ESP, FCS, GA.*

APAR (*ay-parr*) **1.** *n.* Authorized Program Analysis Report. This is an official report to IBM of an error in a program. The acronym is used so often that most people don't know what it stands for. This is one of the many acronyms whose expansion and meaning has changed with time. The group in Poughkeepsie that wrote the early System/360 systems programs (compilers, sorts, *etc.*) were called "Applied Programming" or "Application Programming", hence a request for a fix was called an "Applied Programming Assistance Request". In the period between the demise of the Applied Programming organisation and the determination that "AP" could mean "Authorized Program" the acronym was interpreted as "Always Process As Rush". [This actually got printed on some forms.] **2.** *v.* To make such a report. Note that only programs (and not *microcode*) can be APARed. **3.** *n.* A specific *fix* for a reported problem [an incorrect usage]. "I've applied all the APARs, but it still crashes." Also **APAR avalanche**, the result of innocently requesting a single APAR to fix a simple problem, only to find that it requires a number of other fixes to be installed first, and that these in turn require others, and these...

APARable situation *n.* A reportable *bug.* See also *critical situation, known restriction.*

APL bigot *n.* One who considers APL to be the finest programming language available. APL (A Programming Language) is a popular, mathematically oriented, unreadable, interactive language. Usage: "An APL bigot does not know there are any other programming languages", or: "It's an APL bigot – cannot speak English". Alon Caplin (known for his love of APL and for his sense of humour) was heard to say: "You can always tell an APL bigot, but not much". See also *bigot.*

append *n.* A piece of text (ranging from one line to several hundred) that is appended to a file on a conference disk. The text may be discussions, bug reports, suggestions, questions, or any other topic of conversation. The value of an append is very often inversely proportional to its length. See also *conferencing facility, forum.*

application tower *n.* A series of programs that have been grouped together to form a package which can be used conveniently for a particular application. The package is built on a common base that is shared by several application towers. See *tower.*

architect **1.** *v.* To design how something should work. Usage: "We will have that architected by year end". **2.** *v.* To document, *ex post facto*, the way a particular piece of hardware [and sometimes software] works.

architectural awareness *n.* An improvement to a building. Site Facilities' version of Feature. A popular variety is a column placed directly in front of a door, claimed to be deliberate. Warning: At the Glendale Laboratory (Endicott), and at the Greenford Distribution Centre (London), you will be offered attractive bets that this has never happened. **Do not accept!**

architecture **1.** *n.* The way something works. Usage: "They are developing a new disk architecture". **2.** *adj.* Documentation. Usually in the form "architecture group" that denotes a group of people who go around finding out how the most highly esteemed IBM products or planned products work and then document them. These documents then become the IBM "standard architecture" or "strategic architecture" which the rest of the (IBM) world then has to follow. Note: You cannot spell "Architecture" without "hit".

archive *v.* To save data (usually electronic) in long-term storage (such as magnetic tape or optical disk). This differs from *backup* (*q.v.*) in that it is intended that the data be kept for a long time, perhaps indefinitely. Data are archived when no longer in constant use, and the space taken up by the data is needed for other purposes.

arm waving *n.* A technique used to convey excited dedication to an idea, even though not supported by arguments or facts. "The pitch had much arm waving but little content". The technique may be attempting to emulate the effect of waving one's arms (as if trying to fly) near a flock of seagulls [or *wild ducks*?] who will then all take off together.

artificial intelligence **1.** *n.* The opposite of natural silliness. **2.** *n.* A research topic in Computer Science. Some in the computer industry seem to think that nothing useful can come out of artificial intelligence (but they don't trust the natural kind, either).

ASCII bit (*ass-key*) *n.* A bit set to select ASCII (American National Standard Code for Information Interchange) coded information. In the System/360 computer architecture (now obsolete), bit 12 of the Program Status Word was designated the ASCII bit. When the bit was off (0), the system ran using the EBCDIC (Extended Binary Coded Decimal Interchange Code) coded character set. When on (1), the system ran using the ASCII coded character set. However, this ASCII operation was never used by any of the IBM operating systems and so the *architects* redefined the bit for Basic Control Mode (0) and Extended Control Mode (1). In hindsight, it seems that the ASCII setting might have been

convenient for communication between modern mainframes and personal computers.

Programmers at one time could turn on the ASCII bit in the Program Check New PSW of a 3195 Processor; this (if loaded) would drive the processor into a continuous loop of Program Interruption (bad PSW) which would fetch that same PSW (still bad).

assembler **1.** *n.* A program that takes the symbolic language used for writing machine level (binary) instructions and converts that language into the machine level instructions. **2.** *n.* A symbolic language for writing machine level (binary) instructions. Also **assembly language**. Usage: "You mean the whole interpreter is written in assembler?" The original assembler language for the System/360 series was known as **BAL** (Basic Assembler Language), as in the title for GC26-3602-7 (October 1972) *IBM System/360 Model 20, Card Programming Support, Basic Assembler Language*. See also *code, microcode*.

assemblerize *v.* To rewrite in *assembler* for better performance. Curiously, verbs such as "Cobolize" have not appeared, perhaps because they would seldom be used.

assist *n.* A modification to the microcode of a processor (or to a system control program) to improve the performance of an operating system running under that microcode or control program. Usage: "YMS runs nearly twice as fast with the EM assist enabled". There is a side-effect in using an assist: the number of MIPS (*q.v.*) measured as instruction decodes often drops substantially, even though the effective work accomplished goes up.

at this moment in time *adv.* Now. Also **at this point in time**, and the more pointed: **at your convenience** (now, when pronounced by a manager).

attrit (*a-trit*) *v.* To remove personnel from a department, usually by finding new positions for the people, and usually because the department's *mission* has ended. As in: "I had to attrit my entire department when they canceled the project." See also *attrition*.

attrition *n.* The loss of personnel through resignation from the company. Usage: "Attrition this year is 1.7%". This word is normally used to mean loss through friction or wearing down; one wonders what (or which) agency is causing the friction. The term is also used in this way by Experimental Psychologists. See also *attrit*.

autoline *n.* An automatic manufacturing line for building components of a computer system, often well-endowed with robots.

automagically *adv.* Automatically, and so cleverly [or obscurely] that it seems like some magic must have been involved. As in: "I have an Exec that does that automagically".

auto-pixelization *n.* A method of automatically deriving a dot (raster) image from the vector outline of a shape (often a character from a font).

award *n.* A monetary bonus given in recognition of a special achievement. In Research, a cash prize often given to signify the end of a project. Elsewhere, a cash prize placed sometimes for political effect, but often associated with (though not proportional to) merit. See also *dinner for two*.

backbone *n.* The central nodes of an electronic communication network. The backbone of IBM's *VNET* network is managed directly by a corporate organisation, and in the mid 1980s ran a much-enhanced version of the RSCS product, known as IPORSCS. The nodes of the backbone, for example HURBB, are identified by three characters of the location name, followed by BB (for BackBone). At a time of a major software upgrade numerous problems occurred, which led to the suggestion that in fact the BB stands for *bit-bucket* (*q.v.*).

back-burner *v.* To move something to a lower priority in the hope that it will *go away* or be solved by someone else. "Let's back-burner this item." [Not originally an IBM term.]

back-level *adj.* Not current. Describes a program or system that has not been modified with the latest changes and enhancements. "Your system is back-level, so there is no way you can run this new super-program!" See also *down-level*.

back-page *v.* To communicate a comment on a manual using the Reader's Comment Form (which is on the back or last page of the book). A way to get a change to a manual when direct approach to the author or developer fails. "I think we'll have to back-page that item".

backslash *n.* A backwards sloping *slash* (*i.e.*, a solidus that slopes from top left down to bottom right). This character has suddenly become overloaded, as it has appeared relatively recently on most IBM keyboards but used to be unavailable; every new application therefore uses it as an "escape" character.

back-to-back remote *n.* A method for connecting two computers which have been set up so they can communicate with each other only over a long-distance line, using 3705s, modems, adapters, *etc.* If in fact the two machines are sitting in the same room, then the line terminals of the two machines can simply be connected by short wires. Often useful in initial testing.

backup **1.** *v.* To make a copy of data in a separate place in case of inadvertent loss of the primary (working) copy. Often a tedious and time-consuming process, and so commonly done less frequently and thoroughly than would be ideal. **2.** *adj.* Secondary, reserve. As in: "What's the backup plan?" See also *archive, Iron Mountain*.

BAD *adj.* Of a program: Broken As Designed. Used to describe a program whose design, rather than implementation, is flawed. This term originated (and is mostly used) outside IBM, often in reaction to an IBM "Working as Designed" APAR response.

badge **1.** *n.* A small rectangular piece of plastic (showing the holder's name and photograph) that purports to prove the identity of the bearer. Identification badges are almost always required to gain access to IBM buildings. In addition, at most large locations they must be worn at all times. This wearing of badges is of doubtful value, however, as at least one study has shown that normal suspicion of a stranger is inhibited if a person sees an official-looking badge prominently displayed. **2.** *v.* To use a badge to unlock a door. A task made harder than it need be, since most badge-holders are designed for display rather than for use. Usage: "Each employee must badge in and badge out". **3.** *v.* To mark with a badge. The main IBM computer center in Palo Alto has (or had) a large sign at the main entrance reading "Badged Employees Only".

badge run *n.* A walk among all of the areas (such as machine test laboratories) where one's badge has been authorised to allow entry, inserting the badge, opening the door (and maybe peeking in), and then leaving to go to the next area. The purpose of this is to leave a usage trail to stop automatic systems removing your badge from the authorised entry list simply because you haven't used your access privileges enough.

bad information **1.** *n.* Lies. **2.** *n.* The truth, expressed euphemistically. There is a story (abbreviated here) that well illustrates this: Programmer to manager, "This is manure". Manager to second-level, "This is fertiliser". Second-level to third-level, "This makes things grow". Third-level to Director, "Must be good stuff". After an *external audit*, the misinformed protect themselves by saying: "My people gave me bad information". See also *CYA*.

bad response *n.* A delay in the response time to a trivial request of a computer that is longer than two tenths of one second. In the 1970s, IBM 3277 display terminals attached to quite small System/360 machines could service up to 19 interruptions every second from a user [I measured it myself]. Today, this kind of response time is considered "impossible" or "unachievable", even though work by Doherty, Thadhani, and others has shown that human productivity and satisfaction are almost linearly inversely proportional to computer response time. It is hoped (but not expected) that the definition of "Bad Response" will drop below one tenth of a second by 1990.

ballpark *v.* To make a rough estimate. Derived from a baseball term. Usage: "If you don't have the number, can you ballpark it for me?"

banana **1.** *n.* A parenthesis. A term used especially when dictating computer language, as in: "list fred splat splat left-banana label" for "LIST FRED * * (LABEL". **2.** *n.* One unit of skill in repairing equipment. IBM's avowed goal is to design machines whose maintenance is so simple that the repair engineers can be replaced by trained monkeys. Hence, the lowest three levels of field repairs are sometimes jokingly called One-, Two-, or Three-Banana tasks. This concept was used by the RAS group for the 3850 Mass Storage System at Boulder in the mid 1970s. At this time there were only one-and two-banana tasks. The idea was developed in the 308X RAS and SPR shops, and was extended to three-banana tasks. [Such is the march of inflation.]

banana curve, planning banana **1.** *n.* The basis of a forecasting technique popular in the 1970s. The method: using as much historical data as can be found, estimated, or invented, calculate for each month the best-ever year-to-date attainment as a percentage of the year-end total for that year. Similarly, compute the worst-ever result (which probably happened in a different year). Plotting the results by month produces two curves which both start at 0% and end at 100% but usually diverge in between. Because attainment tends to accelerate towards *yearend*, the region between the curves resembles a banana. In use, then, the current year's attainment was plotted, and if the plot began to fall outside the banana, [an early example of "pushing the outside of the envelope"] it would be assumed that some person, product, or event was not performing as he, she, or it should. **2.** *n.* A plan-by-time graph that shows exponential growth, because of the end-of-year panic by sales people with unfulfilled quotas. "Well folks, we just made it last year, but this time we must straighten the banana curve." [This usage probably derives from misunderstanding the earlier usage.]

banana label *n.* The curved label stuck to magnetic tape reels and intended to identify the contents. It usually contains only a large number and some arbitrary audit information.

banana problem *n.* Not knowing when to stop. This derives from the story about the child who said "I know how to spell 'banana', but I don't know when to stop". Used, for example, when trying to decide how far to refine a design.

banner *n.* Several lines of *boiler plate* at the beginning of a file (such as a *forum*) indicating its security classification. Usually sufficiently large that it obscures the useful information normally placed at the start of a file – especially irritating when trying to browse such a file when connected via a slow communication line. On PC software, the banner takes the form of the display of a giant logo and copyright notice, which usually cannot be bypassed.

bathtub curve *n.* A curve, very much the shape of a Victorian bathtub, that characterises the failure rates of components with time: initially high, dropping to a very low level, then rising again at the end of the component's life. See also *burn-in*.

baud *n.* The speed of a communications line, expressed in "raw" state changes per second (not necessarily binary). [Not an IBM term, but included here as it is often thought, by IBMers and others, to describe the actual data rate achievable – which can be wildly optimistic (as it includes any protocol bits, error checking bits, *etc.*) or pessimistic (as some schemes can encode more than one bit in a state change).]

Beamer, Beemer **1.** *n.* An obvious IBM employee. A person who works for IBM and wears his badge in public, outside of any IBM building – or even further afield. May also wear white socks. This is the "outside" definition for a stereotyped IBM person; a local radio show in the Hudson Valley features a spot called "The Beemertons", a kind of IBM soap opera. **2.** *n.* In the USA: a brand of motor car, from the Bayerische Motoren Werke.

bean counter **1.** *n.* A person whose job is to find flaws in reports dealing with financial matters. According to popular lore, if no mistakes are detected then this person has the job of changing accounting procedures in order to generate some mistakes. **2.** *n.* An individual who refuses to accept any proposal to improve a product (or the work environment) unless it can be quantitatively equated to a monetary reduction in corporate expenditures, or a short-term increase in corporate revenues. **3.** *n.* A person who insists that an employee be at his desk by 08:30 precisely. (Even though this means that he must rise an hour earlier in order to catch an earlier train than the one that would get him to his desk at 08:33.)

bed See *get in bed with*.

bells and whistles *n.* Frills added to a program or product to make it more exciting without making it much better.

belly up *adj.* Broken, not functioning (as for dead fish). Used to refer to a piece of hardware that was functioning, but has ceased to do so. (This adjective is most commonly heard at the most critical point of the final test cycle.) Often used in the form "To go belly up". See also *casters up mode, down*.

best-of-breed *adj.* Comparable to recently announced competitive products. This term is used by planners and enthusiasts, when a product is first proposed, to describe the relationship of a product to its competition. Not used in later phases because (by then) the competition has improved and at the same time many of the nicer features of the new product have been removed due to schedule pressures.

beta test *v.* To test a pre-release [potentially unreliable] version of a piece of software by making it available to selected customers and users. This term derives from the early (1960s) IBM product cycle checkpoints, now replaced by *inspections* and explicit test phases. "Alpha Test" corresponds to today's Unit or Component Tests; "Beta Test" was the Ship Test (system test). These "greek letter" assignments were in turn derived from the earlier A, B, and C tests for hardware. The A-test was a check that the idea for the product was feasible and that the technology was available and could be manufactured. Once passed, the product could proceed to design and development. The B-test was the most significant checkpoint: it showed that the engineering model (often just an advanced prototype) could run and perform as specified. The C-test was a repeat of the B-test on the first few production machines. The term "Beta Test" is now widely used throughout the computer software industry.

bet your job *v.* To take a risk. On the rare occasions that major risks are taken, the responsible manager or consultant will make capital of such derring-do: "I'm betting my job on this".

bible *n.* A master reference document (for example, the *System/370 Principles of Operation*). "I don't believe that Divide sets the condition code – I'll check it in the Bible."

BiCapitalization *n.* The PracTice of PutTing CapiTal LetTers in the MidDle of WorDs. This was originally used to refer to microcomputer software trademarks such as VisiCalc, EasyWriter, and FileCommand but has since spread even to products totally unrelated to computing, and to many more than two capitals. The mainframe world, however, is still mostly devoid of BiCapitalization – in that environment the use of abbreviations is still the PMRR (Preferred Method of Reducing Readability).

BICARSA GLAPPR (*bi-carsa glapper*) *n.* The cornerstone applications of commercial computing. An abbreviation for Billing, Inventory Control, Accounts Receivable, Sales Analysis, General Ledger, Accounts Payable, PayRoll; the applications for which IBM's mainframes were built and on which its fame and fortune were founded. Usage: "Yeah, it's fast, but how does it do on BICARSA GLAPPR?"

Big Blue **1.** *n.* IBM (when used by customers and competitors). **2.** *n.* The Data Processing Division (when used by people concerned with processors that do not use the System/370 architecture). [The DPD no longer exists, but the phrase **big blue boxes** is still used to refer to large System/370 installations.]

Big Blue Zoo *n.* The manufacturing plant and laboratory complex located at the junction of Highway 52 and 37th Street, Rochester, Minnesota, USA. It really is blue. See also *zoo.*

Big Four *n.* The original four largest *TOOLS* (*q.v.*) disks. These are the IBMPC and IBMVM conference disks, and their corresponding tool (program) collections, PCTOOLS and VMTOOLS.

big iron *n.* Large computers. Also **big iron bigot**. See *iron.*

Big OS (*big ozz*) *n.* Operating System/360. This term was popular in the late '60s when "OS" was **the** operating system, and it was believed to do and know everything.

bigot *n.* A person with a passionate or religious (superstitious) fervour for a language or system. As in: *APL bigot* (*q.v.*), "REXX bigot", "CMS bigot". Implies an unwillingness to learn any alternative, except when the term is used by one bigot to another (of the same type), in which case the implication is almost affectionate.

Big Red Switch, BRS **1.** *n.* A device for removing the power from (and sometimes restoring it to) a computer. Originally (1973) used to refer to the Emergency Power Off switch on System/360 machines; now mainly used to refer to the PC or PS/2 Power On/Off switch. [Which, in the usual way of things, is no longer red on the most recent machines.] On this machine, it is commonly used to reset the machine when everything else fails to bring the PC software back into a usable state. Using the BRS is also called "power cycling". See also *Poughkeepsie reset, blue button.* **2.** *v.* To reset or restart electrical machinery by raising the On/Off switch (the Big Red Switch) to the Off position and then returning it to the On position again [or vice versa, down to the Off position, depending on the country of origin of the machinery]. As in: "If Alt-Ctrl-Del doesn't work, you'll need to BRS it".

binary aboriginal *n.* Someone who programmed computers before 1975. A term of endearment, usually identifying a programmer who: **a)** Codes only in *assembler* or even without one; **b)** Knows the original reason why DISK DUMPed files have sequence numbers; **c)** Dated or was dated by keypunch operators; **d)** Knows what a *core dump* is; **e)** Graduated from college with Mathematics or Electronics (Computer Science did not exist then).

binary data *n.* Non-textual data (data that include characters other than those normally recognisable when printed). All data in a computer are stored in binary form, but some are more binary than others.

bit *n.* A single binary digit, which can have one of two values, conventionally described as "0" or "1". A contraction of "Binary Digit". Most computers use, at the fundamental electronic level, a binary representation of data.

bit-bucket **1.** *n.* A notional bottomless hole into which vital messages and files fall when some network machine accidentally destroys them. A useful excuse for anything one has forgotten to send ("Oh, it must have fallen into the bit-bucket. I'll send it again.") or did not feel like answering at the time ("Send it to me again..."). See also *backbone.* **2.** *n.* A similar place, in a processing unit, for unwanted information. Here, in hardware, the bit bucket collects all the leftover intermediate products of a calculation for disposal. In large high-performance machines, a "byte-bucket" or a "word-bucket" must be used because the bit-bucket cannot be emptied quickly enough. **3.** *v.* To reject, cancel, or throw away. As in: "We've decided to bit-bucket this release".

bit decay *n.* The tendency of programs to start failing as they get older, due to changes in the underlying environment or operating system.

black hole 1. *n.* A person or customer of enormous capacity who can drain the entire resources of an organisation (such as a branch office). **2.** *n.* A node on a store-and-forward network that seems to be better at storing files than at forwarding them. Usage: "IBMVM updates are caught in the KGNGATE black hole".

black layer *n.* Hardware. See *layer*.

blank 1. *n.* A character, printed as a space, and often mistaken for the absence of a character. This typically results in its being ignored or discarded. (If you can't see it, it isn't there, right? It's *virtual*). VM was the first major IBM operating system to use the blank as the primary delimiter in its command language. See also *null*. **2.** *adj.* Of a page in a manual: containing only the top title, page number, footing, and the words "This Page Intentionally Left Blank". The most valuable blank pages also contain the rubric "IBM Confidential" (or something similar).

blem *n.* Problem. Derived from Pro-blem (and possibly Blemish). Any bug or problem. For example: "We've encountered a number of blems in the scheduler. We might have to do a total redesign".

blivet *n.* An intractable problem, or a design that can no longer be enhanced or brought up-to-date. Something becomes a blivet when it is out of control. This usually refers to a program that has been touched by so many incompetent programmers that it cannot be maintained properly. From the World War II military term meaning "ten pounds of manure in a five-pound bag".

blow away *v.* To destroy. "The editor crashed and blew away all my files."

blue *n.* The official IBM company colour, Oxford blue. There was once a *blue letter* on Blue on the HONE system, which said that "...the feature number 9063 (Blue for all System/370 CPUs and peripherals, called 'classic blue') will have a slightly changed hue which can lead to colour mismatch in customer machine rooms. Requests to repaint to the old hue are not accepted". See also *all-blue, Big Blue*.

bluebird *n.* A sale that comes in through the window, that has not been "worked for". For example, a hitherto unknown customer walks in and orders a complete System/370. In India, they may be known as "Fairy Bluebirds".

blue button 1. *n.* The System/360 or System/370 combination Reset and *IPL* button. **2.** *v.* To press the Blue Button. Used when a system or program fails to respond to any console command and is somewhere out in never-never land. See also *Big Red Switch*.

blue cable *n.* The new (thinner) cable required for IBM mainframe computer connections that run at 4.5 Megabytes per second. The official name is *Reduced Diameter Channel Cable*. See also *boa*.

blue dot *n.* A small blue paper disk attached to the door-frame of an office to indicate a member of the cognoscenti. This curious emblem evolved at Yorktown as a means to avoid the disordering of one's office (by security personnel) if one forgot to lock the door on leaving (for any reason). A verse from BLUEDOT SONG explains all: "So here's the algorithm that our expert has computed: / A blue dot means your office will be locked instead of looted. / By this device we hope to end the practice we've protested, / So you can leave your desk alone and not have it molested."

blue glue *n.* SNA (Systems Network Architecture). That which binds blue boxes together (official definition).

blue layer *n.* Systems control (operating system) software. See *layer*.

blue letter *n.* The document once distributed by the Data Processing Division to announce a new product or education course. So named because it was printed on blue paper, it contained the generalised product description and the specifications that were used to make the marketing representatives experts. When DPD became NAD (National Accounts Division), NMD (National Marketing Division), and ISG (Information Systems Group), the blue letters changed colour (as did the Peach Letters of the Small Systems announcements). They are now all printed on ivory coloured paper (called buff or bleach [Blue and Peach] by some). It is now fashionable to call the letters "Ivory Letters" to illustrate one's ability to change with the times, but real data processing old-timers will invariably refer to them as Blue Letters. See also *announce*.

blue money *n.* Internal budget dollars, used to purchase an item from another IBM organisation. This is used mainly by product planners. Its corollary is **real money** (or, in the monochrome USA, *green money*), which is needed to buy things from the outside world. Real dollars are worth much more than blue dollars, and nothing can stop a proposal faster than pointing out how many real dollars it will cost. Alternatively, a proposal is much more likely to be approved if "the total cost is all blue dollars". See also *funny money*.

blue sky *adj.* Not inhibited by practicality, possibility, politics, or popular trends. For example: "A computer system that is **actually** Easy To Use? That's real blue sky!" See *WIBNI*.

blue solution *n.* A system to solve a customer's particular requirement or application that uses only IBM hardware and software.

bluespeak *n.* The language and jargon used by IBMers, especially when the jargon is different from that used by those employed by other companies. For example, *DASD* or *file* (others use *disk*). See also *IBMJARG*.

blue suiter 1. *n.* Someone from a more formally-[over-?] dressed part of the IBM culture. That is: **a)** IBM marketing representative (when used by those at HQ); **b)** IBMers at HQ (when used by those in a development laboratory); or **c)** IBMers not at Research (when used by those at Research). **2.** *n.* An Officer in the United States Air Force. (When used by an IBMer at the original Westlake location, in California, which used to be visited by many USAF personnel. As that Westlake is now defunct, these now trek to Boulder instead.)

blue wire *n.* A *fix* (correction) to a hardware *card*. Required to repair damage accidentally caused by deleting a pin while installing an Engineering Change. Also used if the *EC* team runs out of *yellow wire*. See also *purple wire*.

boa *n.* One of the big fat cables that connect the parts of a computer and lurk under the *raised floor* of all large computer installations. Possibly so called because they display a ferocious life of their own when you try to lay them straight and flat after they have been coiled for some time. It is rumoured that System/370 channel cables are limited to 200

feet because beyond that length the boas get dangerous. (Also note that one maker of computer cables in the USA is the Anaconda Copper Company.)

board games 1. *n.* Exercises played by the designers of any new keyboard (not just IBM's!) in order to retain an advantage over the *end users*. The schemes employed can be so perverse that they defy belief at times. **2.** *n.* Invisible decisions taken by members of some board or committee, usually with all-too-visible results.

board wirer (*bored wire-er*) *n.* An early breed of programmer who programmed accounting machines of various kinds by patching connection wires into a plug board. See *grey elephant*.

boat anchor *n.* A hardware project or tool that, despite the investment of resources far beyond the original budget and schedule estimates, fails to meet even minimal objectives. Applied especially to "heavy" equipment.

Boca *n.* Short for Boca Raton, the Fatherland of the PC (and a favourite venue for business meetings during first *quarter*). It should be noted that most of the buildings in that area are in fact in Delray Beach. Also note that Boca Raton (the mouse's mouth) got its name from the pirates who harboured there, because of the safety afforded by the dangerous reefs in the channel. [Note: *raton* seems to be the Spanish for "mouse", not "rat" (which is *rata*).]

Boca West *n.* One of the IBM locations at Austin, Menlo Park, or Tucson. The actual designation varies from day to day depending upon the mood at the headquarters of the Entry Systems Division.

bogey *n.* A target, especially a difficult or unpleasant one. This is used during planning cycles when *headcount* or budget allocations are being cut. The new target is referred to as a "bogey" and is the value that has to be matched in order to be within the authorised resource limits. "We are still three headcount over bogey in '87!" Probably from the golfing term (usually one stroke over par on a hole), with overtones of the 1940s slang term for enemy aircraft. Also **dollar bogey**, a budget limit.

bogue, boge (rhymes with *rogue*) *adj.* Of an idea or project: having little merit. From "bogus".

boiler plate *n.* Content-free portions of a presentation included to capture the attention and otherwise distract the listener from any real issues. Also applied to standard parts of a document or program that contain little information (copyright notices, for example).

boil the ocean *v.* To attempt something too ambitious. This phrase is used to throw (cold) water on something the speaker perceives as an overly ambitious proposal, even though no technical case can be built for disapproval. For example: "Your problem is that you're trying to boil the ocean".

This phrase dates from World War II, when Axis submarines were severely damaging Allied shipping. The story goes that a high level naval meeting was held to discuss the problem, during which an admiral suggested the solution of boiling the ocean to force the submarines to the surface. Everyone thought this was a wonderful idea, except for one relatively junior officer, who asked how this was to be done. The admiral replied: "I gave you the idea, it's your job to work out the details!"

bomb *v.* A synonym for *crash*. (In the USA only – to other English speakers the word conveys the opposite meaning when used descriptively, as in: "That sports car goes like a bomb!")

BOOF (rhymes with *aloof*) *n.* Byte-Oriented Operand Feature. An extension to the System/360 architecture that permits references to data objects on arbitrary byte boundaries. This is a hardware "feature" introduced with System/370 that, although a boon to the lazy programmer, effectively removed an important debugging facility (a specification interruption for alignment errors) of the System/360 architecture. For a considerable performance penalty, program errors are now hidden from the programmer. Originally designed to meet a new *requirement* for FORTRAN standards (in the standard, FORTRAN COMMON declarations were defined as being allocated with no intervening space for alignment). Also implemented ('tis said) for the convenience of programmers of Access Method modules who were faced with the problems of external data not falling on proper memory-aligned boundaries when read into main memory. [BOOF was sometimes called **BOO**, as on the Model 195 it was not a feature, and was therefore always available.] See *feature*.

Bookie *n.* The familiar name for BookMaster, a document-formatting product based on the ISIL tool (which was used for producing most IBM publications before it became Bookie). [You bet it looks nice!] This nickname came about not only because it's shorter than the real name, but also because one of the names originally proposed for the product was "BookMaker".

boondoggle 1. *n.* A conference (or other meeting that involves travelling) with an admixture of both pleasure and business. To be a true boondoggle, the trip must be paid for by IBM. To be a superboondoggle, it should be to Southern France, Florida, or anywhere in the Caribbean. **2.** *n.* A group of people, often a *task force*, getting paid but doing nothing productive for a related group – or for corporate revenue. They may look and act and sound very busy.

boot, bootstrap 1. *n.* A program used to start up a computer. From the expression "to raise oneself by one's own bootstraps". Early IBM computers were started by pressing the blue LOAD button. This simply made the machine read one *card* into memory and then branch to the memory location where that card image had been placed. The first card, therefore, had to contain all the instructions necessary to get the machine to read the next card or cards (as required) which contained the rest of the program which in turn, when complete, could then read in the production program or (later) the operating system. This initial, bootstrap, program typically took two or three cards (160– 240 bytes) and hence was called a **boot deck**. An early computer sport was the writing of one-card self-loading production programs; an *80-80 listing* (*q.v.*) was possible for the IBM 1401. **2.** *v.* To start up a computer, using a bootstrap program. Also, in general, to start or restart a computer operating system. In the sixties, and even on today's mainframes, this was done by pressing the *blue button*. See also *Big Red Switch, IPL*.

bottom line *n.* A term used (mostly by managers) to reveal a strong desire to bypass understanding of a proposed solution in favour of a simplistic quantification of it. Probably a reference to the totals line at the bottom of financial reports. As in: "I don't want all these pros and cons, just give me the bottom line". Higher level managers may interchange use of this term with *net it out* (*q.v.*).

box 1. *n.* A piece or collection of hardware large enough to form a free-standing unit. "The Mass Storage Subsystem was an interesting box." This term is often used when the term "unit" may be ambiguous. For example, in a 3380E disk unit there are four disks and eight access arms. Saying that the 3380E can hold about 8GBytes per "unit" can be misleading if the listener confuses "units" with access arms (which correspond to one I/O address each) or to disks (which have two I/O addresses each). **2.** *v.* To isolate a piece of equipment from the rest of the system for diagnostic tests. See *fence out.* **3.** *v.* To put in a packing box (because the equipment has broken or has become obsolete – in the latter case pine boxes are preferred).

boxology *n.* The art of drawing pretty diagrams using the "box" characters (actually box part characters) in monospace fonts. Also known as **character graphics**.

bracket *n.* A collection of messages. This term is an invention in IBM communications, and part of the Systems Network Architecture. A bracket is a group of messages exchanged between two communicating parties that is deemed to constitute a logically separate unit such as a "transaction". Marker flags are sent with certain messages to indicate the start or end of a bracket. Brackets offer plenty of scope for getting out of step and producing nasty problems called "bracket violations".

brain check *n.* An error that occurs while presenting information to a computer (or to another person) and that is not caused by a simple keyboard entry error (*cf. finger check*). Often used in the following way: "Sorry about that, but it was only a finger check, not a brain check".

brain dump *n.* An alternative term for *core dump.*

branch to Fishkill *n.* Similar to *branch to Owego*, but starting in Poughkeepsie.

branch to Owego *n.* Any unexpected jump in a program which produces catastrophic or just plain weird results. This phrase originated in Endicott, which is just down the road from the rival Owego (Federal Systems Division) site. For example: "Ah ha! My base register got clobbered: that made the program take a branch to Owego!"

For the record, the name Owego comes from ah-we-ga, an Indian name meaning "where the river widens".

brass tag *n.* A small plate (originally made of brass, but now usually made of self-adhesive plastic) that shows the IBM serial number (stock number) of a piece of (non-IBM) capital equipment. It was considered a serious offence to remove the brass tag from a piece of equipment, though readers report that they sometimes kept as a souvenir the brass tag from a much-loved machine when it was scrapped.

breakage *n.* The extra people that must be added to an organisation because the *action plan* has changed. Every planned change causes breakage – usually more than unplanned changes.

breakthrough *n.* A solution to a *challenge* (*q.v.*) which had no obvious resolution. Usage: "This is your goal; we need a breakthrough".

brick *n.* A Digital Communication System (DCS) Portable Terminal (PT) used by most US IBM NSD Customer Engineers (CEs) to record and communicate their activities and to send messages back and forth. The technology has led to the current ARDIS *offering.* The PT is about the size, and weight (0.8kg, 28oz), of a brick and is equipped with an audio annunciator for attracting attention. Eack brick is capable of operating in RF (Radio Frequency) mode or TELCO (Telephone Company) mode. In RF mode it is linked, via a network of remote antennae, to one of the 12 Area Communication Centers (ACCs) throughout the US which receive customer service calls. In TELCO mode the CE dials into the ACC directly. Bricks distinguish IBM Customer Engineers from service representatives from other firms (who carry mere pagers).

bridge *n.* Unsubstantiated facts used to explain one set of data in terms of another. A bridging exercise is a procedure whereby one takes two different and sometimes independently generated sets of information, usually numbers, and relates them in some way to explain the differences. Upon being presented with a set of data, the manager making a decision involving that data usually asks for a bridge from the current set to the last acceptable set of data. Generally the bridging exercise is unnecessary for anyone involved in the decision, but the need for a bridge provides the manager with a convenient excuse to delay the decision. "I cannot make a decision on that without a bridge to the last estimate." The most useful bridge is so comprehensive that it is too complex to be understood by anyone but the person who created it – and hence is ideal for use in reports to higher levels of management.

brimburn *n.* A confusion whose symptoms are reminiscent of a mild schizophrenia. A result of changing hats too fast in a new position. External symptoms include the taking of the opposite side to that held in the previous position. Especially prevalent in those newly appointed to positions of responsibility. Secondary symptoms include an inclination towards pronouncements such as "that is true, but you must understand both sides".

bring the system to its knees *v.* To overload a computer so that its response time is dramatically worse (longer) than usual. "Everything was fine until he started to run MVS as a guest system – that's what brought the system to its knees." See also *thrash.*

bring up *n.* To restart a system (usually by IPL) after a failure or a normal period of disuse. To bring a system to an operative (*up*) state. [A curious choice of phrase, given some of its more common meanings.]

bring up file *n.* A repository for information needed at a later date. Usage: "Let's put that request in the bring up file".

BRS *v.* See *Big Red Switch.*

btw (*by-th'way*) *abbreviation.* By The Way. An abbreviation used in electronic mail to speed typing, and hence properly entered in lowercase. Also **obtw**, "Oh By The Way". See also *wrt.*

Bubblegum *n.* The Boeblingen Laboratory, in Germany. Americans have four alternatives in trying to pronounce "Boeblingen": **a)** BO-BLING-GEN makes you sound as if you have never heard the word spoken and are clearly "out of it"; **b)** BER-BLING-GEN (the most popular variant) sounds as if you KNOW what it sounds like but cannot pronounce it yourself (probably true); **c)** BOB-LING-GEN seems to be a favourite in New York State; **d)** the correct pronunciation leaves you open to accusations of intellectual snobbery by the other groups. Calling it "Bubblegum" defuses the whole issue by attempting to make it a joke.

bucket *n.* A collection; usually a collection of programs, tests, or fixes. "Please send me the bucket for release 3." See also *bit-bucket, regression bucket, test bucket.*

buck slip *n.* A routing slip listing the names of the members of a department. Used to make the loss of correspondence (or delay in delivery) more organised.

bug *n.* A very broad term denoting a defect in either hardware or software. Some bugs can be detected and may interfere with customer (or IBM) use of the product. Other bugs may lie dormant and hatch for a *Watson's Law* event. Much effort is and will continue to be spent forcing bugs to the surface and removing them or otherwise eliminating any ill effects they cause. The ultimate management question is "Have you really removed the last bug from our product?" The required workers' reply is "Oh, surely we have found the last bug?!", delivered in unison. [This is not an IBM term, having been in use since 1889 or earlier, but is included here for completeness and cross-references.]

build *v.* To assemble software or hardware systems. This is used fairly conventionally for hardware (as in "build a new CPU"), but is used far more carelessly when describing software systems. When all the components of a large program are assembled together to make a whole, the process is called building. If the resulting system is large and complex, the verb is often elevated to the status of a noun, as in: "Let's start testing the new build".

build plan *n.* A proposed or committed schedule for the completion and assembly of a software system. See also *build.*

build-to-order *adj.* Of a hardware product: manufactured, or to be manufactured, following customer orders. Often, some special feature (like frame doors of the proper colour) is unavailable – which leads to long delivery delays. Sometimes, however, special orders can be processed more rapidly than those for mass-produced (*build-to-plan*) items, which can have a large backlog. It is reported that when 3380 disk units were scarce (in 1984/5), an internal customer mistakenly ordered brown 3380s (which are BTO models) rather than the standard *blue*/White variety. Much to their surprise, the units were delivered two months later; other departments had been waiting for their blue ones for more than a year.

build-to-plan *adj.* Of a hardware product: manufactured, or to be manufactured, independently of customer orders. Since forecasts (on which the plan was based) have the knack of being inaccurate, this technique can lead to delivery delays or overfilled warehouses. See *build-to-order.*

bullet *n.* One of a list of items to be emphasised, usually marked by a blob (bullet) alongside it on a *foil.* "And the next bullet is absolutely vital...". See also *key.*

bulletize *v.* To convert a proposal, argument, or result into a list of items for a *foil* (which may or may not be preceded by *bullets*). Implies extracting the essence of an argument, but in reality means emphasising the most politically acceptable items from a proposal.

Bunch *n.* When RCA and General Electric dropped out of the computer business, the *Seven Dwarves* became the rather less romantic "Bunch". (Burroughs, Univac, NCR, Control Data, and Honeywell). In 1986, this grouping changed again due to the merger of Burroughs and Sperry-Univac to form Unisys – no follow-on to the term seems to have arisen. [Not to be confused with Baybunch – the San Francisco Bay IBM user group.]

buns on seats *n.* A measurement of sales performance peculiar to regional sales staff departments ("Customer Centers"). Rather than sales dollars, which are difficult to attribute to a regional *sheep dip session*, the staff count the number of people who attend mass-marketed seminars. Staff members sometimes suspect each other of inviting relatives and the unemployed, with promises of Costa Rican coffee and mock-Danish pastries.

burden *n.* The additional costs, or overhead, above an employee's salary that when added to the salary make up the true cost of an employee to the company. Typically (but rather dependent on the country of employment) the burden is approximately equal to salary.

Burlington South *n.* The East Fishkill location, in New York State.

burn *v.* To make a copy. "If you can wait a minute, I'll burn one for you." The term is used both by engineers (when copying a programmable read-only memory (PROM), which requires the melting of fusible links in the circuitry) and by others when copying papers. This latter usage can be dated to the late 1950s, when the dominant method of making copies was "Thermofax". This process used infra-red radiation to transfer copies to heat-sensitive paper. See also *ibmox.*

burn-in *v.* To "condition" a piece of hardware (especially an integrated circuit) by running it for some time (often at an unusually high temperature). Many of the failures in computer equipment occur when it is first used: burning-in is an effective technique for ensuring that these occur before the equipment is used for a critical task. See also *bathtub curve.*

burn sand *v.* To *personalize* EPROMs or gate arrays, programming them by electrically blowing (burning-out) fusible links on the silicon chips. Usage: "We need to ensure that low level design is complete before we commit to burn sand".

business case 1. *n.* Economic (commercial) justification. Asking for the business case is an effective wet blanket to throw on most hot projects. **2.** *v.* To make such a justification. As in: "Sorry, Joe, we are still business-casing that project".

buzz word quotient, BWQ *n.* The proportion of words in a conversation or document that are buzz words (jargon words). For example, if every fourth word in a conversation is a buzz word, it has a BWQ of 0.25 or 25%.

byte (*bite*) *n.* One character of information, almost always consisting of eight binary digits (*bits*). In nearly all True Blue computers, a Byte is realised as more than eight bits – the extra bits (or parts of bits) being used for error checking. The term "Byte" originated in 1956 during the early design phase for the IBM Stretch computer. Originally it was described as consisting of from one to six bits (typical Input/Output equipment of the period used 6-bit chunks of information). The move to an 8-bit byte for Stretch happened in late 1956, and this was the size later adopted and immortalised by the System/360. The term was coined by mutating the word "bite" so it would not be accidentally misspelt as "bit". See also *nybble.*

BYTE8406 (*bite-eighty-four-oh-six*) *v.* To start a discussion about old IBM machines. See also *forum.*

BYTE8406 syndrome **1.** *n.* The tendency for any social discussion among computer people to drift towards exaggeration. "Well, when **I** started using computers they didn't even use **electricity** yet, much less transistors." See *forum.* **2.** *n.* The tendency for oppression to waste resources. Derives from the observation that "erasing a banned public file does not destroy the information, but merely creates an uncountable number of private copies". It was first diagnosed in September 1984, when the BYTE8406 *forum* was removed from the IBMPC Conference.

cable together *v.* To assemble a system on an *ad hoc* basis. "They just cabled together whatever boxes they could find." [A pun on "cobble together".]

cabling system *n.* A new wiring standard that is intended to allow the interconnection of all IBM terminals, PCs, and communication devices. It is also the physical support of the *token ring* (*q.v.*). Installing it should relieve systems administration personnel from the boredom generated by the over-familiar coax wiring.

cache *n.* An area of memory, usually faster or more readily accessible than the rest of the memory, that is used to hold instructions or data that are (or are expected to be) referred to frequently. First used in the IBM System/360 Model 85 (1968).

la cage aux foils *n.* The European Headquarters building, the Tour Pascal in Paris. Perhaps a pun on *cage aux folles*, a madhouse. See also *foil, Foil Factory.*

calendarize *v.* To put an appointment into one's calendar. This expression replaces the more traditional idiom, *pencil in*, in the sentence "let me pencil that in for Thursday".

call-taker *n.* An instructor in a marketing education class who takes on the role of a customer taking a call from the (trainee) Marketing Representative. In this scenario, an inexperienced student pretends to be a seasoned *rep* while an inexperienced instructor pretends to be a customer. Full of imagination, they both sit in an interview room, making believe that it has long been a business office, and earnestly engage in an attempt to satisfy a hypothetical customer requirement by discussing pieces of equipment which neither has ever seen or used. The student is assessed on his or her ability to continue to breathe while fumbling through notes and brochures. The instructor (call-taker) is judged on his or her ability to stay awake after playing the same role twelve times a day.

candy-striped *adj. Registered IBM Confidential* (*q.v.*). Refers to the Red and White diagonal markings on the covers of such documents. Also used as a verb: "Those figures have been candy-striped".

card **1.** *n.* A piece of cardboard about 90mm by 215mm that held information which was encoded by patterns of small rectangular holes punched through the cardboard. The standard IBM (Hollerith) card was made the same size as paper currency of the day, and held 80 columns of data encoded as one character per column (though many other kinds of coding scheme were used). Other sizes of card were also used, with either rectangular or circular holes. The standard 80-column card still influences IBM products, and indeed the whole computer industry; for example, displays commonly allow 80 characters in a row, and many reference documents (especially "Quick Reference Cards") have similar dimensions to a punched card. See also *chip, green card, spindle.* **2.** *n.* An electronic printed circuit board. "The problem determination procedure lets all faults be isolated to a single card."

card-holding manager *n.* A manager who manages employees (rather than one, such as a *program manager*, who is a manager in title only). Until recently, the personnel profile of an employee was recorded on a computer card; this was held by the manager of that employee. See *manager.*

career develop *v.* To promote or move to another job, especially if the employee is not entirely happy with the change. Usage: "We should career develop Jack; he's too bright for the rest of the team."

career limiting remark *n.* An undiplomatic comment directed at one's manager, or at one's manager's manager.

carriage control character *n.* A character, usually in the first column of each line of a file, that controls the way in which the line is to be printed. Originally, this character controlled the movement of the printer carriage almost directly. Nowadays it is usually processed by software to produce some indirect effect. See also *skip to channel one.*

carrier product *n.* The first product that includes an implementation of some new feature of an *architecture*, especially of *SAA* (*q.v.*).

carve up the business *v.* To divide up and parcel out management responsibilities. Most often used at the headquarters level: "After we carve up the business we will know where we stand".

cascade *v.* To distribute information rapidly, using a hierarchy of presentations by senior managers. As in: "Please cascade this to your people this week".

casters up mode *n.* Complete breakdown, as in: "The 1130 is in casters up mode". Engineers' equivalent of the term "all four feet in the air", referring to a piece of hardware which is totally non-functional and of use to neither person nor beast. See also *down, belly up.*

cast in concrete *adj.* Immutable. Used when specifications are *frozen* and are therefore unchangeable. This takes place a few days before the first prototype is available for general usability testing, so minimising the work of the development group. Effectively acts as a wet blanket should further urgently needed changes be proposed.

cast in jello *adj.* Not *cast in concrete*, still not firm or decided. On some projects, describes any decision made without management approval; on some others, any decision. ["Jell-o" is a brand name, in the USA, for gelatin-based desserts (usually fruit-flavoured).]

catalog **1.** *n.* A directory of files in an operating system. **2.** *n.* A list of packages available on an automatic software distribution service.

catcher *n.* A program that executes at locations remote from a central site and which receives and installs programs and data from the central site. A kind of *shadow* (*q.v.*). The term comes from a North American game called "baseball". See *pitcher.*

caveat *n.* A warning, given during an oral presentation. This is a communication technique, favoured in NCD, that affords a presenter the opportunity to give an illusion of speaking frankly and candidly to an audience. Done well, the caveat will relax the defences of an otherwise critical audience, lulling it into accepting the token statement at face value. "The customer must first effect an operational SNA

environment. This is not always an easy task, but has been done in one day at several accounts."

Cave of the Winds *n.* The Divisional HQ at *1133* Westchester Avenue, White Plains, New York. The term refers to the famous cave of the same name, and arose because of the poorly designed air-conditioning system installed when the building was constructed. The building is divided into three parts – a long centre section and two ends. Each part had its own air circulation system (for heating and air-conditioning), and as a result there were pressure differentials relative to the outside – and between the various parts of the building. There were large doors in the one aisle that connects the different pieces, and pressures were equalised through these doors. Offices near to the doors were most undesirable due to the whistling of the winds, and small people sometimes had trouble opening the doors against the suction. The name for the building has stuck, now because of all the hot air alleged to circulate spontaneously therein.

CCITE (*see-sight*) *n.* Cooperative Computing Internal Technical Exchange, an internal conference that focuses on the cooperation of different operating systems in performing computing tasks. The first CCITE was held in 1989 at the Almaden Research Center. It replaced, and follows in the traditions of, the *VMITE* conference (*q.v.*).

center of competency, COC (*see-oh-see*) *n.* A group of people who claim to be experts in some particular topic. This title follows the name of many support groups and development departments, and is almost always self-bestowed. The term suggests a level of expertise, importance, and involvement generally not associated with the group (hence the perceived need for the title). Adding the COC tag to the function name of any department automatically increases the headcount and the travel budget of that department, but usually without a proportional increase in competence.

central electronics complex, CEC (*keck*) *n.* The central processing unit (CPU) of a large computer ("CEC" sounds more impressive than "CPU"). This term was prohibited by *CYA* enthusiasts in 1978, who feared that the term would be trademarked. In 1987 it crept back into general use, both in connection with the 3090 (where it refers to the business end of the 3090 Processor Complex, *i.e.*, everything except the support bits such as the 3092, 3097 and 3089) and with the System/88 (whose engineers refer to the number of CEC slots in various chassis).

Chad Age *n.* The prehistory of computing [prior to 1975]. This is the dawn of the computer era, so called from the myriads of fossilised small pieces of paper or cardboard (**chad**) found in geological strata dating back to the fifties and sixties. Those remains were left by one of our ancestors, the Homo Ibeehemerus Nuyorckus, whose major dwellings can still be located along the Hudson River Valley.

A reader recounts that in 1976 he worked in a U.S. Navy message center that was still using paper tape for all its traffic (thousands of messages a day). They used several colours of paper tape, representing the various classifications of the messages. A common trick to play on newcomers was to have them separate classified chad from unclassified chad – since all classified materials had to be burned.

challenge *n.* Something difficult. A challenge is climbing a mountain (or bottoming a cave) and is not related to "work" at all. In IBM this term is often mistakenly used to mean "Big Problem".

change control *n.* A method for documenting and controlling the changes to a system or environment, sometimes relying on pieces of paper. One of the System Management disciplines, from which DP centre staff derive the warm feeling that they are in control of their computer installation. Often known sardonically (by the users who must actually live with the insidious overheads generated by the various implementations of the discipline) as "blame control".

Charlie letter *n.* An announcement letter for retail dealers of IBM Personal Computer equipment. This refers to Charlie Chaplin, a comic actor whose portrayal of a tramp was copied in IBM PC advertisements, much to the delight of satirists.

charm school *n.* New Manager School. Ambitious careerpersons must learn to direct their friends instead of swill ale, wine, or fruit juice with them. It is observed that some charm schools teach "ugly" instead of "suave".

chauffeur driven *adj.* Of a software system: developed using a standard product that has had a new (usually better) *end user* interface provided by an expert to hide the original interface. Also used to hide the extraordinary number of options provided with much computer software.

check *n.* A serious error. From *machine check.* A check is an error deemed sufficiently serious that a light (called a "check" light as it could be easily checked at a glance) was lit on the front panel of the computer. Usage: "The CPU took three checks before lunch". Also used for software (program checks). See *hit.*

checkbook programming systems *n.* A systems group that hires an outside vendor to produce software instead of having it written by IBM programmers. A group whose achievements are proportional to budget rather than to skill or to talent.

chicken book *n.* A gentle, user-friendly, introductory guide to a piece of hardware or software. Especially used of the PC-DOS User's Guide, so named because of its pictures of "cute" chicken-like birds and perhaps because its audience was expected to be timid and fearful.

chiclet keyboard *n.* A keyboard whose keys are fabricated from small rectangular pieces of rubber-like plastic that look like pieces of chewing-gum [Chiclet is a brand-name and a Spanish generic term for chewing-gum]. Used to describe the original PCjr keyboard.

chinese binary *n. column binary* (*q.v.*).

chip 1. *n.* The small rectangle of cardboard created by punching a hole in a *card.* See also *Chad Age.* **2.** *n.* An integrated circuit. One chip from a wafer of silicon crystal. See also *glass.*

chiselled in granite *adj. cast in concrete* (*q.v.*). Used in the Eastern USA near the Granite Mountains of Vermont.

chocolate *adj.* Enhanced *flavour.* That is, of a program: modified and improved. Rare. See *flavour, vanilla, mocha.* See also *spinning chocolate.*

CI to C *n.* The standard "just list" wiring on programmable accounting machines. See *all cycles to list.*

clean up **1.** *v.* To improve a sloppy program, system, or procedure by redesign or by rewriting sections of the code. "We have to clean up the SPIE exit". A cleanup should convert decadence to elegance, and sometimes does. **2.** *v.* To recover space on a disk by erasing old or redundant data.

CLIP (*klip*) *v.* To change the (magnetic) pack label on a DASD volume (disk pack). The term CLIP stood for Change Label Information Program. Usually IPL'd from cards, this program not only changed the serial number but also other items in the volume label area. These other capabilities were seldom used, so CLIPping became synonymous with changing the volume serial number.

. **clone** *n.* A copy of a computer (almost always an
. IBM PC). Imitation is said to be the sincerest form
. of flattery; in recent years there have been few
. clones of other manufacturers' personal computers.

closed loop *n.* See *loop*.

close of business *n.* End of the working day, typically 5pm local time.

clutch point *n.* A periodic opportunity to do something. As in "missing the clutch point". From the days of mechanical *card* readers, which could only be activated at one point in their mechanical cycle. If the signal to activate was too late, the controlling program had to wait a full cycle before trying again.

coathanger *n.* A computer terminal given to a reluctant old-timer IBM manager who does not believe in data-processing. This is used as a convenient object over which to throw the animal fur coat in order to warm it for wearing home.

COBOL programmer *n.* A person whose experience is limited to commercial applications programming. This term, now rare, had negative connotations. COBOL is not highly regarded in IBM; few people in IBM choose to program in the language.

code *n.* The statements, instructions, or binary representation of an algorithm or procedure. Any program in *source* or other form. *microcode* is the lowest level of software controlling a computer. *machine code* is the next level – the documented instruction set of a computer. *assembler* Code is next, where symbolic names may be used for the instructions. Object Code (see *OCO*) is the result of compiling *assembler* (or higher) level languages. All other programming languages are other more or less obscure ways of coding a clear algorithm into something that a computer might understand, and all programs are referred to as Code. This may also be used as a verb, of course, and a coder may be seen coding code. See also *line of code*.

code freeze *n.* The point of the development cycle after which no further changes may be made to the *code*. This freezing is needed so that the product is no longer a "moving target" for those people trying to add the final polish to documentation or sales brochures. It may or may not be a true freeze – sometimes corrections and *bug* fixes are still allowed. Sometimes preceded by a **code slush**.

code name *n.* The name used to designate a project (or future product) to obscure the purpose of the project from casual observers and other IBMers. The code name of an especially famous project can move into the vernacular (for example, see *Winchester*). When a suitably large number of IBMers know what is concealed behind the code name, the product is announced in order to change its name to a four-digit *product number*. A clever product manager always chooses a code name which lends itself to a descriptive series, and hence makes *follow-ons* a natural possibility. For instance, a project COLLIE might spawn a CHIHUAHUA (wristwatch version) and a NEWFOUNDLAND (mainframe version). See also *announce, FCS*.

. **code triple point** *n.* A *code freeze* that exists on
. paper, or in someone's imagination, but is not
. matched by reality. From the Physics term: the
. pressure and temperature at which the solid, liquid,
. and gaseous phases of a substance can co-exist.
. Code at triple point similarly exists in three phases:
. solid, fluid and vaporware.

coffee break *n.* An unscheduled failure in a computer system. Used to describe a stoppage or *crash* that mysteriously occurs around the time that users or operators are in need of refreshment. Also used to describe any unexplained failure in a computer system.

coffee game *n.* A procedure followed to determine who among a group of people is to pay for a round of cups of (instant) coffee. A religious ceremony practiced at various IBM locations (notably the Glendale Laboratory at Endicott, NY) in which groups of people play a simple but skilful game of chance to stretch a five-minute trip to the coffee machine into a half-hour break. Coffee games often attract large followings, with the most addicted devotees refusing to drink coffee unless it has been properly played for. Games are usually played among a set group of people, with a game taking place every time anyone in the group develops a thirst. Coffee gaming has developed its own special jargon. This is outside the scope of this dictionary, being a major research project in its own right, but some idea of its flavour may be gleaned from the following: A "dip" indicates that a person has lost a game, a "double dip" is two losses in one day. A "triple dip" is known as a "Pat Mitchell Special", in honour of a well-known Endicott ice cream parlour. [Also used as a verb.]

cold pricklies *n.* A nagging suspicion that somewhere one has overlooked something critical, and will be punished for it. See *warm fuzzies*.

cold start *n.* A restart without restoring the previous state of the operating system. On VM, this causes the loss of all *spool* files, and is therefore often used as an excuse for a missing *VNET* file: "You didn't get the memo I sent you? There must have been a cold start somewhere". Also used to designate problems in resuming normal work: "After his week in Yosemite, he had a two-day-long cold start".

column binary *n.* A scheme devised by the SHARE user group, and implemented in the "SHARE Loader", for encoding binary data on punched *cards* in columns, rather than in rows. The IBM 701, 704, 709, and 7090 computers read cards as rows of words, 9-edge first, two 36-bit words a row (in columns 1 through 72). With the improved scheme, three columns (of 12 rows) were used for each word. As an early example of improving the human interface to machines it was remarkably successful, because it let users punch their patches relatively easily on an IBM 010 or IBM 011 card punch.

comeback meeting *n.* A meeting called by an Executive to follow-up on actions requested at an earlier meeting. "The comeback meeting to the Director is scheduled for Tuesday 9th May."

come out of the bottle *v.* To become enraged, or to make unreasonable demands. As in: "When I told him we wouldn't have it ready until next week he came out of the bottle". The proper term for

appeasing someone who has come out (or is out) of the bottle is "back in the bottle", as in "Have you got him back in the bottle yet?" The origin of this phrase is unconfirmed, but it may be derived from the tale of the Fisherman and the Genie in the *Arabian Nights*. See also *uncork*.

command language *n.* A set of magical incantations that may be used to instruct a computer to perform wondrous things. Can bring great blessings on the user; but like all good magic, misuse or use by the ignorant (see *naive user*) can bring great woe.

comment out 1. *v.* To make a section of *source* code ineffective by putting it between comment separators. This allows the effect of that code to be determined empirically, by omitting it without actually destroying it; a powerful and effective debugging technique. **2.** *v.* To make someone's remark ineffective by making a nasty comment about the remark (or his or her expertise).

commit plan *n.* See *Fall Plan*.

commit time *n.* (Used by some Field personnel.) The latest time when one can leave the IBM building on a customer call without appearing to be leaving early for home. As in: "If I don't leave for a customer location before commit time, I have to stay until 5pm".

commonality *n.* The common ground between two plans or designs. "OK, what's the commonality between your proposal and hers?"

communication *n.* The art of obscuring information with jargon. The following example comes from a book describing (appropriately enough) a communications *protocol*: "All PIUs that have a DAF containing the address of this LU and whose OAF matches the partner-network-address field in an NLX associated with the NLB for this LU are queued to the NLX that represents this unique OAF and DAF pair."

The Company *n.* IBM (*q.v.*).

compatibility box *n.* A subset, or mode, of OS/2 under which PC-DOS programs can be run; effectively an operating system within an operating system (though not in the sense that *VM* allows). The compatibility box goes to great lengths to permit almost any PC-DOS program to run in it. It emulates a DOS 3.3 (or later) system, in which old DOS 1.0 calls are still provided. Since DOS 1.0 itself emulates parts of CP/M, some CP/M programs theoretically can still be run under OS/2. See also *penalty box*.

compatible 1. *adj.* Sufficiently similar to some other piece of hardware or software (often an earlier release of the same product) that moving from one to the other is relatively painless. Note that the movement, like stroking a dogfish, is unpleasant in either direction, but is especially so in the direction not intended by the designer. See also *follow-on*. **2.** *adj.* Not compatible. As in: "A compatible subset, with extensions".

computer security audit *n.* The day on which an independent security audit team descends on a location and attempts to find the security problems in the computer system there. This is either **a)** the day before which all passwords are changed and confidential files encrypted [best case], or **b)** the day after which all passwords are changed and confidential files encrypted [worst case].

concern *n.* A formal indication from one group to another that the first is (very) worried about some action by the other. To start a communication with the words "I have a concern with your..." is a sure way to cool a friendship. See *issue, non-concur*.

concur *v.* To give an irrevocable (often written) agreement. "Product Assurance concur (that the product be shipped)".

conference cronies *n.* The 10% of contributors who produce 90% of the contributions to a *conferencing facility*.

conference disk *n.* A *disk* containing documents (files) that are mostly *forums*, which are managed by a *conferencing facility*.

conferencing facility *n.* A service machine that allows data files to be shared among many people and places. These files are typically *forums* on particular subjects, which can be added to by those people authorised to take part in the conference. This allows anyone to ask questions of the user community and receive public answers from it. The growth rate of a given conferencing facility is a good indication of IBMers' interest in its topic. The three largest conferences are the IBMPC, IBMVM, and IBMTEXT conferences, which hold thousands of forums on matters relating to the PC, VM, and text processing, respectively. These are all open to any *VNET* user. See also *append, forum, service machine*.

conscience *n.* Person responsible for a task. As in: "You are my conscience regarding the integrity of that plan". A favourite among younger senior managers with regard to experienced members of their staff. The term implies a deference to the skills of the other, and also a certain delegation of responsibility.

content *n.* The central ideas of a document, as distinguished from its "style" or "layout". When a document is sent out for review it is understood that one is to review its content, rather than its presentation. (And if one can figure out what the author meant to say then the content is better than average.)

control unit *n.* A piece of hardware that controls a number of one type of peripheral unit, such as displays, tape drives, or disks. A control unit is supposed to relieve the main processing unit from the more menial tasks involved in managing the peripherals. For display terminals, especially, it may also have an uncanny ability to increase system overhead time (and hence response time) by several hundred percent.

converge *v.* To take two dissimilar projects and gradually change or evolve both of them until they can be replaced by a single project or product. A concept drawn from non-Euclidean geometry, wherein parallel (or even diverging) lines are seen to intersect. As in: "Let's keep both projects going and converge them in Release 3".

cookbook, cook-book 1. *n.* Some official document which exemplifies the bureaucracy involved in getting a product out of the door. For example, a CTP (Comprehensive Test Plan). Also used as an affectionate term (like *bible*, *q.v.*) for some master reference document. **2.** *adj.* Describing (in great detail) a procedure for a person to follow, down to what commands to type, and when. As in: "This guide has a cookbook description of IPLing a system".

cook chips *v.* To produce multilayer chips for use in complex modern computers. This refers to the processing of the silicon wafers, which involves repeated baking in special ovens.

co-op *n.* Co-operative education student. Usually a college student, in the USA, who works for IBM for a term (semester), and sometimes longer. Co-ops very often get good and interesting projects to work on, but the short straw can be mundane work such as making an inventory of ceiling tiles.

cooperative processing *n.* Processing carried out in two or more places, usually a personal computer (or workstation) and a larger "host" computer. There is an implication of close execution interlocks between the parts of a single application. Coined *circa* 1985.

core *n.* The main memory of a computer. Usage: "Is the transient in core at the time ?" A reference to the ferrite cores employed as the main storage medium for early computers, rather than a synonym for "central". In faddish circles people sometimes avoid this term in favour of the more general (though less clear) terms "storage", "main store", and "backing store". See also *doughnut.*

core dump *n.* A complete briefing consisting of all that a person knows about a subject. Also *brain dump.* Usage: "Give me a five-minute core dump on SNA before the staff meeting". See *core, dump.*

core time *n.* That part of the day in a *flextime* scheme during which all employees are expected to be present. This is also the hours during which meetings may be held; for example, 09:15 through 16:25 in the UK Laboratories.

Corporate *n.* Any hierarchical level sufficiently high that it impresses opponents and quashes their arguments. As in: "These rules come from Corporate". [Now (1990) gradually being replaced by "top of the business".] See also *edict.*

cost *n.* The cost to IBM to build a product (usually hardware). (As opposed to its *price*, which is its nominal selling price.)

counsel *v.* To reprimand. An employee is counselled after making a mistake that is too serious to overlook or to be handled informally. "Was he fired? – No, but he was severely counselled."

counter-strategic **1.** *adj.* Not the official policy. Applied to suggestions that one would like to ignore. "Not the basket in which IBM has placed its eggs." **2.** *adj.* Not the published official policy. That is, causing embarrassment to those who are responsible for what is *strategic* (*q.v.*).

crash **1.** *v.* To halt in an unrecoverable manner, when not expected. Almost never preceded by a warning message except when the crash is deliberate. Usually indicates human error in hardware or software (or even firmware). "The system has crashed AGAIN". **2.** *n.* The event of crashing. "That was a bad crash".

creationism *n.* The principle that large systems are created from thin air in a single step. A superstitious belief devoutly held by many product planners [especially in warm climates?]. See *evolution.*

creeping featurism *n.* The consequence of adding new *features* to old, backward, user-hostile products until so many new options, functions, and "enhancements" are added that all coherent concept of the intended function and use of the original product is lost. A cancerous form of *evolution*, usually indicative of human failings or organisational ineptitude. [Not originally an IBM term, but widely met and used.] See also *creationism.*

crisp up **1.** *v.* To add meaningful content, or to make more impressive or flashy (usually the latter). As in: "We'll have to crisp up this presentation before the Director sees it". **2.** *v.* To remove meaningful content, to reduce to the essential. As in: "We'll have to crisp up this presentation before the Director sees it".

critical service *n.* A hot *bug fix.* See *service.*

critical situation *n.* A customer who has a (real or perceived) serious problem with IBM hardware or software, for which there is no (immediately) available *fix.* Unless a fix is provided, the customer is threatening to call the Chairman of the Board and/or remove all his IBM equipment and cancel all orders. This usually results in the Branch Manager demanding that the programmers and engineers who own any IBM products even remotely involved with the customer's problem jump on airplanes and converge on the account. Normally all but one (and possibly all) will be wasting a trip, but the customer will be impressed by the show of force, and the problem will get fixed. See also *account situation.*

critical unresolved dependency *n.* (*cud*) A reliance of one organisation on another to perform some action or provide some *resource* that is crucial to another's plans, where the provider has not yet agreed (indeed, may not be aware of) the dependency. Usage: "We can ship our new box in eight months, but we do have a CUD on the Programming Center to write the operating system by then". [Something for those guys to chew on.]

crit sit *n.* "Field-ese" for *critical situation* (*q.v.*).

CRU (*crew*) *n.* Customer Replaceable Unit. Part of a device (such as a keyboard) that is considered to be replaceable by a customer or *end user.* (Fix it yourself.) See *FRU.*

CSR *n.* Customer Selected Restaurant. A good [or, at any rate, expensive] restaurant. This term is used heavily in expense claim forms to explain why a person found it necessary to eat at the most expensive restaurant in town – the rationale being that if the customer one is dining with suggested it, one could hardly refuse, could one?

cubicle *n.* A standard *Domestic* office, which has a shape that is approximately an eight-foot cube. Note that most dictionaries define *cubicle* as a "sleeping compartment", though it is rumoured that some have *outside awareness* (*q.v.*).

cubie *n.* The person with whom one shares a *cubicle.*

currency symbols *n.* The two characters ('5B'X and '4A'X) in the EBCDIC coded character set that represent the primary and secondary currency symbols. In the USA these are represented externally by the dollar and cent signs. In the UK they are shown as the pound sterling sign and the dollar sign respectively. Expensive confusion results when a UK user receives a document from a USA location (or vice-versa), since dollar figures now appear in pounds, and cents magically become dollars. The Germans avoid the problem by using both characters for totally different (non-currency) symbols.

cursor *n.* An indicator, often a flashing underscore or rectangle, on a display screen which shows where the next operation will take place (for example, where typed characters will appear). Invented by IBM researcher John Lentz, *circa* 1954. [A recent advance in "graphical user interfaces" is to allow two (or more) cursors on the screen, thus to confuse the user more rapidly and effectively.]

customer *n.* Any individual not currently employed by IBM.

customer ship *n.* A delivery of a product to a paying customer. As in: "This product has remained faultless through 5,000 customer ships!" See also *FCS*.

cut *v.* To write (record) data onto a tape or disk drive. Almost certainly derives from the similar use of the word in the audio recording industry, which in turn derives from the days when grooves were cut into wax phonograph cylinders. Tends to imply a relatively permanent recording, as in: "Let's cut the distribution diskette". Also used to mean "write" more generally, as in: "Please ask accounting to cut a cheque for this invoice". Also **cut sand**, to *burn sand* (*q.v.*).

C-word *n.* Confidential. This alternative is used to avoid triggering automatic disk snooping programs that warn of possible security exposures when they detect the string *IBM Confidential* on an unprotected disk. "This is not an IBM C-word document."

CYA (*see-wye-ay*) *v.* To protect one's rear. This protection is typically effected by generating *documents of understanding*, obscure memos, *PROFS* mail, and the like, which will prove (if necessary) that the author knew all along that the project was doomed to failure. Variously estimated to consume between 71% and 78% of all managerial resources at most development labs. See *MFR*.

cycles **1.** *n.* Instruction execution capacity. An instruction cycle is (or may be – the term is loosely applied) the time required to execute a single instruction or part of an instruction in a computer. Thus, if a program requires the execution of a large number of instructions, then it is said to consume many cycles. "Cycles", therefore, is a term for one of the resources that have to be worried about when designing a computer system. "If we run the formatter and the laser at the same time, we'll run out of cycles." This "technical" term is used to imply that one knows a little about computer hardware. See also *MIPS, resource*. **2.** *n.* Of a person: time. From the previous sense, as in "do it when you have some spare cycles".

DASD (*dazz-dee*) *v.* To place on a computer disk (Direct Access Storage Device), as in: "Please DASD that report when you've written it". DASD storage implies storage on a disk connected to a large mainframe computer, rather than on the hard or soft disks in a Personal Computer. It also implies magnetic storage; an optical disk would not be described as DASD.

dash *n.* Documentation level. IBM documents bear a number comprising three groups of characters, separated by dashes. The final group is one or more digits that indicate the revision level (when ordering a document, you do not normally specify the final group – IBM will send the latest available). A **dash-0** is an original (first version) document. "To be at the latest dash" means to have an up-to-date document. Sometimes also used for software: "We run the latest dash of VM/SP".

data jail **1.** *n.* A database that is carefully being fed with information, but whose owner is not sure that the information in it can be extracted when it is needed. From Fishkill: "We're operating a data jail here." **2.** *n.* A *mainframe*. (When used by a PC programmer.)

DEBE (*debbie*) **1.** *n.* "Does Everything But Eat" – a general 360/370 *utility* for moving data from device to device. Originally a stand-alone program (*i.e.*, it did not require an operating system) named after the niece of its author. It is an example of the human interfaces provided by programs in the 1960s (it's sad to see how little the industry has progressed in twenty years). **2.** *v.* To try as a last resort. "Nothing else works; let's DEBE it".

debug *v.* To hunt down and remove some of the *bugs* (*q.v.*) in a piece of software or hardware.

debugger *n.* A program or suite of programs whose function is to aid the process of *debugging* (*q.v.*).

decision support system **1.** *n.* A computer program claimed to help those with power to make decisions. **2.** *n.* Any computer system used to justify something to higher management that could not be justified in any other way. The favoured technique for this usually involves getting the program to answer a question different from the one that ought to have been answered. Invariably a *MIP-eater*.

deck *n.* A data file, usually in Fixed-80 format (every line of the file is 80 characters long). As in "text deck" or "request deck". This term dates back to the days when all files were punched on 80-column cards for which the collective noun was, of course, "decks". This is still the correct term to use when the file is a spool file present in the reader or punch of a virtual machine (VM).

decommit *v.* To slip one's schedule for an indefinite period of time. A grave dishonour for project management.

de-concur *v.* To formally remove one's approval or agreement to a project, having previously approved it. This ploy is most effective when used without warning and less than a week before Announce, and will then usually be devastating. A favourite weapon of Legal departments. See *concur, concern, issue, non-concur*.

deep staff *n.* Senior *staff* who has been out of active field or development work for at least five years. An expert in IBM politics and the art of *non-concurrence*.

default **1.** *n.* A value that will be assumed for an object (such as a parameter or argument to a program) if not explicitly specified. As in: "What's the default for the paper size?" **2.** *adj.* Assumed if not explicitly specified. As in: "What's the default paper size?"

delta **1.** *n.* A list of changes (*e.g.*, the differences between two programs). "Make me a delta on that proposal". See also *diff*. **2.** *n.* A wedge-shaped gap. Especially one between two lines on a graph or chart, as when one line represents the target and the other achievement-to-date. See also *jaws chart*. **3.** *v.* To arrive at a result from some known base, particularly by applying a percentage increase to all data. As in: "We'll just delta off last year's plan."

demo **1.** *n.* A demonstration. A demonstration is the exhibition of non-functioning or unfinished hardware or software to senior management or visiting VIPs. Provides the ideal conditions for awakening dormant and unsuspected *bugs*. **2.** *v.* To demonstrate. As in: "We demoed the system structure", or "When are you demoing today?"

demonstration application program *n.* A game.

depeditate *v.* To cut off at the feet. Used especially in the context of electronic formatting and typesetting when the descenders of lowercase letters are cut off by a rule (line) or on reaching the end of a column or page.

dependency *n.* A minor *exposure* (*q.v.*).

design *n.* The preliminary sequence of events leading to the manufacture and delivery of a finished product. This may be **a)** An educated guess; or **b)** [more commonly] An uneducated guess.

deskcheck *v.* To run a computer program through a "One Instruction Per Second" [at best] human processor, in order to check or test it by thought experiment. See also *inspection, MIPS*.

desk dump *v.* To clear all the paper on a desk into a drawer at night to meet local "clean desk" policies. The drawer then becomes a LIFO stack, as most of the paper is never retrieved until archived in a waste bin. See also *core dump, dump*.

desk MIPS *n.* Processing power that is provided by physically small (desk-top or desk-side) computers. See also *water MIPS, MIPS*.

de-smut *v.* To correct errors in a SCRIPT file. The name comes from the name of the file in which Script stores error messages, DSMUTMSG. "Looks like you still have to de-smut some of those errors." See also *script*.

diagnostic *n.* A program written to test other programs or (more usually) the hardware of a system. It is intended to be used, when a failure occurs, to identify the failing unit or sub-assembly. It often seems that diagnostics are the only pieces of code that will run cleanly when the hardware starts to fail, as the diagnostics were of course written to test the **expected** modes of failure.

dialogue 1. *n.* A pompous alternative to "conversation" or "chat". "Let's have a dialogue." **2.** *v.* To talk to. As in: "Why don't you call Steve and dialogue with him about that project?"

diff *v.* To make a list of changes. Refers to the widely used program DIFF that attempts to show the differences between two program or data files. "Please diff those two proposals for me." See also *delta, bridge*.

dinner for two *n.* A small *award* to recognise an employee's contribution to a project or department. The amount of the award is small enough that a *first-line manager* can bestow the award with only one, or no, higher level approval, but yet is sufficient to pay for a good dinner for the employee and a guest.

dinosaur 1. *n.* A person or location that clings to old software packages long after everyone else has moved to later and better designs. Usually only a cataclysm (in the form of a major new release of operating system software) will encourage a change in the lifestyle of a dinosaur. **2.** *n.* A major problem or bug. Usage: "OK, ... we'll build a system and bring it up second-level to get the dinosaurs out. Then we can start the detailed debugging".

disclaimer *n.* A list of conditions or warnings that modify the material just about to be presented at a meeting. A *boiler plate* blanket statement that disassociates and relieves a presenter of any responsibility from conclusions that his audience may have reached as a result of his statements, regardless of whether the conclusions were intended or not. Commonly used in hardware or software proposals and performance presentations. See also *caveat*.

disconnected, disc'ed 1. *adj.* Of a *VM* Virtual Machine: not logically connected to a terminal, and therefore running without human intervention. The VM operating system supports two "inactive" states: logged-off (not using the system at all) and disconnected (suspended). When disconnected, a *userid* maintains all its state and activities, but has no "real" user terminal connected to the virtual machine. Most *service machines* (*q.v.*) run disconnected. **2.** *adj.* Of a user: not using a network or computer. Also **discoed**, as in: "I tried to see if she wanted to vend [buy coffee from a machine] with us, but she's discoed". **3.** *adj.* Of a person: paying little attention to the outside physical world, due to distraction, great ideas, or lack of sleep. Such a person is usually reconnected by a loud yell from a suitably high (hierarchical) level, or by a stiff dose of caffeine. **4.** *adj.* Having little interest in a particular topic. "Since I started to use VM, I've been pretty much disconnected from TSO."

disk *n.* A magnetic or optical storage mechanism in the form of a rotating disk. Information is recorded on the disk in the form of numerous concentric "tracks" or as a single spiral track. The term is also used for logical simulations of disks that are in fact held on larger disks, or in main storage, or on magnetic tapes or cartridges. See also *file, floppy disk, minidisk, round and brown, Winchester*.

diskette *n.* A *floppy disk* (*q.v.*).

disk farm *n.* A large room (or rooms) filled with magnetic storage machines. Infrequently frequented by humans.

Disneyland East *n.* The headquarters building on Westchester Avenue, White Plains (see 1133 below). This term gained such widespread use that several years ago a middle manager (who later became a very senior marketing manager and wrote a book about his experiences) actually sent out a memo forbidding its use.

distributed data processing 1. *n.* (Official version) A methodology for selling small CPUs for use at remote sites. **2.** *n.* (Unofficial version, pre-1986) A methodology for spreading competitors' minis and micros around remote sites, as there was no 4311. [But now there is the 9370.]

in a ditch *adj.* Broken, non-functional. As in: "That program is on its back in a ditch". See *down, crashed*.

Divisions 1. *n.* Any IBM locations outside New York State, or north of Interstate 84, or west of the Hudson River. **2.** *n.* A derogatory term used at Yorktown Research to describe the rest of IBM. "That idea came from the Divisions." See also *NIH*.

document administrator *n.* Quote from a GML manual: "One who is responsible for defining markup conventions and procedures for an installation. This involves defining the actual vocabulary of tags to be used and also the nature of the processing required for each". [Need one say more?]

documentation 1. *n.* The several kilograms of mashed, pounded, bleached, and pressed trees that accompany any modern, sophisticated product. Happily, documentation is sometimes now provided on-line (that is, available at a computer terminal), and is, of course, **always** written before implementation. **2.** *n.* Instructions translated from Swedish to Japanese by Danes for the profit of English-speaking persons.

document of understanding 1. *n.* (When signed by one party to an agreement.) A memo that is used to present one party's view of an agreement in the best possible light. Usually shows little or no understanding of the problems of the other party to the agreement. See *CYA*. **2.** *n.* (When signed by both parties to an agreement.) A document (which is not a contract) drawn up between two different departments or companies within IBM, often associated with the transfer of a product or program from one group to another. The only mechanism whereby

the owner of a piece of software can maintain any formal control over it once another IBM group has a copy of it. [Also known as a **letter of understanding** or **memo of understanding**.]

dog and pony show *n.* A presentation designed to [over-] impress. Implies a certain amount of cynicism and deception, and contempt for the audience.

do it right first time *n.* A popular *Quality* slogan. Potentially synonymous with the slogan, "Let the user do the debugging". Correctly deciding what to do next is perhaps even more important. See *creationism.*

dollarize *v.* To express intangible assets (such as programmer creativity) in terms of U.S. dollars. This allows even the most subtle of concepts to be grasped by the materialistic.

Domestic *adj.* Those parts of IBM that are located in the USA. Used by U.S. IBMers to imply all that really matters in IBM. Used almost universally by everyone else to describe an insular (provincial) approach to a problem. "He's Domestic – thinks everyone speaks American." See also *nonus.*

done deal *n.* Something that has been done and is no longer open for discussion; a *fait accompli*.

dotted to 1. *adj.* Having a managerial relationship or political link that cannot be described by a hierarchical tree. Refers to the (dashed) lines shown on organisation charts. This is often used for professionals (such as lawyers and accountants) whose managers do not understand what they do, so they are "dotted to" someone in Armonk. An "abnormal but legitimate" relationship. **2.** *adj.* Directly connected by hardware. In electronics, a Dot is often a wire-ORed or wire-ANDed gate: the logical operation takes place by two gate outputs being connected directly, and the final output depends on which gate wins.

doubleword *n.* Eight bytes (an IBM System/370 Word is 4 bytes, or 32 bits). A **doubleword boundary** is an address that is an exact multiple of eight. Many System/360 or System/370 instructions either require their operands to be aligned on a DW boundary, or work much faster if the operands are so aligned. See also *fullword, halfword.*

doughnut *n.* A ferrite core (actually a torus or ring about one or two millimetres in diameter, hence this term) used in the Core memory of early IBM computers. Also **donut**. Ferrite cores are still used in some IBM computers, such as those used on space shuttles; in the commercial world probably the last product using core memories that was announced was the control unit for the 2305 drum (shipped in 1973). See also *core.*

Doughnut City *n.* Basingstoke, Hampshire (a town with a rapidly growing IBM presence). So dubbed for the large number of roundabouts (traffic circles) encircling the town. [This term predates the IBM usage.] It was conjectured, and came to pass, that as more and more IBM personnel were moved there a verb was created, as in "I have now been doughnutted" – re-located to Basingstoke. [Both friends and relations of mine believed not that Basingstoke had an existence other than in *Ruddigore*.]

down *adj.* Not working; the opposite of *up.* Crashed. The state of the system or printer when you need one more listing and you are already late for your plane. See also *bring up.*

down-level 1. *adj.* Out-of-date. Applied to a person who is not up to date with some technical nuance, or to a piece of software that is not the latest (current) version. Derived from FE terminology applied to software. See also *back-level.* **2.** *v.* To demote, to reduce in *level* (*q.v.*). Also **re-level**.

downtime *n.* The length of time that a system is unavailable to users (*down*). "How much downtime did we have last week?"

dramatic *adj.* Uninteresting. An adjective used to make an unexciting fact sound worthy of attention, as in: "A dramatic three percent increase in I/O throughput". See also *exciting.*

drink from a fire hose *v.* To be at the receiving end of a flood of information, as when attending a major university for the first time. Originally used in IBM to describe how it was for European visitors to the Boulder lab as they tried to "get up to speed" on the Mass Storage System during its development. A group at Boulder was charged with teaching the visitors how the system was designed and how it worked [markedly different, I'm told]. This group spent "a memorable 18 months or so in 1972-74 designing microcode debugging classes one day ahead of the students".

drive 1. *v.* To push a project along in spite of many objections and obstacles. "Sam, you will drive the water fountain replacement project to a successful conclusion by next Tuesday, won't you?" **2.** *n.* A mechanical system for rotating some piece of a computer, as in "Disk Drive". Also used to refer to a complete disk assembly, as in "Place the diskette in the B Drive". See also *spindle.* **3.** *v.* To use or control, especially of a terminal or program. Usage: "I'm not sure how to drive this debugger".

drive-in branch *n.* ISG HQ in Bethesda, Maryland. Named for an incident in 1982 when a former IBM employee drove his car through the doors of the building (which never was a branch office, in fact) and went on a shooting spree that killed or injured a number of people. Many of the fortifications around the entrances of IBM buildings date from this incident. [This usage is unfortunately quite common, being used by those unaware of the details of the incident. It is considered to be in bad taste by those who lost friends and colleagues.] See also *Rusty Bucket.*

driver 1. *n.* A program that "drives" a *bucket* of test cases. **2.** *n.* The main processing loop of an interactive program. **3.** *n.* A complete new level of a system. As in: "The developers cut us a new VM driver yesterday".

driving a brown desk *adj.* Having achieved the technical rank of Advisory Engineer (or Programmer). This derives from the practice in some locations of giving tacky metal desks to the more junior employees, and reserving real (wooden, or wood veneered) desks for those who have been around for some time.

drop-dead date *n.* A deadline by which certain events **must** have occurred if irretrievable loss of honour or revenue to IBM (or a customer) is to be avoided. Should the events not occur, irretrievable loss of honour and revenue to the responsible marketing representative is likely; and the phrase may take on literal overtones.

drum card *n.* A *card*, wrapped around a cylinder or drum within the mechanism of an IBM 026 or 029 card punch, that controlled some of the features of the punch, such as tabbing, automatic duplication, numeric shift, *etc.* A little drum card wizardry could

often save hours or days of data or program entry time.

dual ladder *n.* The principle that one can rise in the company at equal levels in either a managerial or a technical job. Once impossible outside the USA (most countries did not even maintain the practice of having different titles for technical and managerial personnel) but more fashionable since the late 1980s.

dual-path 1. *v.* To provide alternative paths through program code in order to accommodate different environments. "Since the CP response is different in VM/SP and VM/XA, we'll have to dual-path that Exec". See also *special-case*. **2.** *v.* To make a peripheral device available through more than one channel. This can improve performance, and, on multi-processor systems, allows the device to be available even if one processor is off-line.

dump *n.* A collection of all available information about a problem, usually deposited on the slowest printing device available. Originally a complete printed representation of all the storage in a computer, this was a manageable quantity of information when a 100 Kilobyte machine was a big one. Now that machines are so much larger, dumps contain a vast amount of irrelevant information – yet some people **still** use dumps for debugging problems. (Equivalent to cracking an eggshell with a steamroller.) The "Garbage Out" part of "Garbage In, Garbage Out". See also *core dump*.

DWIM instruction (like *swim*) *n.* "Do What I Mean." This is a mythical instruction invoked by a frustrated programmer to give acceptable results when in fact he could not define what he meant (but would recognise it if he saw it). Also invoked when the last instruction issued to the machine was disastrous: "Do what I mean, not what I say, you dumb machine!" In LISP environments, the DWIM instruction is often simply a mechanism that randomly rearranges parentheses.

earth *n.* The safety cable in a domestic or commercial power supply. This is the term used by non-USA English speakers instead of "ground", possibly reflecting the more rounded world view of such people.

earthquake *n.* A real-life shock test for computer equipment. Contrary to popular belief, recent earthquakes near California plants were not initiated by IBM as part of the *Quality* testing program.

ease-of-use 1. *n.* The attribute of being easy to use. An ill-defined but positive quality achieved only by products of the speaker's company or laboratory. **2.** *n.* A quality claimed for all programming languages, to demonstrate superiority over machine languages or lower level languages. OS JCL is a fine counter-example to this claim.

easter egging *n.* Replacing an unrelated part in the hope that a malfunction will go away. The term derives from the USA and European Easter-time practice of hiding coloured eggs, chocolates, and other goodies around the house, the garden, or the town square. Children are invited in and usually then engage in a hurried scamper through the territory to collect goodies and win various prizes that may be awarded. The implication in the jargon usage is that the engineer did a similar search through his machine looking for the part that would fix the problem.

This is the only IBM-approved game of chance, except that Easter Egging is forbidden in the 308X Processor Complex.

eat one's lunch *v.* To use up personal time. Used after attempting to fix a system, usually a broken one, for such an intensive and extended period of time that one emerges from the effort to find that one's personal time has mysteriously disappeared. "That 3380 string was down all day with a power bug that ate my lunch."

EBCDIC (*ebb-sidick*, *ebb-see-dick*) *n.* The Extended Binary Coded Decimal Interchange Code. This code for characters was designed in the early 1960s, as an extension of the BCDIC to take advantage of the 8-bit *byte* being introduced for the System/360. The most notorious of its idiosyncrasies (that the primary English alphabet is not a series of contiguous codes) is ultimately derived from the Hollerith code for punched *cards*. See also *ASCII bit*.

EC 1. *n.* Engineering Change – a hardware *update*. A formally announced fix or enhancement to a piece of hardware, usually required to support later (unforeseen) products. "Before you can run the new level of system with this box, you must apply EC-58320 to all your control units." **2.** *n.* Extended Control – a privileged or enhanced state of control over a piece of hardware. If, for example, a person is running an MVS system under VM/SP, then that person's virtual machine has to be in EC mode, and is said to be "running EC".

-ed *(suffix to a surname).* Subjected to unnecessary troubles due to a person's inconsideration or paranoia. As in: "I've been Smithed". The suffix can also be added to the name of a program or utility, and in this case implies that the user has suffered abuse at the hands of said program: "I've been MSGed to death by our network machine".

edict *v.* To decree, to issue an edict. "The use of Structured Programming was edicted by Corporate."

elastic *adj.* Able to stretch. This is used to refer to a schedule that is subject to frequent stretching. Unlike true elastic, such schedules rarely contract (shorten).

EMEA *n.* Abbreviation for "Europe, Middle East, Africa". The division of IBM that includes all the country organisations in the designated geographical area. That is, most of the high growth areas.

emotional issue *n.* A real problem (as seen by one person) when not seen as a problem by another person. Used when the second person is insensitive or (more commonly) has no taste.

Endicott suitcase *n.* A corrugated cardboard box with a suitcase-like handle. These were issued to students leaving Marketing Training classes (which originally were held at Endicott) for transporting class materials back to their home location.

end user *n.* A person at the end of the chain of hardware, systems, and interfaces. A (possibly hypothetical) person who is expected to represent the biggest group of users of computer equipment in the future. When usage of the term is such that it implies that the speaker is superior to such an end-user, the speaker has identified himself or herself as at best insensitive and at worst, arrogant. See also *naive*.

engine *n.* A small processor such as the 8100, or a microprocessor (when used as the central processor in some device). "Our new terminal cluster controller uses the latest engine".

engineering change *n.* See *EC*.

enhancement *n.* A fix for a problem that has been reported too often to be ignored. See *feature*.

entry-level *adj*. Simple enough for a *naive* user to start with. Sadly, many entry-level computer systems are just toys – they do not have the capabilities necessary to do real work.

entry system *n.* A system that is easy to start using, either because it is inexpensive (cheap) or because it is simple to use (*entry-level*). Something to do with front-door bells?

EPL (*ee-pee-ell*) *n.* The European Program Library (since 1987 called the Software and Publications Centre, or SPC, but still commonly known as EPL). The European equivalent of *PID* (*q.v.*), and even more inscrutable. Availability from EPL is always at least one month later than from PID, except when a program product is developed in Europe and sent to EPL first.

EREP (*errep, ee-rep*) *v.* To take a snapshot of an error log or trace. From Environmental Recording Editing and Printing, a program for printing a formatted log of hardware and software error conditions on System/360 and System/370 machines. Also used (as a noun) to designate the output of such a program. EREPs, like *dumps*, are "run" or "taken" (other *listings* are usually "printed").

escalate *v.* To take a matter to higher (managerial) authority. Very effective as a threat.

ESP (*esp, ee-ess-pee*) **1.** *n.* Early Support Program. A procedure by which certain members of the *lunatic fringe* – both internal and external – are given versions of a product after *announce* but before *FCS*. The object of the exercise is to get the *bugs* out of the product and confirm its *ease-of-use* without creating too many *account situations*. Also called **LA** (Limited Availability), though there are some slight differences. See also *GA*. **2.** *n.* Extra Sensory Perception. The technique by which ESP (**1.**) users learn the details of the product in the absence of any knowledge on the part of the support staff or of any documentation. **3.** *v.* To ship the ESP (**1.**) version of a product to the brave volunteers that will try it. **4.** *v.* To install a new version of a product before anyone else. "Our Compute Centre folks are very progressive, they ESPed SP4."

ETN *adj*. Equivalent To New. Of computer parts: used somewhere (and therefore *burned-in*) and hence, after testing, more reliable than new parts. [So it is hoped.]

Europe *n.* That part of the (IBM) world that consists of Israel, South Africa, and the European countries – excluding parts of the Eastern Bloc, Albania, and Libya.

evolution *n.* The process of implementing a large system by incremental and coherent improvements to a simple system. No other process has ever been known to work. See *creationism, creeping featurism*.

excellent *adj*. *best-of-breed* (*q.v.*).

exciting *adj*. Having the lowest interest ranking for speeches and papers delivered at internal meetings. The complete sequence is: exciting, interesting, dramatic, mind-boggling, and *Registered IBM Confidential*. See also *dramatic*.

exec *n.* A *macro* whose output is a sequence of commands for the Conversational Monitor System (CMS). The term is derived from the name of the original interpreter, and the filetype that distinguished these macros. The meaning is often extended to include any macro written in the EXEC, EXEC 2, or REXX languages, regardless of the destination of the generated commands (GDDM, SQL, *etc.*). The term is reported to have spread to the PC-DOS environment, where it designates the PC-DOS equivalent of CMS Execs – otherwise known as BAT (batch) files.

execute *v.* A commonly used word more or less meaning "to run" (a program) or "to process". The term is now avoided in IBM customer publications since it makes readers in many countries nervous.

exempt *adj*. Of a *Domestic* employee's job level: exempt from certain labour laws; no longer eligible for payment for work carried out after standard hours. Implies (but does not necessarily mean) that the employee has reached "professional" status.

exercise **1.** *v.* To test by running a collection of tasks, often by running a *test bucket*. This gives a new or overhauled machine a chance to become more physically fit before undergoing a rigorous acceptance test. "We are going to exercise the machine." See also *stress*. **2.** *n.* A play, or sham, project.

exerciser *n.* A program written to intensively *exercise* a portion of a machine. The hope is that an operation that occasionally fails can be forced to fail more often, and frequently enough to allow the CE to find and correct the fault. See also *stress*.

expectation management *n.* A management technique whereby the target employees are persuaded to feel truly grateful for what they are about to receive. An essential prelude to the assignment of "career developing" tasks, or to the removal of services. See also *job rotation*.

expert *n.* One who has some knowledge of a topic that therefore qualifies him or her for an urgent but undesirable task. "I hear you're our JCL expert" – "Well, I did look at some JCL one afternoon a few years ago..." – "So you **are** the expert then!". See also *guru*.

expire *v.* To pass, irrepealably. "That issue has expired its deadline for solutioning."

exposed *adj*. Almost certain to be omitted. This is used to describe part (or all) or a project that must for political reasons be described as *in-plan*, yet is unlikely to actually be produced. "The third line item is in-plan, exposed".

exposure **1.** *n.* Some aspect of a project that looks as though it may become a problem. "That's a big exposure." See also *dependency*. **2.** *n.* Danger, risk. A necessary euphemism, since the words are not otherwise found in the IBM vocabulary. **3.** *n.* Visibility to upper management or external agencies. "You'll get good exposure in this assignment." As all mountain climbers know, there is always the risk of over-exposure unless one takes proper precautions.

exterior wet conditions *n.* Rain. The term used by IBM Canada's security department to excuse evacuation of a headquarters building during a fire drill.

external audit *n.* Examination of the current state and risks of a project by an outside group, followed by a report of its findings. The report usually tells upper management exactly what they were afraid that they would discover if they were to pull their heads out of the sand. See *bad information*.

externalize *v.* To document or publish. Usually found in the negative, as in: "We have decided not to externalize the format of the CICS System Definition File".

face down, nine to the throat *adj.* Computers that used *cards* for input data (and pre-computer tabulating equipment) required that any *deck* of cards be stacked in a particular way to process correctly. Almost every IBM machine that used cards carried a label in the card feed area indicating how to place the deck in the feed hopper of that machine; the most common was face (printed side) down, with the *9-edge* (*q.v.*) forward, towards the throat where cards are swallowed by the machine; this phrase dates from the 1952-1964 era. The later **face down, 9-edge forward**, and the alternative **face up, 12-edge first** were very common, and may still exist on working card machinery. Engineers who were unusually proficient in, or (more commonly) obsessed with, computers and their technology were said to eat, sleep, and breathe computers until ultimately they would be "buried face down, nine to the throat" – an expression of mild esteem. See also *column binary*.

face time *n.* Time to confront another person face-to-face. "I think it's face time on this one."

facility 1. *n.* Being facile. Like most people, IBMers do not recognise this meaning, but often demonstrate it. **2.** *n.* The ability to make something easier (or even possible); incorrectly derived from the verb "to facilitate". Used in the titles of many IBM service functions and products which would otherwise not be polysyllabic enough to make their designers feel important. See also *polysyllabic, system*. **3.** *n.* A program or software package whose function is (by the definition of its authors) useful. "Facility" is usually a misnomer, however, as the programs that are accredited this grand description are often exceedingly complicated and difficult to use.

failsoft *adj.* Of a system or network: designed so that the failure of one part of the system will not be catastrophic; some or all of the requirements of some or all of the users will continue to be met.

fallback plan *n.* A plan to fall back upon should the first plan be rejected by higher management. This is often the plan preferred by the development manager – he can count on his management turning down the first plan (so demonstrating their power) but can be reasonably confident that the second one he proposes will be accepted. This strategy, of course, becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy; since the first plan is not the preferred plan, it is often not properly thought out or presented – and is hence guaranteed to be rejected.

fall on one's sword *v.* To voluntarily *decommit* a plan, knowing that this action will invoke extreme displeasure. Falling on one's sword was the honourable means for a Roman to commit suicide. "I knew we couldn't make the dates so I went to the boss and fell on my sword".

fall over *v.* Synonymous with *ABEND*, *crash*. As in: "One of the 2305s fell over last night and took CP with it".

Fall Plan *n.* A plan, adopted in the autumn of each year, that describes the future commitments and business of a location or division. [Now known as the Commit Plan.] This is preceded by a period of three months during which most productive work stops for a general free-for-all over which projects are to be considered *strategic*. The plan, once adopted, is ignored. See *Spring Plan*.

family dinner *n.* An evening meal paid for by IBM, usually before Christmas, for a department or group of departments. The term derives from the ancient concept of IBM being one big happy family of employees. This is supposedly an event to recognise the effort put in during the year, and can therefore be relied upon to introduce colleagues from work whom one has never met and did not know existed.

FAP *n.* Financial Assistance Program. A programme originally offered to ESD (Entry Systems Division) employees, whose job disappeared as a result of PS/2 manufacturing moving from Boca Raton to Raleigh, and later extended. Employees who took advantage of the original FAP resigned from IBM, and received a *golden handshake* of two years salary plus a bonus. This led to such expressions as: "Taking the FAP", "Faphappy", and "Are you going to fap or flap?".

fast back end *n.* That part of a product development cycle that is supposed to take far less time than usual in order to make up for the schedule *slips* of the earlier parts. "We'll have to put in a fast back end in order to make FCS on time." [That is, drop some of the testing.]

fastpath 1. *v.* To enhance the performance of a program in certain cases by reducing the amount of code executed when a given condition arises, especially when the condition is common, or where the existing performance of the program doesn't meet users' expectations. "We will have to fastpath the case where the file isn't open yet". See also *special-case*. **2.** *v.* To access some data directly, rather than, for instance, following an otherwise tree-structured (hierarchical) path. For example, instead of selecting choices "1", "3", "4", "B" in consecutive menus, you might be able to go to the same panel by typing "134B". This can be much faster, especially over slow connections, because only the final menu will be displayed. Of course, strings such as "134B" were formerly spelled differently (for instance, "COPY") and were known as *commands*. **3.** *n.* The nickname used to directly access some panel in a tree-structured menu. As in: "what's the best fastpath to get to PCPRICES?"

fast track *n.* A career path for selected men and women who appear to conform to the management ideal. The career path is designed to enhance their abilities and loyalty, traditionally by rapid promotion and by protecting them from the more disastrous errors that they might commit.

fatal *adj.* Very serious. When used to describe a problem, this indicates that recovery from the problem has not been possible, as in "FATAL I/O ERROR". Always presented in all upper case, as only t'owd man was confident enough to use such a word in a Data Processing environment. ["T'owd man" – An Ancient (from the Derbyshire mining term).]

fat, dumb and happy *adj.* Complacent. Typically used of a project's management who think that their project is competitive when it is not. [Not exclusively an IBM term.]

fatherhood *n.* Something that is good, but not necessarily true. See *motherhood*.

FBC *n.* Funny Black Connector. The hermaphroditic connector used in the *cabling system* (*q.v.*).

FCS *n.* First *customer ship* (*q.v.*). The time at which products are first delivered to customers, usually cause for celebration. ("Pub Time".) This is also the time at which FE starts fixing the bugs that were

discovered too late in the development cycle to be corrected. See also *announce, ESP, GA*.

feature **1.** *n.* A piece of a product (software or hardware). **2.** *n.* A *bug* for which no fix is going to be made available. **3.** *n.* A correction to a publication. **4.** *n.* A mandatory "option" on a piece of hardware. As in: "Of course, if you want to run any software on this machine, you must order the optional Decimal Feature". See also *creeping featurism, enhancement*.

feature shock *n.* A user's confusion when confronted with a package that has too many features and poor introductory material. Originally a pun on Alvin Toffler's title *Future Shock*.

feeb *v.* To perform some act in a feeble (or awkward) manner. For example: "He really feebed that piece of coding".

feecher, feechur *n.* An unforeseen, arbitrary, or capricious attribute, which, once documented, is spelled "*feature*" (*q.v.*).

fence **1.** *n.* Some special sequence of characters (such as hexadecimal "FF") used to delimit other data. Usage: "You should put a fence at the end of the parameter list". **2.** *v.* To protect storage so that it cannot be stolen by another user while you are not actually using it. An excellent mechanism for justifying a storage upgrade. See also *fence out*. **3.** *v.* To protect people from being "poached" by other departments. "My Adtech headcount is fenced this year."

fence out *v.* To electronically disconnect an element from the operating configuration. In the 308X series, Fencing Out is done by *fence* registers that are set and unset by the Processor Controller. This concept was devised by the original 308X RAS Engineering Department, and in doing so they discovered the *aeroplane rule* (see above). See also *box, granularity*.

ference error (*fear-ence error*) *n.* An indexing error occurring when the IBM System 38 encounters a null or invalid index or subscript. This derives from an error in a message handling routine, that truncated the first two characters of the message – it should have read: "Reference Error". However, "Ference Error" conveys just as much information.

field **1.** *n.* The IBM marketplace – where the profits come from. Anywhere outside the Development group. **2.** *n.* (When used at a headquarters location.) The development laboratories.

file **1.** *n.* A collection of records held in a **filing system** on a disk or other storage device. **2.** *n.* A magnetic disk storage device, usually a *Winchester*. "We're designing hard files for PCs."

file farm *n.* A *disk farm* (*q.v.*).

finding *n.* A security *exposure*, discovered during a Security audit. In theory, a finding could be either good or bad, but there have been no reports of a good finding.

finger check *n.* A typing error on a computer terminal. Usage: "I took a finger check while entering that command". Derived from the usage of *check*. See also *brain check*.

finis (*fin-iss*) *n.* To close a file, under the CMS operating system. This [Latin] command name was chosen by a Frenchman who worked on the CMS file system in the 1960s. Often the *incantation* "FINIS * * *" (close all files) is suggested as a panacea for CMS applications developers.

Finnoga- *prefix.* A generic prefix used to avoid using a Registered Trade Mark prefix and thus being admonished by Legal because you forgot to add the mandatory Trade Mark footnote. For example: FinnogaCalc, FinnogaWriter, FinnogaBase. See also *Panda-*.

firefighter *n.* A person or group of people called in to put out a *forest fire*. A good firefighter is the highest form of programmer life, but all too often firefighters are totally unfamiliar with the fire being fought. Firefighters are famous for their interim patches or fixes. These patches, once implemented, become permanent and the tinder to spark off later Forest Fires. It is often said that firefighters are "called too late to even water the hot ashes".

first-line manager *n.* The lowest level of *line management* (*q.v.*). A first-line manager has only "employees" (as opposed to managers) reporting to him or her. A second-line manager will hold the cards of (employ) at least one first-line manager. The term can also be used in a relative sense; when employees report directly to upper levels of management then one person's third-line manager can be another's fifth-line.

FISH (*fish*) *n.* A queuing algorithm that seems to be common in overloaded networks: "First In, Still Here". By analogy with FIFO (First In, First Out) and LIFO (Last In, First Out).

fix *n.* A correction for a software problem. "You need the following three fixes to correct the file system bug". Software equivalent of *engineering change*.

fixed disk *n.* A *disk*, usually a *hard disk* (*q.v.*), packaged with its electronics and which cannot easily be removed from the machine in which it is installed.

fixed head *n.* A Read/Write *head* (*q.v.*) which is fixed in position relative to the surface of a *disk*, rather than being moveable across some or all of the disk. Data that are on the disk surface under a fixed head can be accessed more rapidly than those under the more common moveable heads; the fixed head area of a disk is therefore often used for paging, database storage, *etc*.

fix it in pubs *v.* To change the product publications. Unfortunately nothing to do with the ancient art of Ale sampling, but is instead a favourite way to correct any problem found in the six months before *FCS*. See *feature, pubs*.

flash *v.* To copy by xerography. See also *ibmox, open kimono[?]*.

Flashcube on the Mountain *n.* The Sterling Forest Laboratory, New York. This name was a take-off on the "Motel on the Mountain" which, in the 1950s, was a fashionable motel on Route 17 in NY (not far from Sterling Forest). In an era when motels were cheap buildings alongside noisy highways, this was a nice "low level" hotel. It was built into the side of a mountain and had multiple small buildings of several different levels, and many of its rooms had nice views.

flatten *v.* To bring under control, to eliminate, or to make less conspicuous. "Gee, we've got bad problems with that new software from Yorktown. Shall we bring a bunch of them up to flatten the problem?" (The implication being that any problem can be trampled into the dust by the application of hordes of programmers.) The origin of this term in fact comes from the mathematical sense of flattening a curve (or worse, a vertical line) showing problem discoveries, APARs, et al. Usage: "We'll flatten

that problem when the Umbrella PTF gets out there".

flavour, flavor *n.* A variety or version of a program or piece of hardware. "This system comes in two flavours: SP and XA." An analogy with ice-cream varieties. See *vanilla, chocolate, mocha.*

fletching *n.* See *snow, angel dust.*

flextime, flexitime *n.* A scheme allowing flexible working hours. These schemes let people vary their start and end times from day to day, around a fixed *core time.* With some schemes one can accumulate excess time worked and use it for extra leave.

flipchart *n.* A large piece of paper used for drawing charts as a presentation aid. Often faintly marked with squares which are of length 1/7920 part of a furlong on a side (once known as an "*inch*"). These 25.4mm squares help the presenter draw straight lines. Once especially favoured for formal presentations at Corporate HQ, but nowadays almost totally superseded by *foils*, slides, PCs running fancy programs, and projection displays.

floor sort *n.* A spilt box of computer *cards.* A standard box held approximately 2000 cards, which could be shuffled by the simple and effective technique of depositing them in a heap upon the floor. If the cards did not have a sequence of numbers to identify their order they had to be re-sorted by hand.

floor system *n.* The operating system used by the majority of people on a machine (as opposed to a test or private system). See *spin system.*

FLOP (*flop*) *n.* Floating Point OPeration, more usually seen in the construct Megaflops (Millions of Floating Point Operations per Second), a measure of performance usually applied to scientific *vector processors.* The abbreviation FLOP has the added advantage, in the commercial world, of sounding slightly derogatory. See also *MIPS.*

floppy disk *n.* A flexible magnetic storage *disk*, now more often called a *diskette*. Floppies were originally eight inches in diameter, and were first used, in the early 1970s, for loading the initial program into control units and mainframe computers. See *IPL, Minnow.*

focal point *n.* A person who has been assigned responsibility for coordinating an effort or supporting a large project (such as the development of microcode for an entire system). Warning: if you are at a focal point, you may get burned.

focus *n.* Critical scrutiny with a view to swift corrective action. As in: "There will be focus on Quality at year-end".

foil *n.* Viewgraph, transparency, viewfoil – a thin sheet or leaf of transparent plastic material used for "overhead" projection of illustrations (visual aids). Only the term "Foil" is widely used in IBM. It is the most popular of the three presentation media (slides, foils, and *flipcharts*) except at Corporate HQ, where even in the 1980s flipcharts are favoured. In Poughkeepsie, social status is gained by owning one of the new, very compact, and very expensive foil projectors that make it easier to hold meetings almost anywhere and at any time.

The origins of this word have been obscured by the use of lower case. The original usage was "FOIL" which, of course, was an acronym. Further research has discovered that the acronym originally stood for "Foil Over Incandescent Light". This therefore seems to be IBM's first attempt at a recursive language.

Foil Factory *n.* IBM Australia's Headquarters at Cumberland Forest, New South Wales. See also *Koala Park.*

fold *v.* To change minuscules (lowercase alphabetical letters) to majuscules (uppercase alphabetical letters). Also "translate to upper case". Only a very few pieces of software do this correctly for languages other than English, or even claim to.

follow-on *n.* A new release or version of a product, sufficiently different to merit a new product number but including all the bugs and problems of the previous product architecture. (This is the usual result of being *compatible* with previous releases.)

food chain *n.* The (hierarchical) line of management. An indirect reference to the military term "chain of command", and to the zoological term. As in: "He is too low in the food chain to really matter". See also *line management, lion food, nonlinear.*

footprint 1. *n.* The floor or desk space taken up by some piece of computer equipment, such as a terminal or processor. As in: "Our box has a smaller footprint than that of xyz". See also *visual footprint, toeprint.* **2.** *n.* The audit trail left by a program so that a recovery program or programmer can determine the areas of storage that the first program stepped upon.

footware *n.* Footwear. A list of tennis rules published by the Yorktown IBM Club reminds us that "Proper footware is required (tennis shoes/sneakers)".

forecast *n.* A prophecy of the number of sales of a product as a function of price at which it will be offered. This is typically made by people who have never used or sold such products and based upon [wild] guesses by some people who have. The forecast has no relationship to either the quality of the product or the value as it might be perceived by the potential customer, since the forecasters are not the people allowed to discuss the product with the customer at this stage. Thus a forecast is either strikingly inaccurate for a low price and large number of sales, or a painfully self-fulfilling prophecy if it is high priced and low volume.

forest fire *n.* Something bad that happens, such as a manufacturing problem or a machine *crash*, that receives an undue amount of attention from high-level management. This causes productive work to cease as all available personnel become *firefighters.*

Fort Apache *n.* Building 300, East Fishkill. The term derives from the shape of the building, whose second storey overhangs the first. The term is also applied to Building 707 in Poughkeepsie, where the windowsills are sloped at 45 degrees so that despairing managers will not hurt themselves or damage the building while going out of the windows.

Fort Cottle *n.* Building 026, San Jose. A large, box-like building with gun-slit windows located at the Cottle Road site at San Jose. This building is considered by many to be unfit for human occupancy, and has largely been given over to computers.

forum *n.* A file containing discussions about a given topic on a *conference disk.* (Plural usually **fora**.) Usually a mix of wild applause, bug reports, suggestions, questions by those who did not read the documentation, questions by those who did (but did not find the information wanted), and completely out-of-topic *appends.* Most forums are of considerable value, and form perhaps the most significant method of technical communication within IBM. Others, being cultural rather than technical, are no less valuable but are less obviously productive –

one of the most famous is (well, was, since it has been removed by the editor) the BYTE8406 FORUM on the IBMPC conference. This spawned from a hint about a yet unannounced PC in the June 1984 issue of Byte magazine, and degenerated into a long compilation of stories about old hardware. Browsing forums has become a corporation-wide occupation, and is one of the favourite sports of *tube-jockeys*. See also *append, conferencing facility, BYTE8406 syndrome*.

forumish *adj*. Of a file: behaving like a *forum*. That is, new data are added at (appended to) the end of the file.

Frank *n*. The chairman of the board in the late 1970s: Frank Cary. "If you don't like it, go talk to Frank". The term is still used to refer to the Exalted Ones At The Top. (The current correct term would be "John", but this has not found wide usage.)

Fred *n*. A generic name for files, userids, *etc*. in examples. See also *Panda-*.

freezer *n*. Somewhere where ideas or idealists can safely be stored, almost indefinitely. Also a place where *task force* results are stored (*e.g.*, a filing cabinet to which no one has the key).

fridge *n*. A 3274 Terminal Controller. So called because it has the same shape, dimensions, weight, and noise profile as a small domestic refrigerator.

friendly *adj*. Local. As in: "Before ordering that whizz-bang new PC software, check it out with your friendly legal advisor". In no way connected with *user-friendly*.

frozen 1. *adj*. No longer open to ideas or changes. Applied to a project that has cooled sufficiently to let someone in power successfully quench any red-hot or innovative idea which might be relevant to the project. Also applied to a program that will not have any further fixes or enhancements. See also *cast-in-concrete, functionally stabilized, terminate*. **2.** *adj*. Affected by a high-level edict to "freeze headcount" (stop hiring new employees) in a particular way. For example: "Westchester is frozen".

Frozen Zone 1. *n*. The period between December 15th and January 15th during which no upgrades should be made to the company's systems, to allow users to finish their yearly reports. However, major bugs are usually found during this period, due to the higher-than-usual activity, and, of course, many machines have to be installed before December 31st to avoid being debited on the next year's budget... **2.** *n*. The period, normally at the beginning of a year, in *build-to-plan* ordering of a product when no further changes in quantities can be made by the manufacturing plant. For example, if a sales area requests an increase in the shipments of a BTP product, the plant may well respond that "it's in Frozen Zone – no can do".

FRU (*frew*) *n*. Field Replaceable Unit – a unit that is the smallest replaceable in the field (*i.e.*, outside a factory or reconditioning plant). A complete logic *card* might be a FRU, but a *chip* permanently mounted on a card would not be. See also *CRU*.

FS *n*. Future System. A synonym for dreams that didn't come true. "That project will be another FS". Note that FS is also the abbreviation for "*functionally stabilized*", and, in Hebrew, means "zero", or "nothing". Also known as "False Start", *etc*.

FUD (*fud*) *n*. Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt. Attributed to Dr. Gene Amdahl after he left IBM to start his own company, Amdahl, who alleged that "FUD is the fear, uncertainty and doubt that IBM sales people instill in the minds of potential customers who may be considering our [Amdahl] products."

full court press *n*. Instruction to an entire marketing team to press sales at an account at all levels possible. From the basketball term.

fullword *n*. Four bytes (an IBM System/370 Word is 4 bytes, or 32 bits). Many System/370 instructions run faster when their storage operands are "aligned" on a **fullword boundary**, that is, they start on an address which is an exact multiple of four. See also *halfword, doubleword*.

fun & games *n*. Anything that does not directly result in short term revenue to the corporation.

function *n*. An undefined measure of the value of a program or machine, in the sense of describing what it is able to achieve. Usage "How much added function will we get with that line item?" The word may be contorted further: "How much functionality does that have?"

functionality *n*. Capability, function.

functionally stabilized *adj*. Dead. Said of a product that will receive no further enhancements. See also *frozen, sunset*.

fundamental *adj*. Most important and basic. The noun qualified is to be taken as gospel and is not be questioned. For example "The **fundamental** requirement is ease of use".

funded *adj*. Of a project: formally assigned a budget, possibly of *funny money*. Better than a *hobby* (*q.v.*); about 4 on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is *strategic*.

funny money 1. *n*. U.S. dollars used or quoted in an internal budget or plan. These have a hypothetical, play-money aura – felt especially by those employees to whom the dollar is not the native unit of currency, or when the sums involved are very large. See also *blue money*. **2.** *n*. Test paper pieces used by engineers to test automatic bank tellers and cash issuing terminals. To test the machines properly these often need to be remarkably similar to the real thing, and hence merit appropriate security precautions.

GA *n*. General Availability. The time at which product is available (at least within one country) to anyone who wishes to buy it. This may be later than *FCS* (*q.v.*) if there has been an *ESP* (*q.v.*). See also *announce*.

Galactic Headquarters *n*. The old IBM building in New York City at 590 Madison Avenue. This was occupied by Corporate Headquarters before they moved to Armonk. It was distinguished by the old IBM logo on the front, which was a globe with the words "World Peace Through World Trade" on it. (This building has since been demolished, and has been replaced by a new building, also owned by IBM.) The term "Galactic HQ" now generally refers to the Armonk location.

gap *n*. The difference between "What The Customers Want" and "What We Can Produce". This term is used by the planning community to indicate blind faith in the ability of the Development Divisions to come up with a product that will rectify *planners' droop* and keep the revenue growth going. Note that it is no part of the Planners' responsibilities to plan whatever product might be required, or be produced, to bridge the Gap.

gap product *n*. A product conjured out of murky air in the hour before the *Fall Plan* is due, to fill a gap in revenue projections [forecasts]. Often the gap product will be designed to use surplus parts from other

products which are in a state of decline. See also *planners' droop*.

general *n.* A meeting between a manager and one of his or her employees for an unfocused discussion, usually of a personnel rather than technical nature.

General Availability *n.* The time when a product is scheduled to be available in quantity. The sequence: *announce – ESP – FCS –* General Availability normally applies, but the exact mix varies according to the type of product and the skills of the product planners. In some cases, FCS and General Availability are synonymous. See also *customer ship*.

gerbil tubes *n.* The walkways connecting various buildings at the Raleigh (Research Triangle Park) site. Known for their windowpanes, which can pop out when there is a large inside/outside temperature differential.

get in bed with *v.* To work closely with. Usage: "You will just have to get in bed with those people in Raleigh".

get your ducks in a row *v.* To get a number of people – usually at a lower level – to provide formal approval of a decision that has already been taken. "OK, let's do it. When can you get your ducks in a row?" Also, **get your ducks in order**, as in: "When you escalate, be sure you have your ducks in order, because that's the caboose that pushes the train".

glasnost *n.* Openness to customer problems. By analogy with the Russian word used to designate a "liberal" policy of discussion. When an IBMer practices glasnost, the customer may get more than the Official IBM Answer.

glass 1. *n.* Silicon *chips* (integrated circuits). Usage: "We can't get the upleveled hardware until the new glass gets through Fishkill". The reference is from the observation that both integrated circuits and glass are made from silicon (sand). Originally the term Glass referred to the photographic masters for cards or chip transistors. The image on the glass was projected photographically onto photoresist on the base surface. The 3195 had several "glass expediters" during development and production. See *iron*. **2.** *n.* The cathode ray tube in a display terminal. "It's the way it looks on the glass that matters." Also used in the sense of *real estate* (*q.v.*) needed for display. "That's a neat button design, but how much glass will it use?"

glass house *n.* A large data processing centre or corporate information service. As in: "We haven't been able to find one architecture that can run from the desktop to large glass houses".

glass navel *n.* The artificial part allegedly added to some people when they attend certain types of internal or external education courses that are perceived by others as a form of brain-washing. The connotation is that the recipient of the glass navel needs it in order to see his or her new view of the world.

glass teletype *n.* Before the 3101 ASCII terminal was announced: any non-IBM "dumb" CRT. After the 3101 was announced: the 3101.

glitch *n.* An electrical pulse that is shorter than most and, more importantly, occurs where it shouldn't. By definition (see *pulse*) it cannot be observed, and it is therefore used as the perfect scapegoat to describe all hardware failures in electronic equipment. It is claimed [untruthfully] that all glitches are caused by lightning strikes (or cosmic rays), and therefore such problems are unavoidable. The meaning also encompasses software problems, to denote a weird program behaviour that happens once and cannot be replicated. In this case software people prefer to blame a hardware glitch.

glove compartment *n.* The small space under the wrist rest of 3278/9 keyboards where a leaflet to aid trouble-shooting (the *Problem Determination Guide*) is kept. The first place to check for a list of passwords.

GML 1. *n.* Generalised Markup Language. A language used for marking up documents (such as this one) to show the structure and organization of the document, rather than its appearance. The concepts and syntax of the original IBM GML have been generalised to form the ISO Standard GML (**SGML**). **2.** *v.* To annotate a document with Generalised Markup Language. "I've GMLed the document so anyone can print it."

GMT-friendly *adj.* Of a computer system: having a CPU clock which is correctly set to GMT, hence allowing coordinated interchange of timing information with systems in other time-zones. If one exchanges information with a user on a **GMT-hostile** system, one may receive files that appear to have been created at some time in the future. The future, of course, is up to 25 time-zones away and travelling towards you.

go away *v.* To vanish inexplicably. Normally used in a kind of prayer or litany: "With a bit of luck, that problem will go away when we install Release XXX".

go faster stripes *n.* Frills added to a hardware product to make it appear to run better. IBM hardware does not need these, of course. See also *bells and whistles*.

gold card *n.* A logic *card* or module claimed, by its engineers, to be perfect. It can be used to debug card test programs, or for swapping with the cards in defective machines when no-one has a clue what is wrong. See also *red line card*.

gold-coaster *n.* Someone who is "coasting" until retirement. This term is especially applied to such a person who acquires or applies for a transfer to Boca Raton or Tampa, in Florida. The local tourist agencies' name for that part of Florida is the "Gold Coast" [hence the nice double meaning]. See also *IPR, ROJ*.

golden diskette *n.* The release version of a PC software package. Also **golden code**. Usage: "Of course, we never get to see the specs until the golden diskette is ready to ship". The Personal Computer variety of *to-PID version* (*q.v.*).

golden handshake *n.* A signal (originally in the form of a handshake, but now sometimes simply music played over the public address system) from a manager to his or her employees, made on the day before a major public holiday (such as Thanksgiving, in the USA). It signifies "have a good holiday" and implies "you are now free to leave early today, if you wish". This phenomenon seems to be USA only, and (judging by recent memos) has been overused in some places. A reader tells of a colleague who, before every holiday, used to trace his hand on paper, cut out the tracing, tape it to a ruler, and then thrust it out of his office door every time his manager went by. Others tell of times when their manager didn't know of this convention, and the department remained in their offices for hours after everyone else had left.

. "Golden Handshakes" in the form of a joining or
. leaving present used not to be used in IBM, though
. they have now crept in under the guise of *FAPs*.

golf ball *n.* The removable typing element that was used in the Selectric typewriter and the 105x series of System/360 consoles. This typing element is roughly spherical and is covered with the characters that can be printed. Different fonts (such as Courier, Dance Symbols, Eskimo, *etc.*) are available on different golf balls. "When your program issues the WTO macro, the system will jiggle the golf ball and print the message." [A salesman of the old guard would, of course, refer to "rotating and tilting the typing element".]

Golf Ball typewriters are no longer sold by IBM.

goodness 1. *n.* A measure of a project's worth, used to justify its continued existence when no rational reasons can be found. "This system contributes goodness to the user environment". See also *bad information*. **2.** *n.* An item that is well esteemed, and unlikely to be unpopular with anyone. [Like Apple Pie?] "This project is Goodness."

. **Gor** *n.* A non-specific place name. From the titles of
. a series of "science" fantasy novels by one John
. Norman (John Frederick Lange). It was first used
. in IBM in the names of "generic" PC adventure
. games, such as "Giant Rabbits of Gor", but has
. since spread to other environments.

go to the mat *v.* To fight it out by going to higher authority. From the wrestling term. See *escalate*.

. **gotta minute?** *interjection.* "Please come to my
. office **right now**." [Some snooper found a *demonstration application program* on one of your disks.]

granular *adj.* Patchy, narrow minded. In certain locations, to refer to another person's thinking as "granular" is a subtle suggestion that it is suspect. One is encouraged these days to take a "system view" of thoughts and ideas, where the whole is somehow greater than the sum of its (highly granular) parts.

granularity 1. *n.* A term with an indeterminate meaning. Perhaps "bittiness", by analogy with the grains of silver halide in a photographic emulsion. Usage (Quote from *MVS/XA: An Overview*, GG22-9303, page 10): "Read-only protection is now on a page granularity". **2.** *n.* A substitute for the word "specificity", in the sense "a specific item or detail". Usually coupled with descriptors such as "sufficient" or "a lack of", and in this case used mainly to discredit someone else's work. Not to be confused with granulated. **3.** *n.* Being able to *fence out* (of a configuration) a failing element of a processor complex so the remaining elements can continue to do useful work. For example, in the 3081 one of the two central processors can be fenced out and the other, in conjunction with the rest of the elements, can continue to run as a single processor system. Also on the 3081 processor, a pair of BSMs (Basic Storage Modules) can be fenced out, powered down, repaired, powered up, tested, and returned to the operating configuration. Thus high granularity implies many elements that can be fenced out, and low granularity implies few elements that can be fenced out.

Great Oral Tradition *n.* The explanation for why so many pieces of widely used, basic, or important information are not to be found recorded anywhere, despite the existence of several forests' worth of manuals and Gigabytes of on-line documentation. One theory holds that since widely used information should be intuitively obvious to newcomers to the corporation, writing it down is a waste of time. In addition, such material is in a constant state of flux, which only reinforces the argument of the futility of documentation. [Perhaps this poor dictionary will continue to help those in such need.]

. **Great Runes** *n.* Expressions using only uppercase
. characters. Nowadays used mostly by
. megalomaniac operating systems and compilers,
. and by users discovering their very first desk-top
. publishing system.

green card *n.* Quick reference summary information printed on a large folded sheet of heavy paper, usually yellow or white. This refers to the original (green) System/360 reference card which is an outstanding example of the genre. Some recent "cards" are in fact booklets – which of course tends to defeat the object of providing a quick reference.

| The original green card became a yellow card when the System/370 was introduced, and soon was published as a (yellow) booklet. With the introduction of *XA* (*q.v.*), it has become a 48-page pink book.

A fine anecdote refers to a scene that took place in a programmers' terminal room at Yorktown in 1978. A physicist, using a terminal there, overheard one of the programmers ask another "Do you have a green card?". The other grunted, and passed the first a thick yellow booklet. At this point the physicist turned a delicate shade of olive and rapidly left the room, never [it's said] to return. See also *card*.

. **green cloud** *n.* Dollars budgeted for but unspent at
. the end of the year. There is a very strong incentive
. to spend such funds, regardless of any expense cuts
. or exhortations to economise that may have been
. received. If you don't spend the money, your
. organisation will be rewarded by the logic that since
. it didn't spend it, it obviously didn't need it – and
. cannot possibly need it next year, either.

| **green ink** *n.* Any part of a software product (that is itself part of the Systems Application Architecture, *SAA*) that does not conform to the SAA definition. So called from the use of green ink in the manuals describing such products; deviations from the architecture are printed in green ink. Informally extended to the concepts of "light green" and "dark green" – deviations from the architecture that will be easy or hard to correct in the future, respectively. See also *green words*.

| **green layer** *n.* Application enabling (support) software. See *layer*.

green lightning *n.* Apparently random flashing streaks written on the face of the 3278 and 3279 terminals while a programmable symbol set is being loaded. This hardware bug was not fixed, as some bright spark suggested that this "would let the user know that something is happening". [It certainly does.] See also *lightning bolt*.

. **green machine** *n.* A piece of hardware designed or
. modified to meet U.S. Government military specifi-
. cations (milspecs). The name is derived from the
. observation that the U.S. Army used to paint most
. of its property a drab olive-green colour. Usually
. refers to equipment produced or modified by the
. Federal Systems Division.

| **green money** *n.* See *blue money*.

. **green sheet 1.** *n.* The Travel Expense Allowance
. (TEA) multi-part form used in the USA to submit
. expenses for reimbursement. The only IBM form in
. the USA (and possibly in the world) that was
. printed on green paper (now in green ink), possibly

. to remind the user that it deals with "real" money.
. Usage: "Just go out and buy it and we'll put it on
. the green sheet". **2.** *v.* To submit an expense for
. repayment. "Go ahead and green-sheet that item."
. **3.** *n.* A sheet of ceramic, with binder, that is used in
. the manufacture of integrated circuit chip carriers.
. These are pale green, with a texture rather like a
. thin vinyl sheet.

green words *n.* A widely used but now obsolete FORTRAN term for "parochial control words used to delimit spanned records in the absence of adequate data management support". During a presentation in which these words were first identified, they were diagrammed on a blackboard in green chalk, thus the name. It is reported that the Green words are the Block and Record Descriptor Words (length fields) that are present even today in RECFM=V, VB, and VBS data sets in MVS. See for example the section Variable-Length Records in *OS/VS2 MVS Data Management Services Guide*, GC26-3875-1, pages 9-15. FORTRAN programmers needed to know about these in order to calculate the proper LRECL and BLKSIZE values, and many were accustomed to "adding 4 to get LRECL and 4 more to get BLKSIZE," thus producing unblocked disk-eating horrors. See also *green ink*.

grey elephant *n.* The Model 407 accounting machine. So named because of its size, colour [all IBM machines in those days were grey], and ponderous operation. This machine was programmed using a plug board and patch wires, by a person known as a *board wirer* (*q.v.*).

. **grommet** *n.* A small, black, rectangular piece of
. rubber (without a hole in it) that is used to prevent
. magnetic tape unravelling from its reel. See also
. *sugar cube*.

groove-swing *n.* (Meaning obscure.) This term was used repeatedly in a 1984 talk by a high-level personnel person as part of the persuasion patter intended to convince engineers that they were Executive Resources. The speaker could not believe that the engineers did not see executives as the highest form of life in IBM, so phrases like "the groove-swing leads right to the power curve" flew fast and furious. The speaker didn't seem to know what the terms meant, and the audience certainly had no idea, so a proper definition will have to wait for later enlightenment. [Groove-swing is probably from the golfing term, as in the usage "He's doing it so easily, he must be in a grooved swing".]

growth *v.* To be grown, or to be extended. As in: "The most interesting characteristic of these new processors is their ability to growth to up to 2 MB of main storage".

guru *n.* A professional expert. There is significant difference between a "guru" (who can invent new incantations), and a "wizard" (who can only use incantations already invented). Guru is overtly a term of respect, but can sometimes convey an undertone of contempt for one who would invest large amounts of time in a subject which the speaker does not consider sufficiently important to learn well himself. See also *expert*.

halfword *n.* Two bytes (an IBM System/370 Word is 4 bytes, or 32 bits). Especially confusing term when used to describe a 16-bit data item on a 16-bit machine whose "word-length" is 16 bits. See also *fullword, doubleword*.

Hall of Winds *n.* See *Cave of the Winds*.

hall talk *n.* Gossip, especially concerning information that is widely known and/or believed but has not yet been announced formally by the management team. The term derives from the favoured locale for such talk (in office hallways, near rest areas and vending machines). As in: "There is hall talk that we will have to slip the schedule".

hamster *n.* An incorrectly attached (or, more usually, detached) wire in a computer system. This is a local reference to the hamster, belonging to one C. Moon, which all unknowingly chewed through electric wiring at home.

handshake *v.* To communicate with the proper *protocol*. Normally used to indicate that two computers have been connected successfully, as in: "OK, the boxes are handshaking now".

hands-on 1. *n.* Time spent in exploration of a new piece of equipment. "After the class we will go down to the DP Centre for some hands-on." **2.** *n.* Physical access to equipment. "I have the programs written, but I can't get any hands-on until Thursday."

hard disk, hard file *n.* A magnetic storage *disk* which is hard (not floppy), and usually is not easily removable from the machine in which it is installed. See *file, fixed disk, floppy disk*.

hardwire *v.* To code as a constant value something that one would normally like to be a changeable parameter. From hardware-wired. "The Userid of the receiving machine is hardwired as DATASTAG". "The spool space constant is hardwired at 53%". (An alternative term is **hardcode**).

he *n.* A huge computer program (*e.g.*, MVS, HSM, JES) which does things on your behalf, usually without your knowledge, and sometimes without your control. Perhaps originally an indirect reference to the programmer, but now refers to the program – which seems to take on the personality of an unnamed and devilishly cunning person when its side effects (the ones that are causing you problems) are being explained to you by another. "He dynamically retrieves the datasets that you will need and puts them on a scratch pack". Sexist programmers slip in the term "She" from time to time, either for variety or when the action taken by the system seems especially fickle.

. **head** *n.* The part of a hard disk drive mechanism
. that contains the coil that actually reads or writes
. information on the disk. This part "flies" on a film
. of air, extremely close to the disk; hence the risk of
. a *head crash*. See also *fixed head*.

headcount *n.* The number of personnel currently allocated to a manager or project (whether or not the allocation is filled by *warm bodies*). Headcount is the primary measure of the size of a person's empire or the importance of a project, and is therefore increased whenever possible. Unfortunately it is a common belief, among those who allocate resources, that nine women can produce a baby in one month.

head crash *n.* An event in which a read/write head forgets how to fly over the surface of a magnetic disk, and gouges up priceless data.

headshape *v.* To alter another person's opinion on a subject. Permission from the other person is not required (and probably not available). There is even a non-verbal form in which the shaper grasps the object's imagined head by the ears, using the fingers and palms, and then massages the object's

head with the thumbs. Neither the term nor the gesture should be used in the presence of one whose head is to be shaped.

hear *v.* To understand and sympathise with. Invariably followed by "but", as in: "I hear you, but there just isn't time to fix that problem". This usage probably derives from Erhard Seminars Training (*est*) 1971 jargon.

heat *n.* Reprobation from on high. "If we can't ship this on schedule, we are going to take a lot of heat". Note that being cold-blooded helps one withstand heat. See also *help*.

help 1. *n.* Something provided by headquarters staff, especially during times of difficulty. Often this term is used in conjunction with the observation that "If we don't improve this product plan, we will get more Help than we can imagine". Alternatively, it may be heard in "I'm from the region / plant / headquarters and I'm here to help". See also *external audit, heat.* **2.** *n.* On-line explanatory or reference material. Usage: "The program seems to work OK, but the helps are awful". Or: "The help didn't tell me there is an arbitrary restriction on the number of items a list tag can contain in a NAMES file".

hero territory *n.* A marketing environment or sector where it is very easy to make a name for yourself but where you run a real risk of visible failure. The chance of an assignment to hero territory is often introduced by management with the phrase "Have I got an opportunity for you...".

hex *adj or n.* Hexadecimal, or base-16. An alternative to the term "sexadecimal". This latter term was popular in the early days of programming, when the abbreviation was a source of gentle amusement among those few specialists who wrote programs. With the more widespread use of computing at the time of System/360, IBM invented the safely laundered term "hex". Not intended as a curse or incantation, frequent evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

In fact, neither "hexadecimal" nor "sexadecimal" was derived logically. The original term for the base 10 system was "denary system", from the Latin partitioning number, denarius. However, the term "decimal system" became popular for base 10, while "binary system" was accepted for base 2. When it came time to invent a name for base 16, engineers with little Latin and less Greek stuck a randomly chosen word for six from either Latin *sexa-* or Greek *hexa-* to the word decimal to create the mongrel word hexadecimal. A morphologically correct Latin word for "sixteen each", corresponding to "binary" or "denary", would perhaps be "senidenary". If the term were to end in "decimal", then the correct prefix would be *sexti-*, as in "sextidecimal".

hexit *n.* Hexadecimal digit (0-9, A-F). Calling this set of base-16 numbers "digits" sounds bizarre, since they have more elements than you can count on your fingers (unless you are involved in keyboard design).

hiccup *n.* A file duplicated by a network following a transmission error. This is usually due to a forwarding program resending a file when acknowledgement of receipt of the original copy fails to arrive, even though the original copy did arrive.

hidden agenda *n.* The true purpose of a meeting or announcement. "To maintain integrity, all Software Change Requests will be signed off by executive management." The hidden agenda in this proposal is: "We don't want to see any more changes".

high level 1. *adj.* Global rather than local (describing a view of a business situation). **2.** *adj.* Having at least three levels of subordinate managers. **3.** *adj.* Of a modification or change to a product or plan: having no real value, but added to impress higher management. As in: "This is a high-level feature". See also *bells and whistles.* **4.** *adj.* Of no real substance, or purely rhetorical. As in "a high level discussion". This usage is possibly derived from the term "high-brow".

highlight *v.* To emphasise, or make a point of. From the most common form of emphasis available on older display terminals, in which the words to be emphasised are brighter than the other information on the display. Highlighting on displays now encompasses such diverse forms of emphasis as underscores, reverse video, and (painful) blinking – but no longer intensification.

hit 1. *n.* An error in hardware or software. "My system took three hits before it crashed". See *check.* **2.** *n.* A Slip caused by an unsatisfied external dependency. Usage: "I've got a [schedule] hit because of XYZ slippage". A highly desirable way to *decommit*, as it saves face. See also *bad information.* **3.** *n.* A success in searching for something. "Every time a cache hit occurs, we save three cycles". **4.** *v.* To press (a key or button), as in: "Please hit ENTER". Now discouraged, as it is considered to be a word that might disturb the sensitive user. "Press" is the preferred verb, with "Touch" a near second.

hobby *n.* A project outside a manager's normal line of responsibility which can be pursued without using enough *resource* to attract attention. Depending upon the level and charisma of the manager concerned, hobbies can easily involve dozens of people. If discovered prematurely, a hobby is quickly packaged as *adtech* and held to be an example of the innovation and entrepreneurship that makes a company successful.

HOBit, hobbit (*hobbit*) *n.* High Order Bit; the most significant (leftmost) bit in bit-organised data.

hokey dial *n.* A means of connecting terminals over a switched-line network (usually the public telephone system), when the terminals concerned are designed to work only on a permanently connected ("leased") line. To achieve this, the user manually dials the connection and then starts up the communications, and the hardware at each end hopefully cannot detect the difference. Used as emergency fall-back in some cases where the dedicated lines fail; also used as a cheap substitute for proper lines. National communication authorities do not always approve. (Also called **pseudo-leased**). [The word "Hokey" comes from the sham Latin "Hocus" (as in *hocus-pocus*, a magician's formula or trickery), which can also mean to cheat or stupify with drink.]

home-grown *adj.* Of software: written for internal use and hence not formally supported. Of course, this software is often at least as well supported as product code, but even so the description "home-grown" is often used as an excuse for not using new and innovative tools. See *NIH, type one.*

HONEhead 1. *n.* One of a select few in the Branch Office who, through the use of the office HONE (Hands-On Network Environment) terminal, can always find the answer to even the most obscure question. The first symptom usually noted is frequent missing of lunch to scrounge for new Prod-

uct announcements on the system. Hard cases have at least one *userid* on every HONE machine in the network. **2.** *n.* A member of the HONE system support staff who believes that the answer to every question should be on the HONE system, and that there should be a minimum of five menus associated with finding any answer.

hook 1. *n.* A piece of hardware or software which is added to a product to allow future extensions or additions, but which is not necessary for the basic function. Unless designed very carefully, hooks can disclose planned but unannounced features. For example, many well labelled hooks in the System/370 Model 145 microcode revealed a thing called Virtual Memory. Now for *Quality*'s sake, hooks must be fully tested by the manufacturing department involved. **2.** *n.* The character "?", a question mark. Generally used by PC bigots, since in the old BASIC language the hook could be used to pull the value of a variable out of the otherwise intractable interpreter. See also *shriek, splat.*

hop *n.* An electronic network connection between two adjacent nodes. This is used as a measure of the logical distance between two nodes, as opposed to the geographical distance. This distance is a good indication of the likely file transmission delay (*netlag*), which is closely correlated with the number of times that the file will be stored and then forwarded. Some machine rooms feature systems which are three or four hops apart, even though you can't open the doors of one of the mainframes without first closing those of the other one.

horizontal *adj.* Broad or wide. See *vertical.*

hot and heavy *adj.* Intensive, hard and steady. Used frequently [and, apparently, quite innocently] at a Minnesota location to describe intensive work to meet a deadline. As in: "We've been going hot and heavy on this for six months now".

hot button *n.* A topic currently of great interest to someone who matters (*i.e.*, some big-shot). Implies impermanence, and some contempt. The hot button of today is likely to be of only minor interest tomorrow. Current examples: *ease-of-use*, *Quality.*

hot key 1. *n.* A keystroke (or combination of keystrokes) that switches environments. On the PC, terminal emulators often have a hot key to swap between the PC-DOS environment and the host environment. In System/370 jargon those keys are sometimes referred to as "Program Access" keys.

These keys are probably called "hot" because they are always active. Certainly if pressing them has no effect, the underlying program or machine can be somewhat cold. **2.** *v.* To switch environments.

how hard would it be *adv.* A plaintive litany used when venturing suggestions for changes. Immediately precedes some preposterously difficult proposal which to the requestor (and any other reasonable person) seems simple. From experienced users, a wry acknowledgement that the proposition may well be costly, but is nevertheless desirable. "How hard would it be to remove the length restriction on userids?" See also *WIBNI.*

Hudson River Valley Works *n.* IBM. Much of the Hudson River Valley, in New York State, is influenced by IBM. There are major IBM locations throughout Westchester County, and at East Fishkill, Poughkeepsie, and Kingston.

huff *v.* To compress data using a frequency dependent or Huffman code. "If the data won't fit in the record, we can always huff it." The abbreviation derives from the first of a pair of programs written in the 1970s to compress and restore data, delightfully named HUFF and PUFF.

hung 1. *adj.* Not responding to requests. As in: "The system seems to be hung now". The term derives from telecommunications; a computer that drops the telephone line to a user's terminal is said to have hung up the line (as though it had hung up the receiver on a telephone handset). **2.** *adj.* Waiting, queued. An excuse for "lost" electronic mail files. As in: "Your file must be hung at some intermediate node".

IBM 1. *n.* International Business Machines. [In case you really didn't know; many don't.] **2.** *n.* A hypothetical 370 instruction, existence strongly suspected but not yet proven: "Insert Bug under Mask". **3.** *n.* Immense Blue Mountain (or Monolith). **4.** *n.* I've Been Moved, alluding to the favourite game of departmental and divisional reorganisations. **5.** *n.* It's Better Manually. **6.** *n. Hudson River Valley Works.* Much of that valley, in New York State, is owned by IBM.

IBM Confidential *adj.* Only accessible to IBM employees who can claim a *need to know.* This may be proprietary information relating to personnel or technical matters, or information that could be embarrassing to IBM. See also *candy-striped, Poughkeepsie Confidential, Registered IBM Confidential.*

IBM discount *n.* A price increase. This term is said to have been coined in Poughkeepsie, and refers to the belief that residents in an area with a large IBM population end up overpaying for goods and services.

IBMer *n.* An employee of International Business Machines. See also *Beamer, Beemer.*

IBM Internal Use Only *adj.* Proprietary to IBM, but may be shown to (but not left with) non-IBMers. Sometimes, information that is confidential but which the classifier does not wish to, or cannot, keep locked away.

IBMJARG *n.* A document which lists numerous "jargon" terms used within IBM. (This document.) See also *recursive.*

IBMois (*ee-bay-aym-wa*) *n.* A strange French dialect spoken mostly around Paris, Nice, Bordeaux, and Montpellier. Although it bears some relationship to Franglais, it goes a step further by using French words with an improper meaning (addresser, delayer, eligible...). Note also that some of those words are often misspelt from the French (addresser should be adresser, for instance).

ibmox (*eye-bee-em-ox*, *ib-em-ox*, or *ib-mox*) *v.* To copy xerographically. "I Xeroxed a copy – sorry, I ibmoxed a copy of that report for you." Also **ibmrox**.

IC (*eye-see*) *n.* Information Centre. No, not Integrated Circuit! Since Information Centres replaced the DP *shop* as the place to go for programming assistance, it has been decreed that "IC" no longer means "integrated circuit".

icon 1. *n.* A sequence of characters used in computer conferencing to add emphasis or to convey the writer's tone-of-voice (also known as an **emotion icon** or **emoticon**). For example, the sequence

: -)

(when viewed sideways) looks like a smiling face and hence warns the reader that a comment is meant lightly or sarcastically. A poor substitute for

properly written language, but convenient and widely used. **2.** *n.* A small symbol for a program or for data. [These are not originally IBM terms, but are included here due to their wide usage.]

iconize, iconicize *v.* To render, change, or otherwise cause the appearance of an area of displayed data on a screen to be transformed into a (usually smaller) symbol, known as an *icon*, for the original data (or for the program which presented that data).

I didn't change anything *interjection.* "Something has changed but I have no idea what". Also **I didn't change a card**. Plaintive cry preceding feelings of the *cold pricklies*. The proper reply to this cry is: "Then it works just the same as it did before, right?" See also *one-line fix*.

IEHIBALL (*eye-ee-aitch-eye-ball*) *n.* A data compare/scanning *utility* to be used when all the normal utilities prove to be inadequate. For example, "The only way to check that is to run it through the IEHIBALL utility". [This is a pun, based on the observation that the names of many *OS* utilities start with the prefix "IEH".]

IHR *n.* In-House Retiree. Hudson Valley variety of *IPR* (*q.v.*).

impact See *hit*.

incantation *n.* A small piece of *source* code that appears in most programs written in a given language. Most programmers will use the sequence out of habit, and often without thought or understanding in the hope that it will ward off evil spirits and bugs. One example is:

```
BALR  *,R12
USING R12,*
```

The term is also used for any piece of expert manipulation required of a user or reader to get access to a privileged system function or information.

incent *v.* To motivate with the carrot. [A horrible term, but perhaps it is preferable to "Incentivize"!]

increase *n.* An addition to one's salary. "Your performance will have a direct effect on your increase."

incredible *adj.* A famous memo issued by FE management suggested the word "Incredible" as a possible alternative to the term "Bull" and its derivatives, which apparently was being over-used in meetings. Thereafter, the exclamation "Incredible!" could be heard ringing through the halls, accompanied by merriment from those understanding the translation, and expressions of bewilderment from the others.

individual *n.* Person. As in: "Several individuals are upset by this". IBM always respects the individual.

inflatable buildings *n.* Temporary buildings. A term used in Poughkeepsie (where there are lots of them) because they go up so fast.

Information Asset Security *n.* The protection of ideas, programs, information, and inventions. Also used (usually as the abbreviation **IAS**) to refer to the people involved in enforcing this protection. See *security*.

Information Support Staff *n.* A group of people alleged to exist in various locations to help other IBMers actually get computer access. A rule of thumb: if the telephone number is published, then whoever answers will most likely be unable to help. (There is a general truth here: someone with real skills will have moved on to something better. And will **not** publicise his or her telephone number as then it would be impossible to get any work done.)

informatize *v.* To pass information to. "Can you informatize your people before we announce?" See also *level set*.

inherently familiar *n. user-friendly* (*q.v.*).

inking engine *n.* That part of a computer printer (especially ink-jet printers) that is concerned with getting ink (or "toner") onto the paper.

innovate 1. *v.* To change for the sake of change, preferably making previous programs or systems malfunction. **2.** *v.* To introduce a new product at least three years behind the competition.

in-plan *adj.* Of a task: formally agreed to and planned to be accomplished by some date. What marketing wants. In general: What somebody else wants. See also *out-plan*.

insipidize *v.* To dull. Usage (mostly in marketing departments): "Our claims have all been insipidized by Legal."

inspection *n.* A meeting in which the design or implementation of a product or document is reviewed in detail. Generally, there are three levels of inspection for a product. The first, usually called "**I0**" (*eye-zero*), takes place when the specifications of the product are complete. The **I1** inspection reviews the design of the product. The **I2** checks the actual implementation (in the case of a code inspection, every line of code is scrutinised). An inspection is chaired by a Moderator (usually from a Product Assurance department) and comprises the author or authors of the object being inspected together with at least an equal number of independent reviewers.

install *n.* The process of installing a machine, including making connections to it, loading any required software, and testing the completed installation. As in: "Who's doing the install?"

intelligent *adj.* Programmed or programmable. The document: *IBM Publications Guideline: Style* (ZZ27-1970-0) prohibits use of this adjective in external publications. It recommends the use of "programmed" instead. For instance, one should not write: "This department is full of intelligent people" but rather: "This department is full of programmed people".

interactive *adj.* Modern. Usually associated with typing at CRT display terminals. Supposed to carry the connotation of fast, pleasant, and making full use of "modern" techniques and technology. Usage: "Of course, we will follow up with an interactive version".

interface 1. *v.* (Of humans) To talk. "I'm going to interface to Joe Bleh, the new DP Manager". **2.** *v.* (Of machines) To connect. "I'm going to interface the black box to the [big] blue box". **3.** *n.* A legally defined and documented place on an IBM machine or program where someone can attach another machine or program, of any manufacture. Programmers often call this a *user exit*.

Interim Plan *n.* Two Interim Plans (Summer and Winter) are placed between the *Spring Plan* and the *Fall Plan*. These plans are timed in order **a)** to review and refine the hurried results of the previous Spring or Fall Plan, **b)** to add project items "forgotten" in the previous plan (now that no one is looking), and **c)** to ensure full employment of the bureaucrats responsible for devising the plans.

internal *adj.* Internal or proprietary to IBM. Usage: "We use the internal version of that – don't you?"

interrupt *n.* An event that interrupts the normal flow of control in a program or software system. "The timer interrupt is used for sampling the execution profile of the application."

interrupt mode *n.* The state of only being able to react to events rather than anticipating or guiding them. As in: "I'm in interrupt mode all the time these days; never get a chance to do anything creative".

IPL (*eye-pee-ell*) *v.* To Initial Program Load. To restart "from square one" after an operating system has crashed. Used to indicate starting anything from scratch, as in: "She IPLs on coffee each morning". Also **IMPL** (Initial Micro Program Load – now an obsolete term), or **IML** (Initial Microcode Load). IML was originally known as "Initial Minnow Load", Minnow being the *code name* for the floppy disk drive on the 370/145 computer.

IPR (*eye-pee-are*) *n.* In-Plant Retiree. Someone who has stopped doing any visible work, but has not done anything wrong so cannot be fired. In the Japanese vernacular this is a "person with a window seat" or a "newspaper reader". When it was difficult to to fire an employee who had retired in place, they were "assigned a window seat" to get them out of the way. In one sales office this usage caught on, and over time the adage to "lead, follow or get out of the way" evolved into "lead, follow or catch some rays". Not to be confused with **intellectual property rights**, another (1985) meaning for the abbreviation. See also *ROJ, gold-coaster, IHR.*

IPV (*eye-pee-vee*) *n.* Intra-Plant Vacation. This is usually a long walk around the work location (plant) to let tempers cool and common sense prevail. Usage: "I think I'll go take an IPV". [This is also used as a verb, but such usage is likely to be misunderstood.]

iron *n.* Computing machinery. Prevalent among hardware people to describe "boxes" (blue or otherwise). Hence **pour iron**, as in: "To some degree, we can 'pour iron' on the problem". See also *big iron, micro iron, old iron, pig iron, push iron, rusty iron, tired iron.*

ironmonger *n.* A derogatory term used by some "pure" software people to designate hardware people. One who makes or sells *iron.* This usage generally indicates that the speaker is ignorant about hardware matters.

Iron Mountain *n.* Permanent "vital records" document storage. "We'll send these files to Iron Mountain". Originally, a *vendor* specialising in securing backup documentation against nuclear attack; now any archival storage. Not a good place to put data you ever want to use again. See also *Wansdyke, Salt Mine.*

IS (*eye-ess*) *n.* Information Systems. The department that manages the computer installations at many IBM sites. Optimists thought it stood for "Information Services" until they became users.

issue *n.* A formal indication from one group to another that the first is dissatisfied with some action by the other, and is prepared to take the matter to the next level of management to resolve the problem. Issues are often *solutioned.* See also *concern, exposure, non-concur.*

Ivan Fredin Expressway *n.* The series of corridors that connect buildings at the Endicott Plant at the third floor level. One can cover more than 600 meters in a straight path running through seven buildings; it can take 20 minutes to walk from one end to the other. Ivan Fredin was the Endicott Plant General Manager in the 1960s.

ivory letter *n.* See *blue letter.*

jaws chart *n.* A planning graph portraying time on the horizontal axis against resources or volumes, *etc.*, on the vertical axis. Two lines, representing the planned or projected requirement and the actual resources available, inevitably leave a wedge-shaped gap reminiscent of an alligator's open jaws. This *delta* (*q.v.*) is often labelled by the lower echelons as "shortfall" and by senior management as "opportunity".

JCL *n.* Job Control language. This was one of IBM's earliest attempts to make computing easy – JCL has only five command verbs. Unfortunately, one of these verbs has grown to have at least 192 different modifiers. [Probably 200, by the time you read this!] See *command language.*

JESplex (*jezz-plecks*) *n.* Another word for CEC, the *central electronics complex* of olden days. JES stands for Job Entry Subsystem. This is heard frequently on Myers Corners Road, in Poughkeepsie, where some people still fondly believe that all mainframes run the MVS/JES operating system. (In fact, it's fewer than half.)

job rotation *n.* Moving people from one job to another. A management strategy commonly used when a new and creative manager takes over a department that has many people who have been sitting at the same desk for too long. A policy of job rotation is initiated, so that the old hands can be moved to new jobs (usually good for them and for the company). Unfortunately, for consistency, the rotation rules also have to be applied to the new blood that replaces them, and the resulting insecurity is not always advantageous.

joggle *v.* To shake or disturb slightly. Once used to describe the technique for squaring up a deck of punched cards, it now refers to agitating a person into doing a task or making a decision.

joint study *n.* A study made in conjunction with a customer to try out a program or piece of hardware during the development cycle. This is one of the best ways to ensure the quality of a product, as it gets used by real users. The customer gets the benefit of having his problems solved earlier than he might otherwise expect, and IBM gets the benefit of hearing about the customer's experiences (so long as somebody listens).

jumper **1.** *n.* A removable small wire or plug connecting two pins that modifies an electrical circuit to affect some function. For example, to change the address by which a peripheral device is known. Now largely superseded by micro switches and "software jumpers". **2.** *v.* To place or remove one or more jumpers. As in: "Is this card jumpered for high speed or low speed?"

k, K *adj.* 1000 or 1024. The lower-case "k" is the internationally agreed abbreviation for the prefix "kilo" (as in kilometre, kilogram, meaning 1000 metres or 1000 grams). The upper-case "K" is never the correct abbreviation for "kilo", and has come to mean the number 1024 (two to the power of 10). Computer memory (storage) is addressed by binary encoding so this is a convenient unit, close to the familiar 1000. Hence 64K + 64K = 128K (= 131k, approximately). See also *m, M.*

kahuna (*ka-hoo-na*) **1.** *n.* A Hawaiian witch doctor. **2.** *n.* An expert in some narrow field of endeavour, or one who runs things. A top expert is a **big**

kahuna. (Kahunas have much understanding of the conflict of "K" *versus* "k".) See also *guru*.

Katzenbox *n.* A corrugated cardboard records box (approximately 280mm by 305mm by 400mm). These once had "IBM" printed on all four sides, but now only have print on one end, stating `DIV NO.`, `DEPT NO.`, and `BOX NO. .. OF ..`. The name originated in January 1969 when the U.S. Government brought anti-trust charges against the IBM Corporation claiming that IBM had a monopoly in the data processing industry. Thereafter, tons of papers purported to show the way IBM conducted business in the USA had to be stored as evidence by order of IBM's chief counsel Nicholas deB. Katzenbach. The boxes are now used mainly for moving possesions between offices, or for permanent temporary storage. Also **Katzenbach box**.

Kenmore Card *n.* The first edition of the System/370 Extended Architecture Reference Summary, which had its title laid out so it accidentally spelled out "SEARS". "Kenmore" is the brand name for a number of Sears' products.

key *adj.* Important. Derived from the old term "key part" in theatre, it is used when the speaker cannot explain why it is important. "It's absolutely key."

keyboard *v.* To enter data by pressing buttons on a computer input device. This was originally used to describe the work of card punch operators, now applied to any relatively large scale data entry work. "We are keyboarding the Oxford English Dictionary in Florida."

key off and key on *v.* To reset a machine by the use of its on/off key. This does not necessarily remove power from the machine, but may well re-initialise its hardware and software. Usage: "Why don't you key off and key on that 6670 and see if that fixes it?" See also *Big Red Switch, POR, Poughkeepsie reset, power cycle*.

keys to the kingdom *n.* The access authority that allows control of special, usually privileged, functions in an operating system. Often has the form of a password needed for maintaining the system, correcting problems, *etc.*

kick-off meetings *n.* An epidemic of meetings early in the year, originally in the marketing divisions, when senior managers seek to persuade their staff to face the year's challenges. Usually the only time such managers are actually seen in the flesh (apart from award conventions). Can be relied upon to provide a reasonable lunch.

In small countries kick-offs take place in the first week of January. In larger countries there may be a delay of a month or more while the managers ensure they still have jobs, and find out who the customers are, following the latest annual reorganisation.

A modern trend is to have a minor show-business celebrity, carefully selected for total ignorance of IBM and its jargon, to compere [introduce and tie together the parts of] the meeting. This is to encourage more attention to *end users*.

kill a tree *v.* To generate a large quantity of printed material. A sardonic way to refer to the running of a program that prints indefinitely or produces a timing chart for a hardware simulation run. See also *sequoia, three-tree report*.

killer machine *n.* A *service machine* that checks for idle *userids* and forces them off the system. Killer machines usually just stop other service machines (especially the newly installed ones which did not make it to the exclusion list), since canny users quickly learn to run a looping *exec* to avoid the chop.

King Kong *adj.* Of a program: large, unwieldy, and bug-infested. See also *Mickey Mouse*.

kipper *suffix.* A measure of the speed of desk-top 370s and *minicomputers* that do not manage to achieve a million instructions per second. A "KIP" is a thousand (kilo-) instructions per second (see note under *MIPS*), hence a "300-kipper" is a machine that runs at 0.3 MIPS.

KIPS (*kips*) *n.* Thousands of instructions per second. Derivative of *MIPS*. See also *kipper*.

KISS Principle *n.* "Keep It Simple, Stupid". Usually quoted when developing a product in restricted time, *e.g.*, due to marketing pressures. Not usually adhered to by software development teams, once the first release has been shipped. This usage is distorted (or vice versa) from the marketing guideline "Keep It Short and Simple", intended to hone presentations.

kit **1.** *v.* To collect in one package all the parts needed to build some machine or subassembly. One person (rather than an assembly line) then does the whole job of assembling the item. This manufacturing process is called "kitting". **2.** *n.* (When used in the *field*) Any piece of IBM hardware or set of boxes. As in: "We must get the kit in by Friday to beat the installation time record".

KLOCY (*kay-loc-year*) *n.* Thousands of lines of code times the number of years that the code has been in use. A measurement used in estimating service workloads. See *k, line of code*.

kludge (to rhyme with *stooge*, not *fudge*) **1.** *n.* A quick-and-dirty *fix*; a clever but inelegant solution. Often applied to one's own work in self-deprecation. This is derived indirectly from the German *klug*, meaning "clever". [This sense is not originally IBM jargon, but is included here by popular demand. It is interesting to note that the probability of the incorrect pronunciation (to rhyme with *fudge*) increases with the square of the distance from Cambridge, Massachusetts.] **2.** *n.* Something large and complicated.

known *adj.* Almost ready for Announce. As in: "Yes, that's a **known requirement**" (emphasis on "known"), *i.e.*, "We are working on that, but we can't announce it yet, so you'll have to read between the lines".

known restriction *n.* A bug which was discovered after installation/shipment of a system, but which cannot be described as a feature, and which is so deep in the machinery that it will take a major re-write (and hence be very costly) to correct. "Yes, it wasn't meant to work that way. It's a known restriction."

Koala Park *n.* IBM Australia's Headquarters at Cumberland Forest, New South Wales. A reference to a wildlife sanctuary about a kilometre away. Koalas' most favoured occupations are eating and sleeping. See also *Foil Factory*.

lay down *v.* To install a new version of a program by copying it from a distribution tape to a disk. Usage: "I've got to lay down the new release of VM today". There is little analogy with the laying down of vintage port – a given version of a program never improves with age [though it may seem to throw a crust].

layer *n.* A collection of hardware or software that can be considered to form a layer within the structure of an operating system or *architecture*. Conceptually, layers are smoothly overlaid on each other with a clean interface between each, as in an onion. Upon detailed inspection, however, it will be seen that the globe artichoke is often a more accurate model. In the late 1980s, *SAA* was described in terms of a number of layers, labelled by colours. See *black layer, blue layer, green layer, red layer, yellow layer*.

layered architecture *n.* An Architecture in which a set of sections is defined, each section ("layer") representing a distinct logical function. In theory each layer covers (and hides) the machinery of lower layers, so you only need to know the highest layers necessary to perform the function you require. In practice you usually still need to know about all the layers to get anything to work, since all the interfaces are exposed – which rather defeats the intention.

leading-edge *adj.* At the forefront of innovation and technology. Used to describe *technology* that is four years out of date and is therefore mature enough to be used in a product.

leave the business *v.* To leave IBM. See also *terminate*.

Legal *n.* The local legal department (now usually given a grander name). As in: "Better pass that by Legal before using it!"

letter of understanding See *document of understanding*.

level *n.* A number assigned to each job or position that indicates the seniority and salary scale of the employee filling that position. Like salary figures, a person's level is considered a private matter unless that person wishes to discuss it. However, many job titles correspond directly to specific levels.

level one *n.* The first level of customer support, the person who first handles a problem. If a customer has a *real* problem, he has to somehow get the level one person to refer the problem to a real *guru*, the level two support. If IBM also considers the problem significant, the customer may then be **level two'd**.

level one miracle *n.* An occasion when, on calling a *level one* (*q.v.*) support group, the Level One person solves the problem immediately. This is becoming far more common than it used to be as the databases and information systems available to the support groups continually improve. See *RETAIN*.

level set *v.* To get everyone to the same level of knowledge or background to be used as a base for further progress. That is, to give a short talk to define terms, *etc.* "Before you start, let's level set everyone".

leverage 1. *n.* Commercial advantage. As in: "We could use bipolar or CMOS. John, what's the bipolar leverage?" **2.** *v.* To lever (upwards). As in: "Let's leverage sales of our project by tying it to the others".

lightning bolt *n.* A warning signal that looks like a flash of lightning. It is used on the IBM 3270 range of terminals to signify a communication error. For example "lightning bolt 505" probably means that the system to which you are (were) connected just crashed. Also called **shazam**, a magic word used by the comic-book figure Billy Batson; when he spoke it, lightning struck him and transformed him into Captain Marvel. See also *green lightning*.

light pipe *n.* A cable made from a fibre optic bundle. As in: "We're putting a light pipe between building 24 and building 9".

limited duty sticker *n.* A device added to an employee's badge to indicate a member of the Quarter Century Club [open to those who have been employed by IBM for 25 years or more].

line, the *n.* The boundary between storage whose address is greater than or equal to 16777216 (16 *Meg*, hexadecimal 1000000) and storage whose address is less than 16777216 (below the line). Since the original System/360 architecture used short (24-bit) addresses, much software was written with the assumption that no addresses could be higher than 16777215. With the introduction of XA (extended architecture), some machines allow 31-bit addresses, but very many programs are unable to make use of the storage above the line, due to earlier assumptions. "The interpreter is written for 31-bit addressing – why can't it run above the line?" Also used to describe the 640 Kilobyte line in the IBM PC address space.

line item *n.* A major part of a new release of a (usually software) product. One of the highlights.

line management *n.* Lower levels of management. Those levels between the speaker and the listener. "You should take this matter up with your line management." As with following the line in a strictly hierarchical menu or file system, following a management line (chain) can often introduce delays and frustrations. See also *first-line manager, nonlinear*.

linend *n.* The End-Of-Line character. In *EBCDIC*, each line (where not directly supported by the file/storage system) is ended by a single character, the linend. This is equivalent to the various combinations of Carriage Return and Line Feed used in ASCII. "Linend" may refer to the EBCDIC code `'15'X`, or it may refer to a displayable character that translates to the true line end (such as the number sign, also known as the hash sign, *pound sign*, octothorpe, or tic-tac-toe sign).

line of code *n.* A line of a program that contains information (*i.e.*, excluding blank lines, *etc.*). A measure of programmer productivity or program complexity. Many people still estimate the complexity of a program by the number of lines of *code* (*q.v.*) that it contains. There is certainly some approximate correlation between the number of lines of code, the number of bugs to be expected, and the time it takes to write the code. These measures are more or less independent of the language of the code, so that (for example) 1000 lines of Assembler Code will take as long to write as 1000 lines of PL/I, and be approximately as reliable (though the Function provided may be less). Fortunately, this relationship is becoming less true as languages improve and become better engineered for human use.

The terms **loc** (*lock, loke*) and **kloc** (*kay-lock, kay-loke*) are also used to refer to one or a thousand lines of code respectively.

link *n.* A network connection between two machines. Usage: "Is that link down again?"

lion food *n.* Middle management or headquarters staff. This usage derives from the old joke that goes something like this: Two lions escape from a zoo and split up to improve their chances, after agreeing to meet after two months. In due course they meet again. One is skinny, but the other is somewhat overweight. So the thin one asks: "How did you manage? I ate a person once, and they came

searching the whole country for me. Since then, I have had to eat mice, insects, and even grass". "Well," answers the obese one, "I hid near an IBM office, and preyed a manager a day. And they never noticed." See also *food chain*.

listing 1. *n.* A hardcopy (paper) print-out, usually of a program or algorithm. **2.** *n.* The assembler- or machine-language part of such a print-out.

load *n.* A person who stands in the way of production, and who generally slows down the work rate of everyone else. The term is derived from electrical engineering, and corresponds to the popular "weak link" concept. Most commonly heard in East Fishkill, as in: "That person is a real load".

load-and-go 1. *v.* To run a program in a single step that links its components together and then runs the complete module. "Can you load-and-go a module in this system?" **2.** *adj.* Easy to get started, so that you can just walk up and use the equipment. As in: "This is a load-and-go system: you just load it down and go to the phone to order more software".

lobotomy 1. *n.* The process whereby employees "with management potential" are taught the meaning of life, management, and everything. Commonly used by both management and others, this term implies that the student will, on return from the course, no longer act like a real person and will have lost the capability of independent action. "I had my lobotomy last week, so don't ask me why – just do it." **2.** *n.* The logical disconnection of the two halves of a 3084 or a 3090-400 processor. "You mean that after it has been lobotomized, one could IPL VM in one half and MVS in the other?"

locked and loaded *adj.* Of a disk drive: ready for use. Refers to the steps involved in preparing to use a removable hard disk *file*. First the disk is placed on the drive and locked into place, and then the "Load" button is pressed. This closes the drive (if necessary), brings the disk up to operating speed, and finally loads the read/write *head*. [A reader recalls an Army usage of this term, for a rifle that was ready to fire. Unfortunately, since the term referred to locking a magazine of twenty bullets into place, it was applicable only to an M-16 rifle, and not to a Winchester.]

logo software *n.* PC software sold under the IBM logo [logotype], which may or may not have been written within IBM. Software marketed by IBM but under a different company logo is called non-logo. For instance, Digital Research Dr. Logo is a non-logo Logo.

long pole in the tent *n.* An activity that is on, or nearly on, the critical path in a schedule. When an organization is involved with other contractors in a large project (as in Aerospace), it is Highly Undesirable for any of that organization's tasks to become the long pole in the tent. Presumably this derives from the principle that the long pole is under the most stress, and (more importantly) is the most visible. "We don't want IBM to be the long pole in the tent on this one".

Lookie *n.* The familiar name for BookManager, an *online* document consultation product that provides documentation in *softcopy* form. By analogy with *Bookie* (*q.v.*).

loop *n.* See *closed loop*.

loss review *n.* A marketing division procedure, used to determine why a customer selected a supplier other than IBM. A meeting to avoid, if at all possible.

lots of MIPS, no I/O *adj.* Of a person: technically brilliant but lacking in social and communications skills. Literally: lots of processing power but no Input/Output. See *MIPS*.

low acoustics *n.* Quietness. From the 9370 *blue letter*: "The rack-mountable IBM 9370 processor is uniquely designed for an office environment, having low floor space and power requirements, low acoustics, and an attractive, modular, systems package."

low cost application platform *n.* Some kind of operating system. The exact meaning of this has not yet been discovered; it was used in a product announcement to refer to a System-Programmerless operating system to which you can add other [high-cost?] program products according to your requirements.

LSD *n.* An abbreviation used (in Marketing Education classes) to refer to improper behaviour on business premises. Stands for Liquor, Sex, and Drugs. The LSD lecture usually comes in the second week of the first marketing class in Dallas. One happy anecdote refers to this item: "In 1964 my first manager was lecturing me about the proper conduct of an IBMer (not that I especially needed it). Referring to the 'S' of 'LSD', he said that this sort of activity was 'forbidden on company time or furniture'." [So where *do* little IBMers come from?]

lunatic fringe *n.* In Marketing, customers who will always take Release 1 of any new IBM product. The opposite of *dinosaurs*. See also *ESP*.

m, M *adj.* The lower-case "m" is the internationally agreed abbreviation for the prefix "milli" (as in millimetre, meaning 1/1000th of one metre). The upper-case "M" is the international abbreviation for "Mega", meaning 1000000. Confusingly, in the computer industry, the "M" is also used to mean 1048576 (1K times 1K.) See *k, K*. When used in the form **MByte** it almost always means the latter, but in other contexts its meaning is usually chosen to benefit the writer.

machine check *n.* A failure in the basic hardware of a computer. Automatic recovery is usually, but not always, possible. Also known, more loosely, as a *check*.

machine code *n.* The lowest level of instructions formally defined as being understood and acted upon by a computer. There may be lower-level instructions (*microcode*) understood by a particular computer implementation, but machine code is the level that will be common across a series of machines, such as the System/370 line. See also *code*.

macro *n.* A template (with parts that can be included or skipped by programming) that produces text by plugging the macro's arguments into slots in fixed text. The resulting text is then either considered as programming language instructions (in assemblers or compilers), final output text (as in text formatters), or as commands (system, editor, or program macros). In IBM it was, until 1979, fashionable to write macros in outlandish and preferably unreadable languages, usually abounding with characters that are awkward to type on standard keyboards. This makes it appear very skilful to write macros, when in fact the main attributes required are those of good humour and considerable patience. See also *&*.

magic, FM *n.* A comment on a problem that solves itself. As in: "Things were crashing all over the place earlier, but hey, FM, everything cleared up." [The "F" modifier here cannot be found in certain "unabridged" dictionaries; it can, however, be

. located in any good English dictionary, between
. *Frustration* and *Fulfilment*.]

mainframe *n.* A large computer, usually shared between many users. Originally referred to the central processing unit of a large computer, which occupied the largest or central frame (*rack*). Now used to describe any computer that is larger than a *minicomputer*.

Mainframe City *n.* Poughkeepsie, New York. Where most of IBM's large computers (*mainframes*) are designed.

manager 1. *n.* Within IBM, strictly defined to mean an individual who has other employees directly responsible to him or her. Thus: "Ms Smith is the Manager of Mr Jones". **2.** *n.* A title sometimes given to a person who needs to sound important (to himself, herself, or others) but who is not important enough to have anybody working for him or her. Thus: "Mr Fortescue-Smythe is the Manager of Corporate Tiddlywink Sponsorship Programmes".

manager without portfolio *n.* An employed but unemployed manager. The term follows from the "Minister Without Portfolio" in the British Cabinet.

man-month *n.* An arbitrary unit of work (see Brooks, *The Mythical Man-Month*). Equivalent to the amount of work that an "average" programmer could do in one calendar month. May or may not take into consideration time spent in meetings, technical exchanges, vacation, holidays, illness, travelling, paperwork and design flaws. It is of course assumed that if one person could complete a program in nine months, then by putting another eight people on the job it will be completed in one. Now often called **person-month**. For large projects, the units "Person-Year" and "Person-Century" can find favour.

march along the path *v.* To take the official view of an *issue* (even though not entirely agreeing with it) in order to show unity or loyalty to a particular point or strategy.

mark of Kloomok *n.* Official indication that a product has been released from *PID*. After one M. Kloomok, the signatory to Shipping letters for many years. (The letters are no longer signed.) In one customer memorandum, a person who was trying to emphasise the legitimacy of a product he was referring to stated that it bore "the mark of Kloomok".

. **master** *n.* The (or a) primary copy of a *conferencing*
. *facility* (*q.v.*) disk that has one or more duplicates
. (*shadows*) at remote locations. "You can get the full
. version from the master." See also *catcher, pitcher*.

. **math-out** *n.* A piece of work so full of mathematics
. that the reader cannot see anything meaningful
. anywhere. (By analogy with "white-out".)

Maytag mode *n.* The behaviour exhibited by an 8809 tape drive in streaming mode, when attached to an inadequate or distracted CPU. The continuously back-tracking horizontal reels uncannily resemble washing machine agitators; the 8809's "top-loading" configuration just strengthens the analogy. The term sees common but clandestine usage in some Customer Support Centers. ["Maytag" is the brand name of a washing machine (and other white goods) produced in the USA and known for their reliability.]

Meg *n.* Megabyte. As in: "This program needs two Meg to run". "Meg" does not usually have a different plural form. See *m, M*.

message war *n.* The long and monotonous conversation between two *service machines* (*q.v.*) resulting from an implicit assumption by both that the other is a human (and thus in need of guidance). The messages can usually be translated into English as "I did not understand what you said", repeated *ad nauseam* by both sides. If the message is short and the response time between the two machines is also short, the conversation can rapidly overload the network or the processors involved.

MFR *n.* Memorandum For the Record. A generally secret broadside against some other party, which rationalises one's own position for posterity in local files. Where heavily used, the accumulated collection forms a remarkable work of fiction. MFRs are favoured *CYA* items since there is no possibility of refutation.

. **mickey** *n.* One unit of displacement for a mouse.
. Used in the industry for some time, but made "offi-
. cial" in OS/2, where a system call is named
. "MouGetNumMickeys". [Perhaps one day the
. "disney" will become a unit of measurement for
. animated graphics?]

Mickey Mouse 1. *adj.* Of a program: expected to be small, easy to write and usually of only temporary importance. For example, a program to fix an error in a data file caused by a bug in another program. Naturally, Mickey Mouse programs tend to last longer, get bigger, and in their turn do more damage than the official programs written in the first place, thus turning into *King Kong* programs. Use of this term is inadvisable in the Emerald Isle [Ireland]. See also *toy*. **2.** *adj.* Unnecessary. Used when complaining about bureaucratic harassment, as in: "not *another* Mickey Mouse form to fill in!"

microcode *n.* Any software the customer cannot get his hands on. Originally used to refer to the instructions (embedded in the hardware) that are at a lower level than the machine architecture instructions. With the advent of *RISC technology*, and the increasing number of products shipped *OCO* (*q.v.*), the distinction between microcode and other *code* – already hazy – has almost completely gone.

micro iron *n.* Any 370 architecture machine hiding under the covers of a personal computer. This term has arisen mainly due to the announcement (on 18th October 1983) of the XT/370 – a System/370 processor plugged into an IBM PC-XT – followed in 1984 by the announcement of the AT/370. See also *pig iron*.

mid-air *adj.* Unsound. Used to describe a technologically or financially shaky project, as in: "That's a mid-air project". This is a reference to the phrase "feet firmly planted in mid-air" (rather than on the ground).

migration *n.* A movement from one level of a product to a newer level, or to an alternative *strategic* product. Migration is often needed, even if the currently installed products are viewed as being completely satisfactory, so that continued support will be possible. Subtle "incentives" such as "If you do not migrate we will be unable to support your installation" can be applied to prod a customer or internal user into making the change. Hardware migration comes in three flavours: "horizontal", where one changes to a model of the same size in the new range of machines (for instance, from 3090-200E to 3090-200S), "vertical", where the change is for a bigger model in the same range (3090-200E to 3090-400E), and "diagonal", where

the change is for a bigger model in the new range (3090-200E to 3090-400S).

milk a mouse *v.* To pursue an *issue* which is trivial, inconsequential, or uninteresting. Most often used in a meeting where a much larger and more important issue is to be discussed.

minicomputer *n.* Any machine with a non-370-compatible architecture that runs under 3 MIPS. Also **mini**. [This definition is rapidly evolving, due to the announcement of the 9370 office System/370 machines in October 1986.] See also *vector processor*.

minidisk *n.* A portion of a (real, physical) *disk* that is available to a *virtual machine* and which appears to be a real disk device. A virtual disk.

Minnow *n.* A floppy disk used for the initial loading of some System/370 computers. See *IPL*.

MIP-burner *n.* A long-running program. A derogatory term used to describe any piece of software that takes, or appears to take, more time to accomplish something than the end result would seem to justify. Also used to describe any piece of software that responds slowly to requests.

MIP-eater *n.* Any program that uses more than 10% of a shared CPU on behalf of a single user. Corrupt usage – it should of course be "MIPS-eater" (see *MIPS*).

MIP envy *n.* The term, coined by Jim Gray in 1980, that began the *Tandem Memos* (*q.v.*). MIP envy is the coveting of other's facilities – not just the CPU power available to them, but also the languages, editors, debuggers, mail systems and networks. MIP envy is a term every programmer will understand, being another expression of the proverb "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence".

MIPS (*mipps*) **1.** *n.* Millions of Instructions Per Second, a measure of processor speed. Though often used, the term "1 MIP" is incorrect. ("One Million Instructions Per..." What? Year?) **2.** *n.* Misleading Indication of Processor Speed. See also *cycles, throughput*.

mission *n.* A strange word used by IBM powercrats to imply "job", "function", "strategy", or "responsibility". Thus: "It is this division's Mission to produce low-cost widgets". Fighting over the ownership of Missions is a favourite (and in some cases the only) activity of many Senior Executives. "Mission" has the advantage over more mundane descriptive words of implying a certain level of spiritual righteousness about the share-out of the spoils of the fight, and is therefore usually spelt with a capital "M".

mixed case *adj.* Of commentary, system messages, *etc.*: not all in upper case, and therefore easy to read and understand. Usage (prior to REXX, 1979): rare.

mocha *adj.* Enhanced flavour, *i.e.*, a modified and improved version of a program. Approximately equivalent to *chocolate*, though some rate it more highly. Sometimes used in the phrase **mocha almond fudge**, as in early ISIL documentation. See also *vanilla, flavour*.

model *n.* A suffix to the four digit *product number*, used to distinguish different varieties of the same product. The suffix can be numeric, alphabetic, or a combination of both. There is usually no connection between the suffix ordering and the size and performance of the unit. For example, in order of performance, the 3083 computer has models E, B, and J (in this particular case, the letters are rumoured to be the initials of the project manager).

Model A *n.* An *A-Box* (*q.v.*). This term is sometimes used for the person most trusted by a project manager [right-hand person?].

modulate *v.* To change. "Let's modulate our approach to this problem." From the radio engineer's term for sending out a message by modulating a carrier wave.

module *n.* A general purpose noun that can mean almost anything. Some current favourites: a section of code; a package of circuitry containing one or more chips; a unit of instruction; or a temporary building.

Moletown *n.* The Yorktown Heights location (the T. J. Watson Research Center). A reference to the observation that none of the offices or laboratories there have windows. The disease spread to Poughkeepsie and was there incorporated in the 1982 Office Design Standard. See also *outside awareness*.

Mongolian Hordes Technique *n.* A software development method whereby large numbers of inexperienced programmers are thrown at a mammoth software project (instead of deploying a small team of skilled programmers). First recorded in 1965, but popular as ever in the 1990s.

motherhood 1. *n.* Condescension. Used to describe a common attitude of software development groups toward their underlings (*i.e.*, the users of their software). It is attributable to the observation that designers often believe their creations to be the "ultimate solution", to which no possible improvement could be conceived. "Why don't they distribute source code?" – "Motherhood, pure motherhood". **2.** *n.* Something that is good and true (*cf. fatherhood*) and should not raise any objections. For example: "I'll start the pitch on testing our software with some motherhood about why testing is good".

move *n.* A relocation (movement) of an IBMer from one office to another, either to a new building or (more often) to somewhere in the same building. As in: "Has the move been delayed again?" A move takes a minimum of two days of an employee's time: half a day to pack up all the accumulated material (junk) from desks and cabinets into fold-up cardboard or plastic boxes; a quarter-day to cut out little squares and rectangles and tape them into a model office so the movers know where to put the furniture when it is moved; half a day, once the furniture has been physically moved from one office to the other, to move it around to where it is actually wanted (rather than to where you said you wanted it or where the movers left it); three-quarters of a day to unpack the boxes back into the furniture – taking care to re-read all those gems that only get read after an office move.

movers and shakers *n.* Those people who wear the *power suits* (*q.v.*). Usually (but not always) the people whose ambition is only surpassed by their egos.

MSG (*message*) *v.* To communicate via a computer-transmitted message, rather than by telephone. Usage: "MSG me when you are ready to go to lunch".

MSSB *n.* Multiple Suppliers Systems Bulletin. A memo used as a scare tactic on customers rash enough to try using a non-IBM component in an IBM system or network. It is said that once one was issued to a UK customer who tried (and failed)

to link an IBM mainframe host to an IBM office device using IBM modems. The story goes that the IBM response to the problem was that the 20 metres of wire linking the two modems was not IBM provided.

Mud Flats *n.* The Myers Corner Laboratory, near Poughkeepsie. From the geography of the land on which it was built. See also *Orchard*.

multiplex *v.* To switch one's focus between several tasks that are competing for attention. This lets one demonstrate the uncanny human ability to totally mismanage a multitude of tasks simultaneously.

multiwrite *n.* Multiple write authorisation for a disk. An especially powerful way of accessing data on VM disks, usually outlawed. Since it allows more than one user to arbitrarily write on a disk, possibly without any cooperation or heed for the other users, it invariably results in mislaid, destroyed, or subtly corrupted data files.

musical systems *n.* A popular game played at some sites where people have userids on many test [and, sometimes, production] systems. The rules are simple: one moves from system to system until one finds a system which stays up long enough to complete the logon procedure.

MVM *n.* Multiple Virtual Memory. The original name for *MVS* (*q.v.*), which fell foul of the fashion of changing "memory" to "storage".

MVS 1. *n.* Multiple Virtual Storage, an alternate name for OS/VS2 (Release 2), and hence a direct descendent of *OS*. [OS/VS2 (Release 1) was in fact the last release of OS MVT, to which paging had been added; it was known by some as **SVS** (Single Virtual Storage).] MVS is one of the "big two" operating systems for System/370 computers (the other being *VM* (*q.v.*)). **2.** *n.* Man Versus System.

naive *adj.* Having never used a particular system or program before. This does not have anything to do with the general experience or maturity of the person. "Ah, but can a naive user use it?" See also *end user*.

naive user 1. *n.* Someone new to the computer game. Usually viewed with a mixture of sympathy and pity. **2.** *n.* A person who cannot chew gum and walk at the same time. (When applied to someone not-so-new to the game.)

Nasty and Cold Division *n.* The North-Central Marketing Division. (Alternative expansion of the abbreviation.) See also *Sunny and Warm Division*.

nastygram *n.* An (unwelcome) error message. This term is used for cryptic and "telegraphic style" error messages, especially when prefixed by an identification sequence that distracts the eye. There is no such thing as a "Friendlygram".

Nathan Hale *n.* An asterisk ("*"). Reportedly from Nathan Hale's remarks before being hanged: "I regret that I have but one asterisk for my country". Usage prevalent only among those with a Neu Yawk or Noo Joisey accent, for various and obvious reasons. [Nathan Hale was a (failed) spy involved in the American War of Independence.]

National Language Support *n.* Support for any language other than American English. The phrase **National Language Enabled** is loosely used to describe any program for which more than a few seconds of thought have been spent in considering the problems of making it work successfully in environments other than the USA. See also *Domestic, nonus*.

needs of the business *n.* An undefined reason for not letting you have something. "No, you can't have five more headcount, because of the needs of the business."

need to know *n.* A reason supplied to justify access to restricted information. This phrase is most often wielded when someone wishes to avoid passing on a piece of information, usually because the information would be embarrassing. "Do you have a need to know?"

net *v.* To send by computer network (rather than by tape or by post). "I'll net you the files tomorrow." See also *VNET, snail mail*.

netiquette *n.* The "good manners" preferred when interacting with other people on a computer network. Netiquette deals with many things, such as the length of distribution lists in PROFS notes, the size of the files sent over the network, the habit of attaching a copy of every note to its reply, the ability to spell, *etc*.

net it out *v.* To precis. A term used (mostly by managers) to denote a strong desire to bypass understanding of a proposed solution in favour of a simplistic quantification of it – as in: "I don't want to understand all the reasoning behind it, just net it out for me". Higher level managers may interchange use of this term with *bottom line* (*q.v.*). See also *crisp up*.

netlag 1. *n.* The time it takes files to travel from one point to another on an electronic network. **2.** *n.* The result of one's internal (biological) clock being out of synchronisation with local time due to working on an electronic network. For example, there is a tendency among European IBMers to live on the USA clock in order to have a maximum working time overlap with their US colleagues. This means that they constantly look as though they just stepped off an overnight flight. **3.** *n.* The discrepancy in file timestamps between the sender's copy and the recipient's copy. See *GMT-friendly*. Due to bugs in transmission software or to systems having trouble adjusting to Summer (Daylight Savings) Time. (There are four changes a year between Europe and North America.)

net-net *v.* To summarise a presentation into less than twenty words. An interjection used by impolite executives to stop a meandering presentation and find out what resources the speaker is really asking for.

netrash (*net-trash*) *n.* Any file with useless contents, sent over a network. The electronic equivalent of junk mail. Some *service machines* are very good at generating netrash, especially those which try to "intelligently" process files aimed at non-existent userids. Service machines have a considerable advantage here, but, alas, humans have been reported to outperform them in a number of cases.

netrock *n.* A strident complaint sent over an electronic network. As in: "You should see the netrocks I'm fielding!"

new news *n.* Something that was left out of the last plan and which is therefore suitable for presentation to management because they will not have heard of it yet. This is distinguished from **old news**, something that even management knows about.

Nice To Have *n.* A good idea, but not absolutely necessary. Usage: "That enhancement seems to me to be a Nice To Have, but how does it bring extra revenue?" See also *business case*.

NIH (*en-eye-aich*) *adj.* "Not Invented Here" or "Not In-House". A hatred of anything new, sometimes almost classifiable as misoneism. Possibly more common inside IBM than outside, though of course IBM's house is larger than most. Also **NITT** (*nit*) Not Invented in This Tower. See also *nonus*.

nit *n.* A task, such as improving the user interface to a program, that has not yet been done and should be *trivial* to do. As in: "That's just a nit – I'll fix it in that spare week before we ship".

no-brainer *n.* An exercise or test which ought to be easy for the student but in practice tends to generate results which indicate that the student has no brain rather than that the test requires no brain.

nocon *v.* To avoid contact. From the abbreviation for "no contact" used by support groups (especially those dealing mostly with telephone enquiries). "He keeps noconning me" implies that the other party is deliberately avoiding your call.

noddy program *n.* A simple program to perform some basic function missing from a larger program. "I have written a Noddy program to display the time the system was IPLed." Named from the simple-minded hero of a popular series of books for very young children (now banned in many educational establishments, having been accused of promoting racism and other undesirable practices). Unlike properly designed and tested programs, Noddy programs always work correctly. (Sometimes also known as "back of an envelope" programs, from the original source document. They used to be written on the back of punch cards until these were made obsolete by virtual cards.)

nodeid (*node-eye-dee*) *n.* The nickname under which a computer is known to the rest of a network. As for a *userid* (*q.v.*), tradition and ancient lore dictates that a nodeid should be made as cryptic, non-mnemonic and difficult to type as possible, although some havens of sanity still survive (BOSTON, PALOALTO, PARIS). VENTA has the unique privilege of being mnemonic to Latin native speakers. [VENTA derives from *Venta Belgarum*, "Town of the Belgae", the Roman name for Winchester, England.] See also *vnetid*.

non-concur *v.* To formally state that one will not support the action (such as a product announcement) of another group. The ultimate threat. Makes any project management quake – grown men have been seen to cry when threatened with this. This is an indication from one group to another that the first is convinced that the second is about to cause a major disaster, and that therefore the first group is prepared to escalate the matter as high as necessary to resolve the problem. See *concern, issue,* and the subtle variation *De-Concur*.

Non-D (*non-dee*) *n.* Non-Disclosure agreement. A document, often a "letter 112", which an IBMer or customer signs to acknowledge the receipt of proprietary information and to promise not to pass on the information to anyone else unless they too have signed an appropriate Non-D.

to go nonlinear **1.** *v.* To escalate a decision or concern to a higher level of management without going though every intermediate level of management. That is, not following the normal line (chain) of management. Derived from the engineering graphical representation of equations or processes that suddenly "blow up". See also *line management, food chain*. **2.** *v.* To have an excessive, almost certainly emotional, response to a situation or stimulus; to show the symptoms of displacement. "I tried to talk to him about that bug in his code but he went nonlinear."

non-strategic *adj.* Embarrassingly superior to that which is *strategic*. It is permissible to attribute defects to a non-strategic project even when nothing is known about it. In GBG (General Business Group) it used to be automatically non-strategic to have a *Big Blue* solution to Office Systems needs.

nonus (*non-you-ess*) *adj.* Outside *Domestic*, especially when there is a difference from the way things are done in the USA. "That's a nonus issue – not my problem." This includes character sets, keyboard standards, national languages, policies, politics, *etc.* Although often pronounced "no-news", it is rarely equivalent to "good news". See also *National Language Support*.

noodle *v.* To think or ponder. Often used to hint that there is no politically comfortable solution, and a creative approach or a joke is appropriate. "Noodle on this overnight?" Probably a back-formation from the colloquial noun meaning "head" (originally a blockhead or simpleton).

no-op, NOP (*no-op*) **1.** *n.* No-operation. An instruction to do nothing (used to fill up space or time during execution of a program). Often used to allow space for later insertion of a break point or *hook*. **2.** *n.* Something or someone ineffective. Usage: "He's the biggest no-op I have ever seen". **3.** *v.* To make ineffective. As in: "I'll no-op that piece of code", or "I'll no-op that group's objection".

no problem found *n.* A colloquialism used by Software/Hardware maintenance people to indicate that they were unable to reproduce the users' problem. Depending on the tone of voice used, a gentle or not-so-gentle way of asking for more information. Also **no trouble found**.

NOSS, nossage **1.** *n.* A message sent using the UK NOSS network. NOSS is the IBM UK National Office Support Service, which is based on VM systems running *PROFS* (*q.v.*). "I'll be out of the office tomorrow, can you send me a NOSS on it?" **2.** *v.* To send such a message. "I'll NOSS you on that later."

not obvious *adj.* A publication editor's benign but ill-informed re-wording of *transparent*. The classic usage was: "The operation of the cache is not obvious [rather than transparent] to the programmer". This kind of rewording tends to cause major riots in the programming halls.

notwork *n. VNET* (*q.v.*), when failing to deliver. Heavily used in 1988, when VNET was converted from the old but trusty RSCS software to the new *strategic* solution. [To be fair, this did result in a sleeker, faster VNET in the end, but at a considerable cost in material and in human terms.] See also *nyetwork, slugnet*.

nucleus *n.* The inner part of an operating system; that part (usually) which is immediately accessible. As the atomic age matures, the term **kernel** is becoming more popular.

NUCON (*new-con*) *adj.* Originally a CMS term for the NUcleus CONstant area, a static area in System/370 addressing page zero. Now also used to describe a programmer who will not (or cannot) write re-entrant code: "He has NUCON mentality". See *nucleus*.

null **1.** *n.* A pointer (storage address) that does not point to a real piece of storage. Often used to mark the end of a linked list of pieces of storage. The null pointer has different values (such as zero or

-16777216) depending on the application or language. **2.** *n.* A character (of value zero) that looks like a *blank* but is not a "real" blank. A blank is real data, originally entered by a person, that has value and should be preserved; nulls are used to fill up areas on a mono-spaced screen that contain no real data.

nums *n.* Short for "Numbers". Salesmen, branch managers, region managers and sometimes even division presidents consider nums their end that justifies any means. Represents the quotas arbitrarily derived at the beginning of a year to motivate the aforementioned people. To "make the nums" is to make quota or (if spoken enthusiastically with gestures of the face – wriggles of the mouth and the eyebrows) to surpass it. It may display the speaker's envy.

nybble *n.* A group of 4 binary digits (Bits) which make up a single hexadecimal digit. Four bits is half a *byte* (*q.v.*), so "nybble" seems an appropriate term for this unit. Also sometimes spelled **nibble**.

nyetwork *n.* A variation of *notwork* (*q.v.*).

obsolete *v.* To make obsolete. Commonly found in the text of edition notices in books, as in: "This major revision obsoletes GHXX-XXXX".

OCO (*oh-see-oh, occo*) *adj.* Object Code Only. A product that is OCO is shipped with only the Object Code (the *text* files produced by compilers). The original source code (often in IBM's internal systems programming language, PL/AS) is not provided. This is partly because no PL/AS compiler is available as a product – as any IBMer who has to write code for customers is painfully aware.

Customers with an MVS background (who have never had source code) see this as "business as usual". Customers who use VM see this as a totally unacceptable way to do business. "We want to fix it in the language it broke in".

October Revolution *n.* The 1986 reorganisation of IBM France.

OEM (*oh-ee-em*) *n.* Original Equipment Manufacturer, a manufacturer who makes a fundamental sub-assembly that others use to build a more complex product. Inside IBM it means "Other Equipment Manufacturer". See *vendor.*

OEMI (*oh-emmy, or oh-ee-em-eye*) *adj.* This is used to precisely identify the System/370 channel to control unit interface (also still known by the name **FIPS60** – a standard which is at least 10 years out of date). The word is derived from the channel to control unit interface OEMI Manual (GA22-6974), in which OEMI means "Original Equipment Manufacturer's Information". (The "I" in OEMI is often misconstrued to mean "interface"; however, "interface" is defined by the United States Supreme Court to mean a physical place where Other Equipment Manufacturers are legally entitled to attach their "Plug Compatible Units". Fortunately for 95% of the world's population, this particular ruling is limited by jurisdiction.)

offering *n.* A product release. As in: "The next offering will have that feature".

offline 1. *adj.* Not *online* (*q.v.*). **2.** *adv.* Later, in private. From the state (not on-line) of a piece of computer equipment not connected directly to the processor for one reason or another. As in: "Let's take that offline". Used by speakers when a question has been asked and **a)** the speaker does not know the answer; or **b)** the speaker has a detailed answer which is probably not of interest to most of the audience; or **c)** the speaker does know the answer, and it is of interest, but does not want to give it in public.

offsite meeting *n.* A meeting not held at an IBM site (location). Meetings are held offsite either for pragmatic reasons or for effect.

old iron *n.* Obsolete IBM equipment, as seen by marketing. In customers' shops, it is barely obsolescent; within IBM internal functions (except marketing demonstration centres) it hasn't even been installed yet. This was applied particularly to the 3277 Visual Display Unit (single-colour, but still unsurpassed for speed of alphanumeric display – but not information transfer – to the user); in IBM UK it used to be traditional to have a mixture of these with English and American keyboards, usually connected to the wrong display control units. But today 3277s are truly old iron. See also *iron.*

one-line fix *n.* A change to a program that is so small it requires no documentation before it crashes the system. Usually "cured" by another One-Line Fix. See also *I didn't change anything.*

online *adj.* Of some peripheral device (printer, tape drive, *etc.*): connected to, attached to, or controlled by a computer (usually a *mainframe*). See also *offline, vary*.

Opel letter *n.* A *Speak Up!* sent to the highest levels of the Corporation. Sometimes seen as **opal letter**. As in: "If he tries to pull that on me, I swear I'll write an Opel letter about it". [The term does convey a vague luminescence, no?] This term may or may not be replaced by the phrase "Akers letter".

open door *v.* To skip one or more levels of management, usually to force the resolution of some grievance. From the "Open Door" programme that allows any employee to escalate a grievance, even up to the Chief Executive Officer if necessary. Usage: "I'll open door him if he blocks my move again". See also *Speak Up!.*

to go open kimono 1. *v.* To reveal everything to someone. Once you have gone open kimono, you have nothing more to hide. (This is the more common sense.) **2.** *v.* To give someone a tantalising glimpse of a project (*i.e.*, enough to get him interested but not enough to give any secrets away). [This is an interesting example of the same jargon having two rather different meanings. This may, and does, cause amusing misunderstandings at times.]

open switch *n.* An unresolved issue. Usage: "Whether we do that or not is still an open switch".

opportunity 1. *n.* A menial task that your manager wants you to do, or a difficult or undesirable assignment. As in: "I have an opportunity for you". Often used in the phrase **opportunity to excel**. **2.** *n.* Problem. "This company doesn't have Problems, it has Opportunities." An opportunity can be a little more positive or optimistic than a simple problem, or if especially large and intractable may be described as an **insurmountable opportunity** See also *challenge.*

orange box *v.* An IBM telephone switching system, developed by the ROLM Division of the corporation (sold to Siemens in 1989). From the ROLM CBX II, 8000 or 9000. The switching system in production before the October 1987 announcement of the IBM 9750 (which is cream white). See also *ROLMan.*

Orchard *n.* The Armonk location. Corporate Headquarters was built on the site of an apple orchard (hence the address: Old Orchard Road, Armonk, NY 10504). Some fruit trees still remain, but it is understood that they have been chemically treated to produce flowers but no fruit. This condition is perhaps known as appellation controlee.

organic debugging *n.* A euphemism for some fashionable techniques for "improving" the *Quality* of software. Reportedly, the output from a compilation or assembly of the suspect program is placed on the floor, with a large flat dish on top of it, and an indoor plant in a pot is placed in the centre of the dish. The dish is then filled with water. The principle is that any bugs in the program will be attracted towards the house plant and drown as they try to cross the intervening water. From statistical evidence this seems about as effective a technique as many others currently in use. It is hypothesised that the technique would be even more effective if the house plant were first marinated in Kirsch (*branntwein*), but of course it has been impossible to test this on IBM Domestic (USA) premises.

OS (*oh-ess, oss*) *n.* Any of the operating systems MVS/XA, MVS, SVS, MFT, MVT, or VS1. These operating systems all grew from "OS/360", the first widespread 360 Operating System. The term OS excludes such operating systems as CP/67, VM/370, VM/SP, VM/XA, TSS, RASP, and ACP. See also *Big OS*.

out-plan *adj.* Of a task: desirable but planned **not** to be done. In general: Whatever it is that you want to be *in-plan*.

outredalle (*ootreuh-dahl*) *n.* For EMEA HQ people, the IBM France headquarters; for IBM France HQ people, the EMEA headquarters. The wide plaza at the centre of the Defense district in Paris is known as "la dalle" (a *dalle* is a flat stone used in floors, or, in modern architecture, any flat and horizontal piece of concrete of sufficient dimensions). The EMEA HQ in Tour Pascal and the IBM France HQ in Tour Descartes are located on opposite sides of the plaza, and therefore anybody going from one tower to the other goes across (outre-) the "dalle".

outside awareness *n.* A window. Some IBM offices and (especially) laboratories are totally lacking in windows, but at last someone has noticed that people work better if they can see the rest of the world, so new offices are now sometimes specified to have outside awareness. This radical concept (that programmers require at least 3 hours of direct sunlight every day or their hexadecimals cease to function) is not universal. In Poughkeepsie and Yorktown, engineers are not allowed to see the light. As a reflection of this, a number of signs (with a variety of creative artwork) have appeared on the walls. They usually state some variation on the theme: "I must be a mushroom, because they keep me in the dark, and feed me lots of horse manure". [Of all the world, only IBM employees know less about IBM than journalists.] See *Moletown*.

overflow *n.* A connection that could not be made automatically. A printed-circuit card has a limited capacity for connection, determined by the number of channels for wires between connection points and by the number of *vias* available. For a complex card, it is not possible to embed all the desired connections. Those connections that could not be included in the printed wiring are called overflows, and are connected manually using *yellow wires*.

Overhead Row *n.* The most plush office corridor in a location. This houses the head person (and entourage), whose true power (or ambition) may be gauged by assessing the quality of the wood furniture, the depth of the carpet, and the rarity of the potted plants.

Owego (*oh-wee-go*) See *branch to Owego*.

own **1.** *v.* To have responsibility for, and some degree of control over, a product, project, or data. See *owner*. **2.** *v.* To have responsibility for, but almost no control over, the security of a data processing entity, such as one's personal *userid*.

owner *n.* The person (usually a *manager*, and by extension his or her department), who is responsible for the development or maintenance of a product. Formally, the owner is always a manager; in practice, ownership and some responsibility are delegated to whoever is actually doing the work. Documentation is unusual in that it often has two owners, the book owner and the technical owner (who owns the product being documented).

pack rat *n.* A person who keeps immense numbers of ancient programs around [presumably on a disk, rather than in a den] just in case they may prove useful.

padded cell *n.* A program that limits its user to a finite, and usually small, subset of the capabilities of the computer on which it runs. This is intended to save the user from injury (to person or to pride), or to save the computer or data from damage by the user. Also **padded cell environment**.

paged out *adj.* Not paying attention, distracted. "What did you say? I'm sorry – I was paged out." Refers to the state of a task in a multi-tasking system whose storage chunks (pages) have been moved out of the computer onto some other kind of storage, such as disks. The program is just not all there.

page printer *n.* A printer that prints a whole page at a time, with the ability to represent printers' proportionally-spaced fonts and (usually) illustrations. The IBM version of "APA (all-points-addressable) printer". Note that printers that use datastreams not invented by IBM are not Page Printers.

Pagoda *n.* The IBM Centre in Sydney, Australia. Named after the shape of the awnings adorning the building.

pain in the net *n.* A person whose primary activity seems to be bothering others by sending them *netrash*, either directly or via a *service machine*.

Panda- *n.* A generic name for an object, usually in the form of a prefix. Usage: "That could conflict with PandaCalc". First used generically in the construction "Pandamuffins". See also *Finnoga-, Fred*.

panoota **1.** *v.* To guess or estimate. From IBM Australia; the abbreviation of Pull A Number Out Of The Air. As in: "Let me panoota a figure for you." **2.** *adj.* Estimated or guessed. "It's a panoota number."

paper chase *n.* An officially sanctioned version of the infamous chain letter. (Also **paper game**.) For example, person A sends a letter to person B, copying persons C and D. Persons B, C as well as D may reply, copying each other and incidentally persons E, F, G, H and I. Person A, in self-defence, responds to all, this time via a distribution list including persons B through I and anyone else he

can think of who might be remotely interested. The next step is usually a meeting, to which the persons on the distribution list each invite one or more members of their respective departments.

The process usually runs down when the list of players gets so large that the secretary or program attempting to book the meetings that follow cannot find a time-slot acceptable to all.

parallel *adj.* On a similar path, drawn using a jagged edge, and only slightly divergent from some other path. Usage: "The new documentation will be consistent with and parallel to the existing documentation". See also *transparent.*

paren **1.** *n.* Short form of "parenthesis". Many people have forgotten that "parenthesis" is the real word. CMS users seldom bother to balance them; and many user-written CMS programs report the presence of a closing right parenthesis as an error. **2.** *n.* The character "("; used in conversation to pair with **thesis**. For example, the string "A(B)" might be described as "A paren B thesis". Especially favoured by LISP programmers, burdened by many such. See also *banana.*

parity bit *n.* An extra bit kept in parallel with each byte of memory in the storage of most IBM computers (even [nearly all] PCs). This parity bit states the parity of the remaining eight bits, and so gives a high probability of detecting an error in any given storage location. Of course, it also adds 12.5% more memory that may fail, and somehow it often does seem that only parity bit memory chips fail.

parm (*parm*) *n.* Misspelt abbreviation of the word "Parameter", a variable argument to a program. This is used so universally that "param" sounds silly.

partitioned *adj.* Separated, broken. As in: "When the transatlantic links are down, VNET becomes partitioned". Here, the distinction between "broken" and "partitioned" varies depending on the time of day and whether you are east or west of the partition. [Fog in Channel: Continent cut off.]

part number **1.** *n.* The IBM catalogue number of a spare or replacement part. **2.** *n.* Where English is not the native language, an item which has a part number in an IBM catalogue. You can be asked for or given a "numero de part number" (part-number number). This sense applies only to non-native English speakers. First heard from one of the Essonnes plant managers, but since also from FEs and other people from various European countries. See also *product number, model number.*

passthrough *n.* Any of a variety of methods by which one computer which is receiving messages from a terminal passes them on to a second computer as though the terminal were directly connected to it (and similarly relays messages coming in the opposite direction). Also spelt **passthru**, from the name of one such program. Passthrough requires a program in the first computer to pretend to be a terminal. Having to write such a program is very helpful in making computer buffs experience something of the effect of their work on real people, but sadly the architects and planners who design the data streams never have to dirty their hands and write one.

By implication, passthrough is used from small computers to larger ones, or between peers. Hence **reverse passthrough** is used when a large mainframe computer is used to provide access to a much smaller machine.

patch **1.** *n.* A *fix* applied to a program by adding new *machine code* in an otherwise empty area (often provided specifically for this purpose). Applying a patch was often much quicker than rebuilding the program from *source.* **2.** *v.* To fix a program. Often implies a "quick and dirty" fix. See also *zap.*

path **1.** *n.* The sequence of *hops* (*q.v.*) followed by a file sent from one node to another. The path may appear very strange, at times, since it is chosen according to prevalent link speeds and traffic, rather than on purely geographical constraints. For instance, files have been seen transferred from Kingston to Endicott (both in New York State) via Santa Teresa (in California), and there is one report of files going from Hursley to Portsmouth (both in Hampshire) via Poughkeepsie (New York). **2.** *n.* The channel(s) used by a mainframe to access its peripherals. **3.** *n.* The order of search used by an operating system to locate a program or piece of data. See also *dual path.*

pay for the coffee *v.* To suffer mild pressure. Said to originate from an occasion when a manager, not known for his intra-personal skills or generosity, bought one of his employees a coffee. The employee, surprised, politely thanked the man and headed back to his desk, only to find he had been followed and was now being confronted with a work-related problem. "Sure," he quipped, "now you're going to make me **pay** for this coffee...". See also *tanstaafl.*

PC (*pee-cee*) *n.* The IBM Personal Computer. In order to discourage the persistent innovators who suggested that IBM build yet another desktop computer, they were told to bring it from conception to production in less than a year. The result was one of the most visible (but not the most profitable) successes since System/360. The very unfortunate choice of processor hinders the competition just as much as IBM, but even so the effect of standardisation has been of considerable benefit to those using the machine (or one of its many copies).

PDB *n.* Pastel Denim Binder. One of the few pieces of truly IBM jargon associated with the IBM Personal Computer. Refers to the boxes and binders in which the documentation for the PC is shipped. May be almost any colour.

peach letter See *blue letter.*

peer review *n.* An approval process whereby a design or product is reviewed by the technical peers of the designer or design group. When treated responsibly this is a powerful and effective technique, but all too often it becomes a political skirmish. In this latter case it becomes a game with many players on one side and usually few on the other. The object is for the side with many players to inundate the opposing group (the "peers") with so many facts and figures about the goodness of the design being reviewed, that the second group must just nod in agreement or run the risk of appearing stupid. When played successfully, the members of the second group dare not ask for additional information for fear of being told they had already seen it in presentation form.

pel *n.* Picture Element. One addressable point on a display screen or printed sheet of paper. This is used as a convenient abbreviation (far more logical and easier to say than "pixel"), and also as a measure of screen or printer resolution, as in "16 pels per mm (16ppmm)".

penalty box 1. *n.* A position of low esteem. This term probably derives from Ice Hockey, in which rule-breakers may be required to sit out of the game (in an area called the penalty box) for some specified period of time. Thus, when an executive is transferred from a position of power to one of less power, perhaps after having been associated with a failed project, this may be described as "going to the penalty box". Favoured penalty boxes are Research (see *sandbox*), Group Staff, Quality Coordinator, or Branch Manager of a remote or moribund location. Another technique is to keep the offender at the same location, but put him or her in charge of a less exotic project (*e.g.*, "Productivity" or "Standards"). Variation: "He got five years for fighting". See also *walk in the woods*. **2.** *n.* The OS/2 *compatibility box* (*q.v.*).

penguin *n.* An affectionate term for a member of a Field Support team, when used by Laboratory personnel. Field Support people in some areas wear white shirts, dark suits, and a formal attitude. It's also said that they often walk with a side to side gait (waddle) caused by carrying a tool kit in one hand and an oscilloscope in the other in their Customer Engineer days.

peon *n.* A person with no special privileges on a computer system. "I can't force a new password for you, I'm only a peon on this system."

people *n.* Non-managers, as in: "Only first-line managers deal with people, in IBM". Higher-level managers, it follows, do not deal with people. (Who or what **do** they deal with?)

perfect programmer syndrome *n.* Arrogance. "Since my program is right, there is no need to test it". Or: "Yes, I can see there may be a problem here, but I'll never type SHUTDOWN on the RSCS console when there is a CP read up". [This latter action had the unfortunate side-effect of closing down the entire system, instead of just the communication subsystem (RSCS) if the CP privilege class assigned was too high.]

performance release *n.* A release of a product or internal program put together (usually in a hurry) when it becomes apparent that the previous release was too slow or used too much *resource*. A performance release should show improvements in performance without loss of function.

permanent home *n.* Any IBM building or office in which you will reside for less than one year.

permanent move *n. temporary assignment* (*q.v.*).

permanent recording *n.* The only data that remains on a disk after a *head crash*. Readable only by one or two *gurus* in San Jose.

personal computer 1. *n.* Before 12 August 1981: a computer used by one person, who is local to it and does not time-share it. A catch-all for home computers, hobby computers, the 5100 APL-based machine, professional workstations, some 3031s, and probably a few Cray-1s. **2.** *n.* After 12 August 1981: the IBM 5150, 5160, 6150, *etc.* This has had the predicted major impact on the industry, and an even bigger impact on IBM itself. **3.** *n.* A way to continue business work at home. **4.** *n.* A way to continue game playing when at work. See *PC*.

personalize *v.* To program. As in: "Let's personalize the gate arrays tomorrow". See *burn sand*.

person-month *n.* A fashionable term for *man-month*.

perturbate *v.* To perturb. To cause an undesirable change, usually in a budget or a schedule. Used chiefly by Aerospace Engineer types who have joined IBM some time into their careers. "Joe, how much is this going to perturbate your launch schedule?" [This is the same strange modification to usual English as in the constructions "orientate", "preventative", and "indentate". I suppose that they do help sell storage devices.] See also *hit*.

PF4 *v.* To erase, or destroy. This is derived from the usual effect of pressing the *hardwired* "Program Function key number 4" when running *PROFS* (*q.v.*). As in: "Yeah, I got that request and I PF4'd it!" Note that PF4ing in PROFS only erases the working copy of a document; it does **not** erase backup or other copies of the document.

Phase 0 *adj.* Preliminary. From "Phase 1 review", which is the first official review of a project. A "Phase 0 review" is a preliminary review, often conducted as a trial run for the real Phase 1. Hence, "do a Phase 0 estimate" means "do a preliminary estimate".

pick-and-pray *n.* A multi-choice question in an exercise or test.

PID (*pid*) *adj.* The version of a program as shipped to customers. From Program Information Department. This department is no more, having been replaced by ISD (IBM Software Distribution) and then SMD (Software Manufacturing and Delivery) but the term PID is still very widely used. "These days, we have to run the PID version". See *vanilla*.

PID buffer *n.* A period of approximately three weeks during which a software release matures while at *PID* (*q.v.*). This provides a convenient breathing space during which the developers can discover problems before the software is shipped.

pig iron *n.* Any very large, very fast, mainframe computer (equivalent in cost to a 5 *MIPS* mainframe in 1982). Used as: "Sure that software is slow, but it will sell a lot of pig iron that way." See also *rusty iron, micro iron, push iron*.

pistol *n.* A program whose protection features (if it has any) make it very easy for you to shoot yourself in the foot. Usage: "The DOS COPY command is such a nice pistol!"

pitch 1. *n.* A presentation. "Are you going to the Akers pitch in the auditorium?" **2.** *v.* To present, or attempt to persuade. "Are you going to pitch that to staff someday?"

pitcher *n.* A program that executes at a central site and distributes [sends] programs and data to remote locations. The term comes from a North American game called "baseball". See *catcher*.

PITS (*pitz*) *v.* To register a problem on the Problem Information Tracking System. PITS is an *ad hoc* database system, developed at the Glendale Laboratory at Endicott, that is used for tracking problems during software development. "That looks like a real bug; you had better PITS it."

PizzBoo *n.* The Publishing Systems Business Unit, one of the first to *BiCapitalize* mainframe products. From the usual pronunciation of its abbreviation, PSBU.

placard a balais *n.* Broom cupboard. The empty space in mainframes, often used by CEs to store all kinds of tools and spare parts. It is reported that in civilised countries this space can advantageously be used for the storage of beverages. Sugary drinks, beer, Champagne, and white wine go near the channel cable input to take advantage of the cold air intake by the cable hole in the floor. Red wines can be warmed to an appropriate temperature in the power supply area.

A *Domestic* reader recalls the control unit for the 2305 drum, whose early models had a built-in

. compressor to cool them because the forced room-
. temperature air was not sufficient. This had a space
. next to the cooling coils that was just big enough to
. hold a six-pack [a retail unit of six cans of beer]. At
. some military installations, where the rules on beer
. were less strict than at civilian installations, the
. operations staff were wont to share an IBM-cooled
. can or two with visitors.

planar *n.* A large printed circuit *card* onto or into which other cards are plugged. Known as a "Motherboard" by users of cruder imagery.

planification *n.* Planning [one must suppose]. As in: "This software qualification tool allows the conception, maintenance, planification and execution of sequence tests."

planned personal illness *n.* A minor illness, serious enough to require absence from work, which the victim seems to know about several days in advance. Mostly taken by people who are rarely ill and who feel that they are "entitled" to their fair share of time off.

planner *n.* One whose job is to think about doing real work.

planners' droop *n.* A chronic symptom demonstrated by most *forecast* graphs. It describes the tendency of revenue projection graphs for a given product to show a steep rise for the next 3 years followed by a steep decline. Since falling graphs are anathema to any self-respecting planner, the situation is usually remedied by postulating a *gap product* which will appear in 3 years and keep the revenue graph going upwards. This has the added advantage that the product manager has a superb excuse to explain his need for a further cast of thousands to develop this (hypothetical) product.

plan of record *n.* Plan. A plan of record has by implication extra solidity – though in fact it is the least reliable plan of all, since product plans **always**
. change. Caution dictates that any figures or targets
. in a plan of record, once committed to paper, will
. not be sufficiently "aggressive". Each level of
. management therefore inflates such figures before
. passing the plan up the chain, until it reaches the
. final authority – who sets the numbers or target
. according to some preconceived notion. See also *action plan, whim of record.*

. **plant life** *n.* One who works in a manufacturing
. plant (rather than in a sales or development area).

platform *n.* A collection of machines, often of the same hardware *architecture*, or a family of operating systems or software interfaces. Usage: "We'll build the new cellar management application on a PS/2 platform", or "The communications help facility will be based on an AIX platform".

play *v.* To spend one's own time on a project. As in: "I'm staying this evening to play with the new Fred program". It seems that most really usable software, a surprising amount of revenue, and even more profit, derives from such "play".

play pen *n.* A room where programmers work.

plist (*pee-list*) *n.* Parameter list. A programming mechanism for passing arguments (parameters) from one environment or program to another.

point *n.* A measurement of the IBM list price of a product, originally equivalent to a monthly rental of one U.S. dollar. See also *funny money.*

. **pointing device** *n.* A mouse or light pen.

Pokieland *n.* The Poughkeepsie area. The term is mainly used by people outside Pokieland. [There is also a cave, in northwest Massachusetts, named "Pokie Hole" in honour of Poughkeepsie.]

polysyllabic *n.* Any word of two or more syllables, although in IBM a minimum of four is preferred. "IBM conventional methodology involves the utilisation of polysyllabic utterances to the maximal degree", especially in documents for announcements.

Polysyllabics are also popular in product proposals because they make life harder for the reviewers: the documents take longer to read, the authors' meaning is less clear and therefore harder to refute, and they discourage any comments from foreign IBM laboratories. In skilled hands, the technique can even be used successfully between British and American English speakers.

Example: "CICS/VS offers a functionally superior alternative to CICS-Standard" is longer, more dazzling, and less clear than "CICS/VS works better than CICS-Standard". After all, it might not actually work at all.

pony *n.* Something good that may (hopefully) come out of a bad situation. This refers to an apocryphal story about a hopelessly optimistic boy who was given a barn full of horse manure by his father on his birthday. He immediately grabbed a shovel and started to dig, while chanting "There must be a pony in here somewhere!" Anything is possible if you have Faith.

. **POO** (*pooh*, as in Winnie-the-) *n.* Principles Of
. Operations. See *POP*. This acronym was used
. extensively in FSD (Federal Systems Division) and
. elsewhere in the late 1960s and early 1970s but is
. less often heard since then – probably because so
. few now write programs in *assembler*. Also **mini-**
. **poo** for the *green card*.

POP, POOP, POPs, p.ops (*pops*) *n.* The manual that defines the principles of operation of the System/360 (and, later, the System/370). Probably the best (most rigorous) data processing architecture document ever written, and the source of the Ultimate Truth for many. See also *bible, POO, Princ Ops*.

POR (*pore*) *n.* Power-On Reset. See also *plan of record*. The general reset of a piece or system of hardware that takes place when the equipment is first switched (powered) on. Since all hardware requires this, a power-off followed by power-on can often be used to reset a machine to a known state. See *Big Red Switch, key on/key off, Poughkeepsie reset*.

port 1. *v.* To move a program from one computer to another – and get it to work in the new environment. If it is said that a program is "portable", it is intended to convey the fanciful notion that the program can easily be made to run on a foreign hardware or software architecture. Ease of porting a program is highly dependent on the porter's point of view, increasing in proportion to one's distance from actually working on the problem. **2.** *n.* A hardware interface between a computer (usually a small one) and some peripheral hardware such as a network or keyboard. "The mouse is attached to port 7." [Poor mouse.]

position 1. *v.* To explain or provide context to. As in: "Let me position you on that subject". **2.** *v.* To describe by providing context. As in: "Would you first position XXX for us?"

. **Poughkeepsie Confidential** *adj.* Of a document:
. unavailable. This classification, though unofficial, is
. nevertheless the most secure in IBM. A
. Poughkeepsie Confidential document cannot be
. distributed, even by its author, without management
. approval (even if the manager who approves the

. distribution is junior to both the sender and the
. receiver). See also *IBM Confidential*.

Poughkeepsie reset *n.* An unpublished feature on all IBM data processing equipment, this feature is actually a switch connected directly to the main power source. A flip of this switch (usually named the "ON/OFF switch") will reset 99% of all annoying device problems. However, the trade-off for such a life-saving capability is the probable loss of some existing data or state information. See also *POR*.

pound sign 1. *n.* A name for the symbol "#" (two horizontal lines crossed by two vertical lines). This nomenclature is used in some (but not all) areas of the USA; elsewhere the symbol is known as "the number sign", "the octothorpe", or simply as "hash" or occasionally "hatch"). The musically inclined call it a "sharp", but a convenient way of describing it is "the tic-tac-toe board", or "the noughts and crosses board" (depending on one's heritage). **2.** *n.* The name most often used for the British (Sterling) currency symbol. This is an antique capital L (standing for *libra*, the Latin for "pound"), a cursive "L" crossed horizontally by one or two small dashes. Unfortunately it cannot be illustrated here because of the unpredictability of printing devices. See *currency symbols*.

. **power cycle** *v.* To reset, by removing and then
. restoring the power to a machine. See *Poughkeepsie*
. *reset*.

power eraser dispenser *n.* The ultimate unnecessary feature. See *bells and whistles*.

power suit *n.* The wardrobe worn by the *movers and shakers* (*q.v.*) within an organisation. This (for a man – women dress more subtly) consists of a dark blue three-piece pin-striped suit, a long-sleeved white shirt, the latest in tie design (in 1985 that was a striped tie with the stripes pointing to the left shoulder), a black belt with an inconspicuous buckle, thigh-high socks with colour matching belt and shoes, and black wing-tip shoes. In Texas genuine lizard [or other unconservational leather] cowboy boots may be substituted for the wing-tip shoes. In 1983 blow-dried hair styles and moustaches were also necessary.

power up *v.* To switch on. Usually applied when the switch-on process is complex or involves a number of machines. "Could you power up the system if you're the first in on Sunday?" See also *up*.

prayer meeting *n.* A meeting, usually of a *task force* that is hoping for a miracle to solve some intractable problem. As in: "The Performance prayer meeting starts at Two".

preannounce *v.* To *announce* something (usually a product) before it has been formally approved for announcement.

precurse 1. *v.* To precede in the manner of a precursor; to act as a forerunner or harbinger of an advancing technical evolution. As in: "It is for us to precurse that technology for the rest of the corporation". See also *leading edge*. **2.** *v.* To offer a brief incantation prior to divulging an innovative solution to a problem. *e.g.*, "May the fleas of a thousand diseased camels inhabit your armpits". See *NIH*.

price/performance *n.* An undefined measure of value-for-money. As in: "The XYZ offer improved price/performance".

Princ Ops (*prince-ops*) *n.* A verbal abbreviation for the System/360 (and later extensions) Principles of Operations Manual. Used by the System Architecture group in Poughkeepsie, and others. See also *POO, POP*.

priority list *n.* A dynamic list of things to do, sometimes in a Virtual state, to which is attached a priority pertaining to each item, ranging from "right away" to "probably never". Usage: "I'll put that on my priority list".

It is recommended that if you are on the receiving end of this statement, you should obtain at least an approximate date of completion. This date, of course, you will remember as a definite commitment. See also *time-frame, virtual, wishlist*.

. **proactive** *adj.* Active, not reactive. Used of people
. or policies that take the initiative rather than result
. in *interrupt mode* activity. It is also sometimes
. applied with the sense of "teaching" or "reaching
. out".

Problem Determination Guide *n.* A small booklet allowing one to determine that a non-functioning (read: broken) 3278 or 3279 terminal is indeed non-functioning. Unfortunately, it does not give the slightest hint about how to make it work again. (There is a Problem Reporting Form, however.)

problem state *n.* Doing something for someone else. The System/360 (and 370) architecture recognises two basic "states". One is "Supervisor State", in which the machine is doing work for the supervisor – usually an operating system; and the other is "Problem State", in which the machine is conceptually solving problems for the user. [This is a rather narrow view of the System/370 world, however, as (for example) the VM/SP product makes both states accessible to the user by a little "sleight of virtual machine".]

production program 1. *n.* An application program. This term dates from the days when computers rarely had operating systems, and instead ran just one program at a time, loaded by the *boot* program. If the program did (or appeared to do) something of value, it was called a production program. **2.** *n.* Any program no longer undergoing testing and thought to be safely operational.

production system 1. *n. floor system* (*q.v.*). **2.** *n.* The version of the operating system that you get when you don't do anything special (don't take any risks). This is usually the system being used by the people who are sitting around at terminals and actually being productive.

productize *v.* To give an unfinished piece of software or hardware the appearance and form of a finished product. As in: "Productization is taking place on all levels" [sigh].

product number *n.* The four digit number that identifies every major IBM hardware product. The numbers rarely have any relationship to each other but sometimes some sort of sequence may be followed (*e.g.*, 3350, 3370, 3380 are all disk storage devices). See also *model, part number*.

product tester *n.* Someone who tests products. Those who have been to the mountain; keepers of the word; interpreters of the Specifications. Sometimes disliked by developers, these were the people that really did assure that products were high quality before their *mission* was changed and they became paper-pushers [through no fault of their own]. Research has shown that most were given chemistry sets or electronic kits at an impressionable age by well meaning parents.

professional *n.* An employee who is not a manager. "Our professionals are the best in the business." Often used as an euphemism for "technician".

professors *n.* The staff of the IBM Israel Scientific Centre, at Haifa. A mildly derogatory term used by marketing people in Israel that also implies a grudging respect; a remarkably high proportion of that staff are indeed professors.

PROFS (*profs*) **1.** *n.* Professional Office System. A menu-based system that provides support for office personnel [such as White House staff], using IBM mainframes. Acclaimed for its diary mechanisms, and accepted as one way to introduce computers to those who don't know any better. Not acclaimed for its flexibility.

. PROFS featured in the international news in
. 1987, and revealed a subtle class distinction within
. the ranks of the Republican Administration in the
. USA. It seems that Hall, the secretary interviewed
. at length during the Iran-Contra hearings, called
. certain shredded documents "PROFS notes" [as do
. IBMers who use the system]. However, North,
. MacFarlane, and other professional staff used the
. term "PROF notes". **2.** *v.* To send a piece of electronic mail, using PROFS. "PROFS me a one-liner on that." [A PROFS one-liner has up to one line of content, and from seven to seventeen lines of *boiler plate*.] See also *VNET*.

program manager *n.* A person who is a manager of a project or product but who (by design) has no employees reporting to him or her. See also *card-carrying manager*.

programmer *n.* A machine for converting ideas into practice.

programming *n.* The art of debugging a blank sheet of paper.

progress *v.* To make progress with arranging. As in: "We are progressing your promotion". (Use: Rare.)

proof *v.* To run a spelling checker program against a document. From the VM program called PROOF. Mainly used, in the UK, to check documents before sending them to readers in the USA who are sensitive to British spelling.

protocol *n.* A sequence of events or exchanges of information defined to enable two machines or programs to communicate with each other. This bears slight relationship to the usual senses of this word, but does correctly convey the flavours of solemnity and complexity that are associated with such communication.

prototype **1.** *n.* The first implementation of some idea in the form originally envisioned for it by the original innovator. Generally unrelated in form, function, and cost to the final production version. **2.** *v.* **a)** To implement a working system fast, *i.e.*, by "unconventional" methods. **b)** To implement a "model" system that has to be replaced by a "proper" system later [lest anyone realise how simple programming is].

PSE (*pee-ess-eee*) *n.* Preliminary Sales Estimate. A qualified guess at how many units of a product will be sold. Nobody except a forecaster can explain why this is different from a *forecast*.

PTF *n.* Program Temporary Fix. This is an official IBM temporary fix. The abbreviation is used so often that most people don't know what it stands for. PTFs are permanent fixes in some systems, which has led to the false definition of **permanent temporary fix**.

PTM *n.* Program Trouble Memorandum. The same as an *APAR* (*q.v.*), but generated internally, before a program is shipped. Also known as **PTR** (Program Trouble Report); both are sometimes used as verbs.

pubs **1.** *n.* The Publications (now "Information Development") department of a Development Laboratory. **2.** *n.* The publications (manuals, books, and brochures) associated with a hardware or software product. See *fix it in pubs*. **3.** *n.* The name of a program that provides a user interface to the ProcessMaster product. "I'm a full-time PUBS user now!"

pulse *n.* A temporary change in the level of a logic signal. It is difficult, nowadays, to observe the very short pulses in fast computers with ordinary electronic equipment such as oscilloscopes – the capacitance of the leads connecting the oscilloscope to the computer will degrade and sometimes destroy the information in the signal being inspected. A story from the not-so-recent days of 3033 development is related by an engineer who looked over the shoulder of his colleague and commented "That's a mighty noisy line, Joe". Joe looked up and replied "Them's good bits, Ken". The bits were seven nano-seconds wide.

A pulse that is in the wrong place (and, usually, is shorter than an intentional one) is known as a *glitch* (*q.v.*).

punch *v.* To transmit data electronically from one disk pack to another. Often these disk packs can be around the world from one another but just as often can be the exact same one. A VM/370 term, from the use of a virtual card punch to send data from one virtual machine to [the virtual reader of] another. Usage: "Punch me that jargon file".

purple wire *n.* The wire shipped with a feature change to the IBM 1130 and 1800 Systems. Also referred to as **personality wire**. Used and required to tell the software about the hardware installed on a system, and its address. A change here is Most Frightening to the "Sensor based" Customer Engineer. See also *yellow wire, blue wire*.

push iron *v.* To make a living by selling hardware. Formerly referred to those salespersons who sold only large *mainframe* computers. Also **pump iron**. See also *pig iron*.

put a stake in the ground *v.* To stabilize a fluid or confused situation. For example, to provide a focus or leader for a group effort. Also **put a stake in the grid**.

put in place *v.* To complete. As in: "Do you have the plan of record put in place yet?"

puzzle palace *n.* A building in which the computer room has expanded beyond its original boundaries. Buildings 701, 920, and 921 in Poughkeepsie are prime examples: some aisles dead-end at a printer box-room, and then resume on the other side of the room. This may be adapted from a favoured nickname for the NSA (National Security Agency) in the USA.

qfoic (*queue-foe-ic*) *v.* To display or update the microcode configuration on a 43xx computer. This name comes from the "fast-path" *incantation* used to access the menu for changing UCWs (Unit Control Words).

quad *n.* The character formed of a simple rectangle of lines, used in the APL language for various mysterious purposes. Conjures up memories of glorious University afternoons to many.

qualified *adj.* Of a part (piece of hardware): tested six ways from Monday (*sic*) and approved for use in IBM products. Generally a well known product (such as a TTL "7400" quadruple NAND) whose identity is subsequently disguised behind a twelve-digit IBM part number. Since the original part number is no longer available, the only specifications available are those produced by the Fishkill testing lab – which tend to give no hint of what the part really is.

Quality *n.* A once-popular hot button characterised by the slogan: "*do it right the first time*" (*q.v.*). A laudable aim, pounced upon with glee by product managers who claim that they do their design right, first time, and that therefore testing with real users is obviously a waste of time. In an extraordinary use of English, an official definition of "quality" defines it as *Conformance to Requirements*. [Not in **this** Dictionary!]

. A 1987 Quality poster put it this way: "Quality: A
. place for everything, and everything in it's (*sic*)
. place".

Quality Circle *n.* A group of people gathered together to celebrate the cause of *Quality*, and sometimes to bring forth good ideas for increasing the sum of product quality. Said to be the most perfectly formed closed loop of ideas around which a group can travel continually only to to get nowhere that they haven't been before.

. **quarter 1.** *n.* A three-month portion of a year. The
. unit of time used when a "month" is too precise, as
. in: "We will announce in 2Q88" [second quarter,
. 1988]. **half** is sometimes used, in a similar manner,
. when plans are even less definite. **2.** *n.* A quarter of a *byte* (half a *nybble*). Also **two bits** – a reference to the old coins which broke apart to make change, the pirate's Pieces of Eight. [This isn't in very common usage, but the incestuous puns may please.]

quick and dirty *adj.* Of software or hardware: produced in a hurry to meet an urgent request or to fix a problem, usually someone else's. One's own solution is usually a *prototype* (*q.v.*). Also used to imply inferiority, or to defer a simple request from an *end user*, as in: "I can give you a quick and dirty solution in four weeks [which will do exactly what you want] but a real solution [which will do exactly what I want] will take eight months".

| **quiesce** *v.* To halt after finishing the current task. This term is often used to describe the process of stopping the flow of data across a network link, or to some device such as a printer, so that maintenance of some kind can be done. As in: "We're quiescing the link now; you can have the machine as soon as that last file is through."

R&I *n.* A Read and Initial memorandum. A form of memo circulated with the intention of its being read by an entire department in a timely fashion. The progress of circulation is indicated by the initials of the readers (and sometimes the date when it is read). Generally completes the cycle 2 to 4 months later, if at all, and is therefore an extremely useful way of delaying a decision on a document more or less indefinitely.

racheck (*rack-check*) *n.* The RACF security system's primary macro call to check authorisation of an action; often used as a verb. In technical usage this term is neither good nor bad, and just indicates a place where RACF will check for authority. In common usage, it means access that (apparently capriciously) is denied; as in: "I could have finished that project last night but I got rachecked so many times I gave up".

raft 1. *n.* A collection of programming ideas, loosely bound together and floated as a suggestion for a new software release. As in: "We are proposing a 15K raft of improvements". In a streamlined development process there can be a close resemblance between the raft and the First Customer Ship (*FCS*). [Though it may surprise you that **anyone** could confuse a raft and a ship.] **2.** *v.* To put forward as a suggestion. "Let's raft that at the meeting tomorrow." **3.** *n.* Something flat, untidy and of practical use only to its designer.

| **rainbow book** *n.* Nickname for GH09-0242 *The Nature of Office Systems*, a document, distributed to thousands of customers in 1984-6, that chronicled IBM Canada's experiences in installing Office Systems. So called because of the photograph of a rainbow over the Rocky Mountains on the otherwise black cover.

. **raindance** *n.* A complicated sequence of steps
. (including some physical activity), required to
. achieve some goal. It may include a few *incantations*
. as well as more tangible actions (such as mounting
. tapes, flicking switches, *etc.*).

. **raised floor** *n.* An area where a large computer
. installation can be found. Named because the
. computers stand on a false floor which is elevated
. some distance above the "real" floor of the building,
. in order to leave space for the *boas* (*q.v.*) to prowl.
. Usage: "We can put that in the raised floor", or
. "Site XXXX will be down Memorial Day weekend.
. This will include system YYYY also since it is on
. the raised floor that will be down."

ramp *v.* To increase. From the A/FE Corporate News Letter, 31 May 1985: Q. "What's the latest update on PC/AT delivery shipments? Are you still encountering supply shortages?" – A. "Demand for the AT has exceeded our expectations, although we are ramping up production of enhanced AT's with additional fixed drive sources". The reader is referred to the Concise Oxford Dictionary for some alternative definitions of "ramp" that may be appropriate in some circumstances.

rat belt *n.* A cable tie. Small cable ties are **mouse belts**.

rattle some cages *v.* To do things, (writing memos, making phone calls, sending VNET messages, *etc.*) that will make someone unhappy. Generally done because they have made you unhappy. "I'm going to rattle some cages and see if I can get this spec changed."

RDR (*reader*) *n.* An abbreviation for *reader* (*q.v.*). From the *VM* standard name for the virtual card reader.

reach-around *n.* Communication which does not just go up the management chain or down it, but rather goes up the chain and then returns directly to the original level as a response. Use: extremely rare.

read *v.* To move data from one real or virtual disk pack on your system to another. A VM/370 term, derived from the READCARD command that was used to move virtual cards from the virtual card reader to a virtual disk. Usually the source disk pack (the virtual reader) is owned by the *spool* system and the destination disk pack is dedicated to a user. Usage: "Please read that new file onto your disk". See also *receive*.

reader *n.* A temporary place on a disk pack to place data until a user decides exactly what to do with it, or it is destroyed by a *cold start.* From "virtual card reader". Also used as a place on a disk pack where one user puts data so that another user has a good chance of finding it, and as a system-owned area of space to store data if your private space allocation is not large enough. See also *read.*

reader eater *n.* A computer program that automatically processes the files in a *reader.* Typically used to discard unwanted messages and to maintain private copies of *forums.* It may be coincidence that "reader" and "eater" rhyme in the speech of many North Americans.

real estate *n.* A resource of some kind that is both physical and two-dimensional. Examples: **a)** A small area of land purchased to build facilities for creating things; **b)** A large area of land purchased to build bigger facilities for administering the facilities for creating things; **c)** That area of floor space in a machine room that is just too small for the new machine that you need; **d)** That area of a desktop that is too full of other things to permit the siting of a terminal in a convenient position (see also *footprint*); **e)** That area of a silicon chip which is too small to permit the incorporation of the *function* required to make the chip useful.

real IBM *n.* That portion of IBM which is not part of the Research Division. Used in the Research Division. See also *real life.*

reality check *n.* A comparison between an idealistic point of view and a pragmatic point of view. Employed when design groups come up for fresh air (or *peer review*) when deliberating alternatives for new features. See also *sanity check.*

real life *n.* The *field* (*q.v.*). Used by people consigned or resigned to working in Headquarters locations, as in "He's probably right, he just came from real life". See also *real IBM.*

real money *n.* See *blue money.*

real storage **1.** *n.* The main storage in a computer. This term widely replaced "*core*" when the latter term became out-dated. For example, "This machine has 8 MB real storage", meaning 8 Megabytes of (physical) main storage. **2.** *n.* Hardware (physical) storage in contrast to virtual (imaginary) storage. This term was precise in the days of early System/370 computers, which could only have one processing unit. **3.** *n.* An imaginary representation of the physical storage of a computer. This sense of the term was necessary for the multiprocessing System/370, such as the 158MP and 168MP models. Here there could be more physical storage than (in theory) the processors could address. Increased performance was possible by providing each processor with its own bank of real storage (here called **absolute storage** to minimise or maximise confusion).

rearrange deck chairs on the Titanic *v.* To perform pointless actions; a description for frantic, useless endeavours in the face of an impending disaster. This derives from IBM Canada, where it was applied to measures designed to head off a slipped ship date.

receive *v.* To initiate the movement of a file from the *spool* system onto a private disk. As in: "When you get the file in your reader, please receive it". Derived from the name of the program used to move the file. See *read.*

recognition event *n.* A gathering to which employees may be invited as a reward for their achievements. Awards may be presented, or some of the activities may be simply entertaining or not directly productive. Usage: "We proposed holding the Technical Forum at a non-IBM site near the ocean, but rescheduled to Dallas so it wouldn't be construed as a recognition event."

recurse *v.* To recur. Not to be confused with the repeated invocation of a spell or oath. Almost certainly derived from the adjective *recursive.*

recursive *adj.* Referring to itself. See *recursive.*

recycle *v.* To bring a system down and then restart it. Used especially for whole systems ("recycle the 3081"), but also to a sub-system ("JES2 was acting flaky, so I had them recycle it").

redeploy *n.* A person from an IBM plant, laboratory, or HQ location who has accepted a position in a marketing organisation. As in: "Debbie's a redeploy from Poughkeepsie".

red layer *n.* Applications software. See *layer.*

red line card *n.* A logic *card* not made to normal production standards, so deemed not suitable for use in production machines. Marked with a red line which acts as a warning. See also *gold card.*

reference **1.** *n.* A document that is the ultimate source of information about a piece of software or hardware. To write a good reference is one of the most difficult technical writing tasks. Note that almost by definition a reference is only useful when you already know something about the object in question, and is often almost useless to a new user. Usage: "This document is not a tutorial, it is a reference". **2.** *n.* A cross-reference from one program routine to another. In general, a cross-reference from one storage location (address) to another. **3.** *v.* To refer to. The verb formed from "Reference (**2**)". As in: "The allocate routine references HIGHMEM to find out how much storage is available". Also seen in documentation: "You may also want to reference the CMS Command and Macro Reference."

refresh *n.* A new copy of a (software) package. Getting a refresh implies that you are installing the whole package again as a precaution against having missed some partial update in the past. A package for which refreshes will no longer be provided may be considered *frozen.*

Registered IBM Confidential *adj.* The highest level of confidential information. Printed copies are numbered, and a record is kept of everyone who sees the document. This level of information may not usually be held on computer systems, which makes preparation of such documents a little tricky. It is said that RIC designates information which is **a)** technically useless, but whose perceived value increases with the level of management observing it; or **b)** is useful, but which is now inaccessible because everyone is afraid to have custody of the documents. See also *candy-striped.*

regression bucket *n.* A set of test cases to run against a product during development to check that things that used to work still do, or to allow the measurement of any change in performance. See also *bucket, test bucket.*

regular employee *n.* A fully benefited IBM employee. Once upon a time almost all employees enjoyed all privileges; nowadays a third of the workforce in some countries are freelance, employed for a year or two at most.

reinvent the wheel *v.* To do something that has already been done. A derogatory phrase, mainly used to prevent someone from writing a system correctly now that he or she has become familiar, through experience, with what should have been done in the past.

release *n.* The software prepared for shipment to customers. All the code that a development group has produced by some arbitrary date, sometimes regardless of whether it works.

release-to-print *n.* A declaration, by a document's technical *owner*, that the material is correct and complete and may be sent to the printer.

release x *n.* (Where *x* is some number larger than that of the current release.) Never-never land. "Well, that's a nice function – we'll put it in Release 6." Cynically implies that no Release 6 will take place.

remap *n.* A machine whose logic design has been entirely or largely taken from an earlier machine and re-implemented in a newer (usually denser) technology. The 370/148 was a remap of the 370/145, for example.

rep **1.** *n.* Short for "Marketing Representative". The rep is IBM's primary contact with the customer. IBM holds the rep responsible for the account, hence the rep has nominal final say on everyone else's contact with the customer. An IBMer in a laboratory, for example, should usually only call a customer with the rep's approval. Unlike an SE (System Engineer), reps are paid on commission and are seldom very technical. **2.** *n.* An incurable (but rich) optimist. **3.** *n.* For systems, the **lead account rep** is the System Architect, designing and assembling a system for the customer from the various boxes and programs found in the Sales Manual. If successful in beating great odds doing this, a rep is rewarded handsomely by both cash and company-sponsored trips. If unsuccessful, he (or she) may just vanish like Carroll's Cheshire Cat, which "disappeared quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone". **4.** *v.* To directly alter the compiled version of a program. Derived from the "REP" (replace) command used in object code card decks (such as system load, SuperZap, and System/360 object code decks). See also *code, zap.*

repository *n.* A cavernous storage area where data *may* be found. Programmers in the 1970s spent many adventurous hours searching for the repository; programmers in the 1980s spent even more hours creating a new one.

repurpose *v.* To save some equipment from the scrap-heap by, for example, reprogramming it to do something useful.

requirement **1.** *n.* A *feature* that must be included in a product as otherwise someone will *non-concur*. Therefore, the best way to get a new feature into a product is to persuade a third party to describe it as a requirement. Conversely, it is very hard to get anything truly innovative into a product, as (since no one else had thought of it) there can hardly be a requirement for it. **2.** *n.* A *function* or quality that must be included in a product, as otherwise it will be considered unsaleable to some selection of *end users*.

resource **1.** *n.* Any commodity (usually in a computer system) that may be in short supply (memory, CPU instruction cycles, *etc.*). A singularisation used for effect, as in: "If we try and run the printer and modem simultaneously, we'll just run out of resource". Use of this word also avoids committing oneself to a statement of which of the (un)available resources will be the limiting factor. Also used as a euphemism for *headcount*, or [insultingly] for an individual. **2.** *v.* To allocate, or find, the resources needed for a project. Usage: "How are we going to resource the follow-on?"

RETAIN *n.* A database and network that contains references to many of the problems found using IBM equipment and software, together with a solution for the problem (if known). This term is an acronym for Remote Technical Assistance Information Network, but is also used as a verb. "Let's RETAIN that one."

retread *n.* A Re-trainee – someone who has been trained to do a new job, which is not necessarily his or her vocation. Not a nice term. For example, it may refer to a planner or engineer who has become a programmer after 90 days of programming school.

retrofit **1.** *v.* To add a needed feature to a piece of software or hardware rather later than it should have been added. Usually results in inelegant *architecture*. **2.** *v.* To merge. A standard procedure in some divisions: laboratories A and B work on a project independently for a time, then each "retrofit" their *updates* to the other's work performed in the meantime. A sensitive political situation arises when one group's updates must be "retrofitted" because of unexpected changes made to lower-level updates by another group. **3.** *v.* To adapt existing local modifications of a program (usually an operating system) to fit a new release of the program.

retro-upgrade **1.** *v.* To apply appropriate correctional and preventive maintenance to a software product (such as a System Control Program) that is significantly out-of-date and generally not of the same level for which the maintenance was designed. This takes place when a product that has been *functionally stabilized* is suddenly seen to have new market potential. **2.** *v.* To change the base source for a new release of a software product (again, usually a System Control Program) from that new release to an older release (for purposes of upward *compatibility*).

reverse emulate *v.* To make an IBM computer or terminal behave as though it were the equipment of a competitor. This is considered to be retrograde, akin to emulating a Volkswagen with a Porsche, hence the "reverse" modifier.

reversion (*ree-version*) *v.* To change the version number. Usually a step following a significant change or enhancement to a product. "Can we reprice without reversioning?"

revisit (*ree-visit*) *v.* Of a problem or issue: to discuss again. As in: "Well, we aren't going to solve that today; we'll have to revisit it in the next meeting".

revival hour *n.* A weekly meeting with the purpose of getting Engineering and Programming functions talking to each other. The term is a reference to the essentially "religious" (*i.e.*, superstitious) nature of the discussions that take place during these meetings.

Rexxpert *n.* An expert in the REXX language. A Rexxpert of long standing is known as a **Rexpert**, for historical reasons.

RFA *n.* Request For Announcement. The primary, formal, document that is the core of the *announce* process and product release. RFAs for major announcements may circulate (in various versions) for months before announce, with hundreds of reviewers on the distribution list. At any one time there are thousands of RFAs in circulation.

RISC *n.* Raleigh International Systems Center. (Now the International Technical Support Center – Raleigh.) See also *RISC technology*.

RISC technology (*risk technology*) *n.* Reduced Instruction Set Computer Technology (as used in the IBM RT PC and the RISC System/6000 series). In IBM parlance, this means the 32-bit 801 Minicomputer Architecture devised at the Yorktown Heights location (the T. J. Watson Research Center), building 801. The prototype for this machine used 24-bit wire-wrapped Emitter Coupled Logic, and was therefore a surprising triumph over electrical noise; the integrated circuit version of this architecture is rather more compact, and rather more reliable.

RIT date (*writ-date*) *n.* The moment of commitment to the design of an integrated circuit *chip*. RIT stands for Release Interface Tape. This "tape" is the collection of information necessary to process and test a chip. It is no longer moved from place to place on a magnetic tape, but is sent electronically.

road *n.* Used in NAD to signify anywhere that "action" takes place. "Where the rubber meets the road". See also *sky*.

rococo *adj.* Of a program or machine: having many fancy frills and curlicues that add no function. A reference to the highly ornamental style of art prevalent in Europe circa 1730-1780. The word can also imply antiquity, in the sense of "out-of-date". Similar to *bells and whistles*.

ROJ (*rodge*) *adj.* Retired On the Job. A common designation for petty bureaucrats and others simply marking time. Some of these can actually tell an enquirer the number of days they have before their official retirements. See also *IPR, gold-coaster*.

roll out *v.* To deliver or announce a product or series of products. As in: "Here's how we'll roll out the mid-range boxes". Also **rollout** *n.* A delivery schedule or plan. "Can I see the rollout for the P and N series?"

roll your own 1. *adj.* Non-IBM, *ad hoc*. This term is often used when referring to a customer's software which was "home grown" but for which there seems to be an equivalent IBM product. *e.g.*, "This customer runs a RYO teleprocessing system". **2.** *adj.* Of IBM software: self-tailored. Typically used to describe a system assembled and configured by the customer from a selection of software components offered by IBM.

ROLMan (*rolm-an*) *n.* An employee of the ROLM company, after it became a division of IBM and before it was sold to Siemens in 1989. An alternative term is **ROLMulan**.

round and brown *n.* Magnetic storage, especially large and fast *disks*. From the iron oxide colour, and shape, of most magnetic disks [modern high-density disks are no longer brown]. As in: "storing data on the round and brown". Also known as **rusty memory**.

RPQ *n.* Request for Price Quotation (for an infrequently requested feature, such as upper/lower case, or compatibility with earlier products). The RPQ "route" is taken to get an important modification or enhancement to a product in a shorter time than can be achieved through the formal *requirement* and release cycle.

RTFM *v.* Read The oFficial Manual. Used, with variations on the third word, to suggest to someone that instead of wasting another's time with questions the manual should be consulted. [It has been pointed out that RTFM is not the most expressive term. The alternate form **RTFB** (where **B** is for Book) is preferred by native speakers of English, since "Manual" is from the French but "Book" is a suitable and short four-letter English word, which better fits the slogan.]

rubber *n.* See *road, sky*.

rubber bands on wrists *n.* A sign of an old-timer. Decks of *cards* were often held together with a rubber band; so essential was this tool for programmers that many kept a few conveniently sized bands constantly available to hand [as it were].

rupt *n.* An *interrupt* (*q.v.*).

Rusty Bucket *n.* A group headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland; often shortened to simply **Bucket**. The outer skin of the building is an alloy designed to react with water and standard metropolitan pollutants to "rust pretty" on the surface. Lacking the requisite pollutants, the building just plain rusted.

Its distinctive qualities make it one of the places in the Washington (DC), area for which [it's said] no address is required. You can tell a cab driver that you want to go to the Rusty Bucket and you'll get there. You can mail a letter to the Rusty Bucket, Bethesda, MD and it'll get there.

rusty iron *n.* Out-of-date, hard-to-repair equipment that, when it works, does the job better and cheaper than anything to be found in the current sales manual. (Especially true of non-IBM electrical or mechanical tools.) See also *pig iron, tired iron*.

SAA (*ess-ay-ay*) *n.* Systems Application Architecture. A collection of interfaces (to users, for programmers, and for communicating with other computers) that most of IBM's major product lines are committed to support. To be SAA is to be *strategic* (*q.v.*). "Is it SAA?"

safe *n.* Any filing cabinet that has a combination lock (instead of a key lock). Also known as an "approved container", such a cabinet may be used for the legal storage of USA Government classified documents.

salary plan *n.* A document rumoured to explain why managers get paid more than technical personnel, and why employees in different countries get paid different amounts for earning the same amount of revenue for the company.

Salt Mine *n.* Hutchinson, Kansas, where many *vital records* are sent. There are stories of huge underground caverns, whence was mined rock-salt, filled with salty tapes and documents. See also *Iron Mountain, Wansdyke*.

Sammy Cobol *n.* See *Susie Cobol*.

sandbender *n.* A person directly involved with silicon lithography and the physical design of *chips*. Not to be confused with logic designers, most of whom (it is said) would not recognise a transistor if they stepped on it with bare feet. [Possibly because it is more painful to step on a 14-pin Dual-In-Line package than on a transistor?]

sandbox 1. *n.* A location or department where the immediate goal is not a product or product support (or where the goal should be a product, but isn't). The **Sandbox Division** is the Research Division. Almost always used in a derogatory sense. See also

adtech, fun & games, trivial. **2.** *n.* The Washington Systems Center experimental laboratory. So described in authoritative presentations, and reflected in the node name WSCSNDBX (officially "WSC Systems Networking Development BoX"). **3.** *v.* To prototype something, to experiment. As in: "I can't tell you if that will work, now; we'll have to sandbox it". **4.** *v.* To spend time on a project or subject which is of particular interest but is outside your area of responsibility, especially when you had no intention of doing so. As in: "We went in to get approval to repaint the cafeteria, but ended up sandboxing the merits of intelligent workstations for two hours." See also *hobby.*

sandwich file *n.* A *spool* file that contains more than one operating system (logical) file. Such a file provides one method of introducing unwanted or undercover files into a system.

sanity check *n.* A second, pragmatic, opinion or estimate. "Let's recalculate that as a sanity check." Also used in the sense of informal verification, "Are you still there? Does this address still work?" See also *reality check.*

sardine can *n.* The small square metallic package used for many IBM *chips* over the years. Vendor chips usually come in plastic or ceramic packages. Also **Burlington sardine can**.

scaffold *v.* To provide temporary layers of software either at a higher or at a lower level than a routine to be tested, in order to simulate the normal conditions of use. "You'll have to scaffold that code if you expect us to test it in August."

scalarize *v.* To turn good APL into bad APL (by removing all vector and matrix operations) for the purpose of translating it to bad FORTRAN [or ADA]. The bad FORTRAN is then manually translated into (hopefully) good FORTRAN. It is often faster to prototype a function in APL, scalarize it, and then translate it to FORTRAN than it would be to work in FORTRAN to begin with. With the advent of vector processors this practice is slowly becoming obsolete.

scenario level *n.* A service [I think]. As in: "This decision would, in general, also provide your customers with a better scenario level". (Circulated to approximately 100,000 people by an IBM Director.)

scenario walkthrough *n.* A meeting in which the designers of a product outline the expected use of a product, in the form of various scenarios, and then describe how the product will behave in each case. See also *inspection.*

scenic route *n.* A slow path through an Electronic Network. "Hey, my file hasn't got to VM yet" ... "Which node did you send it through?" ... "K31" ... "Ah! That's the RSCSSNA scenic route".

SCIDS (*skids*) *n.* A 6-hour social occasion, held every night of SHARE and GUIDE meetings, during which customers (sometimes successfully) ply IBMers with alcoholic beverages in plastic cups to try to find out what's coming next. Originally informally known as "Share Committee for Inebriates, Drunkards, and Sots", but now officially stands for "Social Contact and Informal Discussion Sessions" or "SHARE Committee for Informal Discussion Sessions". More familiarly known as the "Society for Cultivation of Indiscretions via Drinking Sessions."

Scientific Centre *n.* A research (not Research) laboratory dedicated to performing computing research of interest to people outside IBM. Projects are justified on their relevance to the non-IBM wider technical community.

scope *v.* To delve into or investigate. "We'll have to scope it before we can come up with a firm answer." This term derives from the abbreviation for Oscilloscope, which used to be the tool of the first line of investigation for any tricky electronic problem.

scratch *v.* To erase or delete. "Please scratch the tape". Scratching is always a deliberate action, rather than an accident. Also used as an adjective "This is a Scratch Tape", which implies that the tape is being used for temporary data and may therefore be scratched after use.

The term Scratch is involved in one of the finest known examples of error messages. There is a utility used for mounting tapes, called MOUNT. If this command is invoked with the parameters "MOUNT SCRATCH 181 RING" (a request to mount a scratch tape, with a ring to indicate that it may be over-written), the utility will in due course respond with the error message: `VLIB09010S 'SCRATCH' MUST BE SPELLED W/O THE 'A'.`

script *v.* To format a document for printing. SCRIPT is the name of the command used to invoke the most widely used IBM formatter, the Document Composition Facility. "If you script this dictionary onto a page printer you'll save a lot of paper."

seamless *adj.* Of two or more programs: melded in such a way that the resulting package appears to have been designed as an entity. See also *transparent.*

secretary of task forces *n.* A person within a laboratory, site, division, or other operating unit who takes on the tasks of keeping interim and final reports for all *task forces* in his or her domain. A second function is advising leaders (Task Force chairpersons) and providing minutes about previous Task Forces on similar subjects. If the information thus collected were used by higher management, the Secretary would save many person hours.

security *n.* Any aspect of company operations that protects assets, people, or face. One of IBM's most enduring interests. Fuelled by court-cases and viruses, security became the *hot button* of the 1980s. Nearly all the useful and workable security precautions have long since been in place, so now that it has become a hot button security departments have had to bring in a whole new range of security measures to show that they are doing something. Where physical security is involved, they usually do a good job [though a new concept, that if an IBMer wears two badges he will be twice as secure, is somewhat suspect]. By contrast, the requirements for data processing security seem hastily thrown together and have undeniably affected the ability of IBMers to do their work. The net result, of course, has been dissatisfaction – which used to be unheard of in IBM, and is in fact the only **real** security exposure.

send to the world *v.* To distribute a piece of software electronically, as in: "That's good enough; OK, send it to the world". This really does mean "to the world" – software sent over VNET can reach fifty countries in a matter of hours or even minutes [especially at Christmas-time].

senior bit *n.* The most significant bit in a *byte*.

separate *v.* To let go, persuade to leave, or fire. Usage: "I think it's time he was separated from the business".

sequoia *n.* The unit of measure of a product specification document, that is, the number of exceptionally large trees required to produce the quantity of paper necessary to print the document. In some circles, the size of such a document is held to correlate directly [or inversely] with the quality of the project described therein. See also *three-tree report*.

service 1. *v.* To handle [an interrupt]. It should be noted that interrupt handlers seldom appear in AI programs. **2.** *v.* To fix *bugs* in a machine or program. See *critical service*.

service machine *n.* A *userid* running under VM (*q.v.*) that instead of being the "desk" of a human user, is instead just a virtual machine that runs a program with little or no human supervision. The program may carry out simple (though non-trivial) services such as sending diary reminders to users, or it may carry out far more complex tasks such as managing the security, data, or backups for an installation. The service machine is such a powerful concept that many locations run dozens of them, and for much of the time the service machines outnumber the real people using the computer (and sometimes use more resources, too). See also *disconnected*.

settle down *v.* Of a new version of a program: to have the most obvious problems fixed. Often, installing a new release of system software uncovers all kinds of problems, and one must wait until the stirred-up system has settled down before installing new applications.

Seven Dwarves *n.* A term describing the most significant companies in data processing in the USA in the 1960s – other than IBM. Originally the expression "IBM and the Seven Dwarves" described the entire computer industry. The Dwarves were Burroughs, Honeywell, NCR, Univac, RCA, General Electric, and the new upstart, CDC. Since then RCA and GE have dropped out, while Burroughs and (Sperry)-Univac have merged to form Unisys, so now there are four. Some consider DEC to have become sufficiently respectable to constitute a fifth, and Microsoft's chairman has sufficient renown for his company to be considered a sixth, but no present-day seventh comes to mind. Dwarves are at least in principle exempt from the definitions of *minicomputer* and *vector processor* since they are deemed to produce "ordinary" computers like IBM. Of course, the term should really be "Seven Dwarflings"? See also *Bunch*.

shadow *n.* A copy of a *conferencing facility* (*q.v.*) disk which is maintained as up-to-date as possible by manual or automatic methods. The distortion between files of the master system and those of the shadow is a counter-example to Einstein's postulate about the constancy of the speed of light on computer networks. See also *catcher, master, pitcher*.

shadow-sitter *n.* The individual who maintains a *shadow* (usually on a part-time basis). Shadow-sitters are an expanding breed within IBM and have a folklore all of their own, such as tales of the great IBMPC crash of June '84.

sheep dip session *n.* A sales seminar, usually on a vague topic such as Computer Integrated Manufacturing, which is intended for a large audience of generally poor prospects. Often planned by staff managers to improve Year-to-date *buns on seats* performance.

ship 1. *v.* To move a product from a point A to a point B (even if the vehicle or mode of transport would inevitably sink if placed on the surface of an ocean). It is possible to ship items by road, rail, aeroplane or even by electronic networks. **2.** *v.* To become available. As in: "This version may never ship externally", or "When does AS/400 ship?" See *customer ship, FCS*.

shop *n.* The Data Processing section of an Information Service (*IS*). Also commonly used to mean "department", as in IS shop, DP shop, *etc*.

short *adj.* Of a DASD *string*: having fewer DASD units than the head of string unit can support. This will usually improve performance, but takes more floor space and dollars (the controller:DASD ratio is higher than it could be). See also *A-Box, Model A*.

short card *n.* A PC expansion card or adapter that will fit in one of the two "short" spaces located behind the diskette drives on some PCs. See also *tall card*.

showstopper 1. *n.* An unfixed *bug* of such a serious nature that it is likely to cause a *crash*. **2.** *n.* An unsurmountable problem that may kill (halt) a project. **3.** *n.* An event that became an unforgettable lowlight of someone's life.[In common usage this word means almost precisely the opposite of the above; a section of a performance that is so good that applause interrupts the show.]

shriek *n.* An exclamation mark (point). This usage is especially popular among APL users. Also sometimes called a **bang**. See also *splat*.

sidecar *n.* An expansion box for the late PCjr. So named because it came as a unit that attached to the side of the processor box. [The "jr" in PCjr apparently was intended to suggest the title "Junior", and has little to do with television soap operas set in Texas; even so, the cry of "who shot JR?" can often be heard abroad.]

side sucker *n.* A program that uses an intemperate amount of system *resource*. From the metaphorical: "That application really sucks in the sides of a 4381".

silent majority *n.* *end users* with an IQ of less than 110. Also called **discretionary users**.

silver bullet 1. *n.* A memo or phone call from someone with sufficient power to stop a section of the corporation from proceeding down a wasteful or foolish path. **2.** *n.* A part of a product plan (or something wishfully thought to be part of a product plan) that will cure all a customer's ills. An easy, painless, magical, and costless solution to an intractable *opportunity* (*q.v.*). [Mythical] **3.** *n.* The metallic toggle switch in the centre bay of an *orange box*. Like a *BRS* (*q.v.*), it restarts the system.

silver fox *n.* A member of the IBM Quarter Century Club (someone who has been with IBM for 25 years or more), or (less often) any old-timer IBM employee.

sit 1. *v.* To perform one's contractual obligations, to work. As in: "Where do you sit?" Primarily used at manufacturing plants and laboratories to ask a person where his or her office is located. Not used so often in the *field* since "sit" and "work" are less likely to be synonymous. **2.** *v.* (Of a program) To be placed, be found. "This Xedit macro sits on the Tools disk."

six sigma *adj.* High quality. From statistical theory; 99.9999998 percent of the area under a normal curve is within plus or minus six standard deviations (usually designated by the greek character *sigma*) from the mean. Allowing a reduction of 1.5 sigma for anticipated variation in the mean over time, one ends up with a 99.99966 percent coverage – approximately 3.4 defects per million parts; or 3.4 failures or errors per million opportunities. Usage: "We're aiming for a six sigma product".

skip to channel one *v.* To go to the top of a new page. This is an instruction, to a computer-controlled printer, that had its origins in the days when printers (such as the model 1403) had their vertical movement stops (tabs) encoded on a wide loop of tough paper called a carriage control tape. The carriage control tape had a number of "channels" that could be selected to allow a variety of forward vertical movements. Channel one was normally reserved for "Top Of Form". Thus, "Skip To Channel One" meant "skip the rest of this page and go on to the next one". [Occasional excitement was had when a carriage control tape, over-tensioned, split lengthwise along the drive holes. This meant that the tape would no longer rotate and the selected stop would never be found. The printer would then dutifully spew out the rest of the box of paper at maximum speed.] See also *carriage control character*.

skunk works *n.* A *hobby* (*q.v.*).

sky *n.* A place where something is supposed to happen, but never quite seems to. As in: "Where the rubber meets the sky". Used by business personnel to refer to Headquarters locations, and by engineers and programmers to refer to the Research Division. Usage: "Well, now that we have developed the action strategy, let's take it to where the rubber meets the sky and see if they'll approve it." See also *road*.

slash *n.* The solidus, the oblique character "/". Also **slashslash** – the JCL identifier, as in: "Slashslash deedee splat" (`// DD *`).

slide to the right *n.* An unplanned (though probably anticipated) *slip*. Derives from the usual representation of a schedule, which starts on the left side of a chart and ends on the right (typically with *FCS*). Also used as a verb: "If Fred doesn't get his code running this week, we're going to have to slide to the right by two weeks!"

slip *n.* An extension to a schedule deadline. A slip implies that the developer intends to complete the project, but was too *aggressive* in his schedule. As a rule of thumb, if a schedule slip of one month is announced, the project is likely to be ready after two extra months.

slope shoulders *v.* To refuse to accept responsibility (for a problem). Problems will usually visit a number of people suffering from sloping shoulders before eventually finding someone whose shoulders are square enough (or who is naive enough) to bear the problem. Oddly, "Square Shoulders" is not a verb in everyday use.

slot *n.* A position (for a person or logic *card*) to be filled. "I have a slot for a Project Programmer." See also *headcount*.

slugnet *n.* *VNET* (*q.v.*) on a slow day. [Some say on a fast day, and especially in 1988.] See also *notwork, nyetwork*.

slush *v.* To prepare a product for an IBM Software Distribution tape, but with the understanding that it is not the "final" final version. Slushed precedes *frozen* in those products that have had a rocky development cycle. See also *cast in concrete, to-PID version*.

smoke test *n.* The first *power up* of a device. Originally a term for the very first time that power is applied to new machine. It now applies to any power up of a device after internal components have been handled by the person who turns it on; *e.g.*, turning on a PC after adding an option card, memory, co-processor, *etc.*

SMOP (*smop*) *n.* Something quite possible, but requiring unavailable resources to achieve. "Why isn't that function available in the program?" – "It's just a Simple Matter Of Programming". (The implication being that, given a few person-centuries, all things are possible.) Also **SMOUP** (*smoop*) , a Simple Matter Of Micro-Programming (if hand-written, using a Greek mu). See also *how hard would it be*.

snail mail *n.* Archaic postal systems that use paper as the medium for message transmission, rather than electronics or optics.

SneakerNet *n.* A high-bandwidth file transfer procedure between PCs that are not connected electronically. Usually implemented with a bunch of floppies and a good pair of sneakers [soft shoes, worn in the USA]. Also called **CarpetNet**. See also *TapeNet*.

snow *n.* Random white dots appearing on the PC colour display when a program does brute-force writes in the adapter memory. Contrary to popular belief, this feature was not provided to make compatibility with the 327x *green lighting* (*q.v.*) possible when writing terminal emulators for the PC.

Snow White *n.* IBM. See *Seven Dwarves*.

soapbox *n.* The (virtual) thing you take over when appending to a *forum* (*q.v.*). According to computer conferencing traditions, you are supposed to make an allusion to it when **a)** your *append* (*q.v.*) is mostly personal beliefs with no hard facts, and **b)** runs to more than 30 lines. "Excuse me, while I hoist myself up onto the soapbox."

social science number *n.* A rough estimate or statistic based on an inadequate sample (or a guess), or a number that is an average that does not necessarily predict the figures that will be obtained in practice. A figure that is usually better than nothing, but not necessarily so. Originally used by an Instructor of the Endicott Inspection Process course.

softcopy *adj.* Held on a computer storage device, not printed on paper.

software engineer 1. *n.* A person whose goal it is to construct large, complex programs without actually having to write any code. **2.** *n.* A person who engineers others into writing code.

software rot *n.* See *bit decay*.

softy *n.* An affectionate term used by engineers to describe a software expert who knows very little about hardware. Software experts seem to have no affectionate terms for engineers.

solution *v.* To solve. (Probably originally from South Road Labs, Poughkeepsie.) "We must solution this problem". There may be a subtle distinction here: if a problem has been solved it disappears completely. In contrast, one that has been solutioned may still exist but will have disappeared from formal reports.

Some Of Our Best People Are Working On It *statement.* "This is a serious problem, which we didn't anticipate."

source *n.* The highest-level (primary source) version of a piece of *code.* The version that the author or owner will work with when changes or enhancements are made to the program. See also *OCO.*

SP *n.* System Product, as in Virtual Machine/System Product (VM/SP). Although there are many different System Products, only VM is known as "SP". As in: "Are you running SP?"

speak *v.* Of a computer language or software: to be proficient in. In many locations one can see signs on office doors such as "APL spoken here" or, in the case of one CMS *bigot* at the original Westlake location, "No hablo MVS/TSO".

speak to *v.* To talk about. "Will you speak to these foils, please?" See also *talk to.*

Speak Up! *n.* An exemplary personnel programme which allows employees to make a genuinely anonymous complaint to any level of management about any IBM-related subject. Replies to Speak Up!s range from a (quite common) positive acceptance of the complaint and resultant change, to a (more common) patronising brush-off which may aggravate the original feeling of dissatisfaction. The programme does, however, provide a mechanism whereby employees can get the autograph of senior members of the Corporation on personal letters to them [except in IBM Israel, where the replies to Speak Up!s are not signed]. See also *open door.*

spearcatcher *n.* A person given the task of facing a hostile audience (of any kind) for the purpose of giving calm, reasonable answers to angry questions.

special assistant to *adj.* Idle. A manager for whom no use can be found any longer is made "Special Assistant to" some higher echelon. His activities from then on are completely without consequence. See also *staff, ROJ.*

special-case *v.* To allow for a special condition in a program. "We'll have to special-case the zero return code." Special-case can be seen as a subset of *dual-path* (*q.v.*) but the latter implies that either path is equally probable, while a special-cased piece of code might be executed only rarely. See also *fix.*

specify 1. *n.* An option from a set of options, one of which must be chosen. (As opposed to one from a set of options, none of which need be chosen.) "The power supply for this model is a specify." **2.** *n.* A specification. "Could you look up the specify for the Model 80 and tell me the feature number of the pointing device?"

specs *n.* The document detailing the specifications for a product. Usage: "If the specs say it should work that way..." See also *specify.*

speculate on *v.* To reveal secrets about, to answer honestly. "Q: Why does the IBM PC Documentation refer to an assembler, when there is none announced?" – "A: I'm sorry, but I cannot speculate on that in public".

spec-writer *n.* The person who writes the functional specifications for a product. A product is usually specified in detail before being developed. The **specs** (Specifications) are then formally reviewed in a variety of ways before the product is produced.

speed, flexibility, and accuracy *n.* An IBM marketing slogan for its mid-20th-Century tabulating machines. Unfortunately it became over-used, and in some places evolved into a *double entendre* with a British slang phrase of the period with the same abbreviation. "What did you sell today? – Speed, Flexibility, Accuracy..." Once this happened, an unsuccessful attempt was made to re-introduce the slogan as "Speed, Accuracy, and Flexibility".

speeds and feeds *n.* A Marketing presentation that is technically oriented, in contrast to the typical presentation. This is perhaps a reference to fertiliser descriptions; the presentation is designed to speed the growth of a market place by feeding it with inspiring information. Its first usage in computing, however, was a reference to a presentation that went into details about the printing speeds and paper feeds available with a new printer.

A more plausible etymology suggests that it comes from analogy with common machining jargon. "Speed" refers to the rotational velocity of a drill or mill bit, and "feed" to the linear velocity with which it moves into (or across) the workpiece. Thus to machine a piece with the proper finish yet in minimum time, one must calculate the proper "speeds and feeds". By analogy one talked about the speeds of a processor family and the feeds (*e.g.* cards per minute) of a series of input devices.

spindle 1. *n.* Disk axis, and, by extension, disk unit or disk pack. Systems people tend to speak in term of "spindles" since it used to be the unit of access by the main computer. Using the term "disk drive" can be misleading since some IBM disk drives, like shoes, were sold in pairs. The issue is now further confused, since on the 3370 and 3380 devices, there are two actuators on each spindle; hence two addresses known to the host computer can refer to a single set of spinning magnetic disks (one spindle). **2.** *v.* Of a *card*: to wrap around a pin, bobbin, or finger. A violation of the First Commandment of card care and maintenance: "Do not fold, spindle, or mutilate".

spinning chocolate *n.* Large, high-revenue, magnetic disk storage devices. A marketing term, a reference to the brown colour of magnetic disks (which is due to their being coated with a mixture of materials including ferrous oxide – rust).

spin system 1. *n.* A version of a major control program. The term "Spin" was originally used by *OS* developers (around 1970) in the form "spin nn" to identify a particular development level of a release *prior* to its *FCS.* Thus "spin 11" might become the *PID* release version of, say, MVT release 19. **2.** *n.* The current (released) version of a system. The system that FE are prepared to fix bugs on. (Pre-FCS systems are not spin systems, for this usage.) This sense probably refers to the system that is actually spinning on the active system disk drive. See *floor system.*

splat *n.* An Asterisk. As in the JCL statement "// DD *" (pronounced "slashslash deedee splat"). See also *Nathan Hale, shriek, slash, star, *.*

in sponge mode *adj.* Intending to listen but not contribute to a discussion. As in: "I'm at this meeting in sponge mode".

spontaneously occurring software generated error *n.* A *bug.* From the excuse used by a software contractor to explain the delay in the delivery of a typesetting program.

spool 1. *v.* To move data from one disk pack to another. From the term Spool, meaning to put data in temporary storage while awaiting delivery to its final destination. Usage: "Please spool that new file to me". See also *punch, net.* "SPOOL" has become a common verb, but originally was itself an acronym signifying Simultaneous Peripheral Operations On Line. This acronym originated with the 7070

computer, which had a system of interrupts that let one program a peripheral activity (*e.g.*, card-to-tape, tape-to-print, tape-to-card) while a main program was running. **But** there was no monitor in the system, so if (for example) you programmed an application to print out a tape while your program was running, and there was more printing to be done when the job had finished, either you dedicated the mainframe to the print function or you could lose the end of the print-out. Spooling was therefore somewhat ineffective until the advent of the System/360 with the INTRA and INTER job monitors. [Before spooling was "perfected", the usual procedure was to direct all print output to a tape (tape spool?) and then subsequently print it from the tape using a special tape-to-print peripheral.] **2.** *n.* The space occupied by such buffered data. "Did the system crash because spool filled?"

Spring Plan *n.* A plan, adopted in the spring of each year, that describes the long-term activities and business of a location or division. [Now known as the Strategic Plan.] See *Fall Plan.*

squatterize *v.* To borrow or make use of an item, without removing it from its original location. As in: "If the terminal is not yet set up I will go to John and Sophie in Pascal to squatterize a screen".

stack *n.* Alternative [usually incorrect] name for a queue. This usage probably originated in Cambridge (MA), at the Scientific Center there.

staff person *n.* A person with little responsibility but with an amount of power directly correlated to personal charisma. It is usually very hard to determine how seriously one should deal with a staff person. A staff person is usually supposed to be helping the workers accomplish their jobs but more often is asking about something or asking for something. Staff persons can usually be ignored completely. However, occasionally someone with a great deal of charisma lands in a staff job and carries great weight with higher management (usually yours). This particular breed of "staff" can be difficult to detect, and must be treated with respect.

standard IBM keyboard *n.* A mythical computer input device. The Corporate implementation of the Loch Ness monster. Everybody has heard about it, lots of people talk about it, very few claim to have seen it, and none would want to meet it. A step in its evolution is known as the **converged keyboard**.

star *n.* An asterisk. See *.

star out *v.* To *comment out* lines in files in which comments are indicated by a leading asterisk (*star*).

statement of direction 1. *n.* A statement describing a commitment to a comprehensive (*e.g.*, text processing) strategy incorporating all current products. **2.** *n.* A phrase used to cover up the absence of any strategy, or to admit a lack of foresight and planning.

steel storage substructure *n.* A rack. As in the 3480 product presentation (ZV11-6107, Page 9): "The cartridges are held in a removable 20-pack made of polystyrene that fits into a 74-inch high by 20-inch wide steel storage substructure (rack)".

straight-wire *v.* To make a change or connection that is *transparent* to a user or system. Derived from the electrical engineering term used when a complicated piece of circuitry is replaced by a simple wire.

strategic *adj.* Used to designate a major IBM product, to which IBM is prepared to commit significant resources. A project manager will do *anything* to get his or her product classified "strategic".

strategic horizon *n.* The total period ahead that is being considered for planning purposes. Nominally two years, it is typically two months and becomes two weeks at bad times such as just before the *Spring Plan* (*q.v.*).

strategic plan *n.* See *Spring Plan.*

strawman *n.* A plan or proposal that is unfinished or not fully thought through; one that is being set up as a target for others to throw spears at or knock down.

stress *v.* To test a piece of hardware or software by increasing the (electronic) load on it beyond that expected in normal use. "Stress testing" is used to test software with the philosophy that a heavy load is more likely to show problems (especially *windows*) than a light load. See also *exercise, exerciser.*

stretch *v.* To work overtime. As in: "We'll have to stretch to make that deadline".

stretch target *n.* A goal that probably is impossible. As in: "We're setting stretch targets next year".

string *n.* A set of peripheral devices, each connected to the next in line, supported by a single control unit. This applies almost exclusively to DASD and tape devices. See also *Model A.*

sub-system *n.* Any product which has already been grouped (physically or on paper) with another as a *system.* Also applied to any IBM product to imply it ought to work in conjunction with some other product; for example, CICS might be described as a "sub-system" in "a VTAM environment".

sugar cube 1. *n.* A small synthetic foam sponge parallelepiped that is used to prevent the movement of the end of a magnetic tape, by being wedged between the sides of the tape reel. Usually black, but brown or white in France. See also *grommet.* **2.** *n.* In continental Europe (where sugar cubes are often not cubes): the electronic *modules* used on circuit *cards* which have a whitish look due to their metal cases. See also *sardine can.*

sugg (*sug*) *n.* A suggestion. A formal response to an *APAR* that implies that the the APAR is accepted as a suggestion and could be implemented one day; it does not describe a permanent restriction. Introduced in the late 1970s.

suggestions programme *n.* A formal mechanism for submitting suggestions for saving money. Known as a lottery whereby an employee can (by wasting IBM time filling in a form) get cash for ideas which someone else will have to implement. Indeed, sometimes a whole *task force* can be set up to consider the suggestion.

suitably programmed host computer *n.* A host computer that might be used to support a "box" that provides local computing power. This phrase implies that **a)** No IBM-provided software will do the job, and **b)** the development group making the "box" doesn't know how to write the host support, but someone should be able to work it out.

Sunny and Warm Division *n.* The South-West Marketing Division. (Alternative expansion of the abbreviation – a geographical truism.) See also *Nasty and Cold Division.*

sunset *v.* To withdraw support for a product or a range of products. Usage: "We'll sunset that range in late '89". See also *functionally stabilized.*

super *adj.* Used in the Marketing Divisions (and possibly elsewhere in the company) as a euphemism for "Bull" and its derivatives. "Super" is an excellent example of dialectal and idiolectal variation within IBM. Its meanings vary from "Wonderful"

to "Rubbish" via *incredible* (normal or alternative meaning (*q.v.*)) depending on cultural sub-group. Alternative terms with probably the same meanings include"Fantastic", "Horse Apples", *etc.*

supervisor state *n.* See *problem state.*

supplication language *n.* See *command language.*

surface *v.* To raise, or bring to someone's attention. "We should surface that issue at the next staff meeting."

Susie Cobol *n.* A programmer straight out of training school who knows everything – except the benefits of comments in (plain) English. Also (fashionable among personkind these days to avoid accusations of being sexist) *Sammy Cobol.*

SVC13 *v.* To create a *dump*; to create waste. From the identifier of an *OS* supervisor call (SVC) instruction. SVCs are used to communicate between user address spaces and the system supervisor, including hardware facilities. Each SVC function (load, attach task, *etc.*) has a specific identifier, 13 being used to terminate a failing address space with a dump. See also *brain dump.*

symbol *n.* A sequence of characters that forms a symbolic code for some other sequence. Originally provided in text formatters so that common phrases or uncommon characters could be represented by a more convenient sequence, symbols are now used in more general communication. By convention (from various macro processors and languages) symbols start with the **&** character (*q.v.*) – hence one might see "&deity" appear in a discussion, with the implication that one should insert the deity of one's choice at this point.

SYNTAX ERROR 1. *n.* An unidentified error. A general message put out by compilers and interpreters when **a)** the error was never expected to occur; or **b)** the programmer got tired of dreaming up new error messages for trivial cases; or **c)** the compiler failed, but it was easy to blame the error on the user. **2.** *n.* An expletive used to cover a speaker's embarrassment after making a gaffe. "Oops! Syntax error!"

sysprog *n.* Systems Programmer. An affectionate term for the systems programmer responsible for a department or small location. This person is expected to be a hardware and software expert, to have infinite patience when dealing with ordering procedures, security requirements, and users, and of course to control enormous computing resources. Usage: "My sysprog always grumbles if I ask for more than 100 *Meg* of disk storage at a time".

system *n.* A word appended to the description of any group of two or more modules or products which are announced or developed together. The intention is to give an impression that the products result from a careful and unified design process. For example, "3270 Information Display System" may give some people a feeling of assurance that the 3278 keyboard really was carefully designed for use under the VM operating system. See also *sub-system.*

tablature *n.* The tables in a document. Usually has nothing to do with the true meanings of the word, which include "stone tablet", "musical notation", and "work of art".

tailgate *v.* To go through a *badge*-controlled access door without using your own badge. This is done either because you were able to catch the door before it closed, or because the person in front of you was nice enough to hold the door open for you. Even if there is no physical door, as in a main lobby, to pass the badge reader without inserting your badge is considered tailgating. A heinous action.

take *n.* A position in a discussion or argument. As in: "My take on this is that it's unimportant".

talk to 1. *v.* To discuss. "I will talk to that detail later". Usually means that the speaker hopes his audience will drop the subject. See also *speak to.* **2.** *v.* To communicate with another (usually of machines). For example, "These machines talk to each other, but do they understand? Is one talking French and the other listening in German? (While an English-speaking *security* person eavesdrops?)" See also *speak to.*

tall card *n.* A PC expansion card or adapter that will only fit in the PC/AT. The PC/AT box, being higher than earlier varieties, accepts "taller" cards. See also *short card.*

Tandem Memos *n.* Something constructive but hard to control; a fresh of breath air (*sic*). "That's another Tandem Memos." A phrase to worry middle management. It refers to the computer-based conference (widely distributed in 1981) in which many technical personnel expressed dissatisfaction with the tools available to them at that time, and also constructively criticised the way products were [are] developed. The memos are required reading for anyone with a serious interest in quality products.

tanstaafl (*tan-stah-fil*) *n.* There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch. From Robert Heinlein's *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress.* Used to explain pricing policies to a customer – a fashionable way to say "You pays your money and makes your choice". It may also remind the customer that he, in the end, pays for the extended lunches that marketing representatives (from any company) "treat" him to. See also *pay for the coffee.*

TapeNet *n.* A very high-bandwidth file transfer procedure between *mainframes* that are not connected electronically (*e.g.*, because of a network failure). Files are written to tape, taken by courier to the destination system, then re-loaded there. See also *SneakerNet.*

target 1. *n.* A goal (usually a date) toward which the members of a project work. **2.** *v.* To aim to complete by. "Let's target this decision for November" **3.** *n.* A termination flag (again, usually a date) arbitrarily affixed to the end of a project. See *slip.*

target date *n.* A date by which a given event must occur. "Let's set a target date" actually means "Let us agree on a date at which, if the event has not yet occurred, we'll start looking for someone or something to blame".

task force 1. *n.* A high-powered group of experts appointed to solve some problem of pressing urgency. [Official Definition.] **2.** *n.* A useful place for management to hide people who have nothing better to do than natter on about things. [**Note:** It is said that task forces have occasionally produced (useful) results. There exists little evidence to support this hypothesis.] **3.** *n.* A group of friends and one or two experts gathered to again affirm the predefined conclusions of the leader. The gathering can be convivial fun or a crashing bore. The activity may benefit the leader's *CYA* position. See also *secretary of task forces.*

TAT (*tat*) *v.* To test the Turn-Around Time of a *conferencing facility.* This is done by sending an *append* to a test *forum* (usually called TESTER) on the *master* and seeing when it is echoed back to the local *shadow.* This can help one determine whether

. shadow inactivity is due to an idle master or to a
. broken network link.

. tattooed *adj.* Of an IBMer: die-hard. According to
. folklore, long-term IBMers have their IBM badge
. tattooed on their chests.

technical vitality *n.* Visible use of leading-edge (advanced) technology. This is interpreted in some development labs as "using recent vendor technology". This phrase is also used at a lower level as an excuse to hire new personnel or order new machines. "Manager of Technical Vitality" can be a *penalty box* assignment.

technology *n.* Some particular flavour of silicon manufacturing process. "We can't put the whole channel on one chip until we go to the next technology."

TechRef *n.* The IBM PC Technical Reference Manual (TRM). The TechRef is the only PC documentation that will be read by self-proclaimed "real" PC programmers.

temporary assignment *n. permanent move.* (*q.v.*)

temporary building *n.* A prefabricated building intended as temporary office space. Temporary buildings usually have a life span that far exceeds that of more permanent structures. This is an international constant in IBM – some of Hursley's 5-year temporary buildings are still standing after 18 years. See *temporary assignment, module.*

tenant *n.* A person that works at a location, but not for the division that runs the location. Often treated as a "second-class" citizen in any consideration of space, services, or resource.

. tent card *n.* A rectangular card, folded down the
. middle lengthwise, on which a name is written to
. identify a participant in a meeting.

. terminal *n.* A device (usually consisting of a display
. screen, keyboard, and other hardware) that is at the
. end of the chain of hardware, systems, and inter-
. faces between a program and its user. The term is
. generic; many terminals nowadays are simply PC's
. running **terminal emulation** software (which may be
. all that they run). The term is best avoided by
. salespeople working in the medical sector.

terminate *v.* To release someone from IBM employment. This deadly verb is used to describe the action of losing an employee. "He [his employment] will be terminated." Rumour has it that (ex-) employees do survive this process, if not from the point of view of IBM. Interestingly, even loyal employees are terminated should they happen to transfer between IBM companies.

test 1. *v.* In a good development laboratory, to allow real users to use a product for a significant amount of time before announcement. **2.** *v.* In a bad development laboratory, to get a few bored or unmotivated people to try one or two of the things mentioned in the product specification. That is, to try the things the developers had already considered.

test bucket *n.* A set of test cases to run against a product during development to check that it performs basic functions correctly. "You must run the test bucket against all code changes." This term implies (always incorrectly) that the set of test cases is complete and provides a full functional verification of the product, encompassing all possible combinations of input, output, timings, and error conditions. See also *bucket, regression bucket.*

text 1. *n.* Executable code, usually with addresses unresolved (known sometimes as **object code**). "The compiler produces one text deck for each source file". **2.** *n.* Textual (documental) material. Data which are in ordinary *ASCII* or *EBCDIC* representation. "Those are text files, you can review them using the editor".

. thank you *n.* "End of message." Used by many
. computer centres as a secular alternative to *Amen*:
. "All systems will be going down in one minute.
. Thank you."

thesis *n.* See *paren.*

THINK (*ponder*) **1.** *v.* Think. Perhaps the most famous IBM slogan. This was originally used by the first Mr. Watson, around 1900, to convey the idea of complete staff work. That is, given a problem or a challenge, time should be taken to reason the problem through and cover all involved aspects carefully, and to consider all repercussions and (of course) all financial considerations. This is not unlike the more recent "Make Sure" and *do it right the first time* (*q.v.*) slogans now used within the *Quality* Program.

"Think" is also the name of the in-house magazine distributed to all IBM employees in the USA (but considered too syrupy for the more cosmopolitan tastes in the other half of IBM). **2.** *n.* (Meaning unknown.) A well-established IBM acronym which is so well-established that no one can remember what it originally meant. Said to exemplify an ideal that cannot be achieved.

think small *v.* To reduce problems to a series of smaller problems. A hardware or software test strategy; the technique being to exercise the most primitive functions first to prove to yourself that they work, before trying the more complex (and presumably failing) tasks. When people forget this basic strategy, they are gently reminded to "think small".

thin-slicing baloney *n.* Hair splitting, but starting from an indefensible and absurd position.

. thought *v.* The slogan of the IBM retirees club in
. Auckland, New Zealand. See *THINK.*

thrash *v.* To think very hard but not accomplish much. "John needs some help on this problem – he's thrashing." Refers to the computer malaise in which the system uses more time organising the resources available than it gives to the users.

three-handed keyboard *n.* A 3278 or 3279 keyboard with the APL feature.

three-tree report *n.* A very large, fat, report printed on a 3800 or other fast computer printer. Variants include Five-Tree and Seven-Tree Reports. See also *kill a tree, sequoia.*

through *v.* To pass on to, or work through. As in: "I do not wish to through activities to another group which may create user dissatisfaction by decreasing support level".

throughput *n.* Any measure of the processing power of a computer, in terms of the number of pieces of work in some unit of time. "The new model has twice the throughput of the old." See also *MIPS.*

TIE system *n.* Technical Information Exchange system. A computerised Bulletin Board system, as might be operated by a PC Club. Since the essence of such a system is the public exchange of information by the subscribers, and since posting information on (or to) anything called a "bulletin board" is a management prerogative, a different name had to be found.

time delay *n.* Delay. [What other kind of delay is there?]

time-frame, timeframe *n.* A range of dates during which an event will occur. When used in a question, its intent is to elicit a *target date* (*q.v.*) without seeming to be too aggressive, as in: "What sort of time-frame are we talking about?" Can also be used in a response: "We're looking at a July time-frame for completion". An important usage note: the date when used in a response always means the earliest possible date to the questioner (1 July, in the example above) and the latest date to the responder (31 July).

TIME/LIFE *n.* The legendary (defunct since 1975) New York Programming Center, formerly in the TIME & LIFE Building on 6th Avenue, near the Rockefeller Center, in New York City. For many years it was the home of System/360 and System/370 Languages, Sorts and Utilities. Its programmers are now primarily in Kingston, Palo Alto, and Santa Teresa (or retired).

time-stamp, timestamp **1.** *n.* An annotation to either paper documents or electronic data that indicates the time and/or date of some (often undefined) happening. The accuracy of a time-stamp seems to be directly proportional to the obscurity of the units in which it is expressed. For example, the date on a *buck slip* is often unrelated to the document to which it is attached, even though it is almost always written in an easily understood form. On the other hand, *MVS* allows one to determine a time of day as a count of 26.04166 microsecond timer units since midnight, and provides the difference between local time and Greenwich Mean Time in units of 1.048576 seconds. **2.** *v.* To mark with a time-stamp.

tip of the ice cube *n.* The visible part of something very small and insignificant. "That task force report is just the tip of the ice cube".

tired iron *n.* Data processing equipment that is perfectly functional (because most of the bugs have been fixed) but has been superseded by a new line of devices.

TLA *n.* Three Letter Abbreviation. A four-letter abbreviation is, of course, an **XTLA** (eXtended Three Letter Abbreviation). See also *acronym*.

TNL **1.** *n.* Technical Newsletter. Replacement pages containing miscellaneous technical changes to an existing IBM manual, often published between editions or releases. Considered to be synonymous with the phrase, "We forgot to tell you about this," or "This is how it really works". The TNL's binding, size, and three-ring binder holes must be just slightly different from those of the base manual. **2.** *v.* To publish or issue a technical newsletter. As in: "We can always TNL it later". See also *fix it in pubs*.

-to *suffix.* Used to make an ungrammatical sentence slightly more or less grammatical, according to the whim of the user. This can be used with almost any verb, as in: "We can't exit Phase 0 without an agreed-to IBP".

toeprint *n.* A *footprint* (*q.v.*) of especially small size.

token *n.* An 8-character alphanumeric operand. This size was chosen because it just happened to fit the size of one of the System/360 atomic units of storage (the *doubleword*). Some operating systems and programs used to (and often still do) insist on parsing all input and truncating any words longer than 8 characters. [Especially annoying to those with 9-letter surnames.] See also *how hard would it be*.

token ring *n.* A local area network architecture in which computers are connected to a ring of wires or fibres around which messages (authorised by a token – rather like a relay baton) are passed; a possible physical layer for SNA or OSI. Not to be confused with the Tolkien Ring, although the purposes are similar: "One ring to rule them all, One ring to find them, One ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them, In a LAN with more nodes where the stations lie."

tolerant *adj.* Of a program: able to tolerate a certain system environment without *crashing*. By implication the program will run, but may have limitations or may not be able to take full advantage of the environment. "Yes, it'll run under XA, in toleration mode."

TOOLS disk *n.* A *disk* of shared data (especially of programs or computer conferences) that is maintained automatically by the TOOLS and TOOLSRUN programs. TOOLS was created in 1981, and now maintains tens of thousands of disks of data in IBM, mostly shared and copied across *VNET* (*q.v.*).

toolsmith *n.* One whose delight is the creation of tools. "Tool" here refers to any program (software) that helps people – preferably many people – do what they want to do as easily and as pleasantly as possible.

to-PID version (phonetic beheading of *stupid*) **1.** *n.* A version of a software product made available to internal users by the development group, which is supposedly a copy of the distribution tape prepared and shipped to *PID* (*q.v.*). This is rarely the same as the tape sent to customers, since developers often send more than one tape to PID at different times. See also *golden diskette*. **2.** *n.* An unreadable tape. This usage refers to the practice (pioneered, it is said, by CPD Raleigh) of sending an unreadable tape to PID when the software isn't ready yet. By the time PID discovers the "mistake", the real version will be ready (or so it is hoped).

topside *n.* The higher management echelons of a project or group. "To go in topside with a problem" means to attack the problem from top management downwards.

tortoise-and-hare problem *n.* The problem that arises when a recent version of a file (or an update) sent over the network overtakes an older version of the same file, due to difference in size or network routing. This, unless precautions are taken, usually results in a back-level version for the recipient (often a *service machine* or *conferencing facility*). The same problem can affect users directly when pieces of electronic mail arrive in the wrong order – sometimes leading to costly errors.

touch base with *v.* To talk about something to someone who would expect to be informed. Usage: "I shall go touch base with management about that problem". This term is understood to be a loan word from the language associated with a tribal ritual called "baseball".

tourist information *n.* Additional interesting but irrelevant information given in a presentation. For example: "Status: Customer running with no problems. TSO response time 11 minutes. Transaction rate 11.1397 per second". The second and third sentences are tourist information if the subject of the presentation is system availability. This is probably derived from tourist guide books or maps that not only provide information about getting from place

to place, but also give a collection of other information about each place.

tower *n.* An extension to a library, or suite, of programs that is built upon a previously available lower level "base" or "platform" of programs. This type of extension is in contrast to extensions made by modifying the base, and often leads to structurally sound systems – provided the base is stable enough. The term is used most often by those for whom it is a novel idea. See also *application tower*.

Tower C, Tour C *n.* The cafe/bar opposite the entrances of Towers A and B of the European Headquarters in Paris. Usage: "Confidential matters will not be discussed at Tower C". It is reported that, when it first opened, Tower C did very poor business in the early evening until curtains were installed so that homeward-bound executives couldn't see who was inside.

toy 1. *n.* A program that can be readily understood. **2.** *n.* A project in which the writing of the *code* is a significant part of the effort. In a "real" project, coding is a negligible portion of the costs. **3.** *adj.* Of a tool: great for teaching but lacking the basic facilities needed for doing real work. The classic example in computer languages is Pascal. See also *Mickey Mouse*.

tradeoff document *n.* A paper describing the pros, cons, and assumptions that were used in arriving at a decision. Usually written after the fact, and therefore "a list of reasons why we did what we did and why we didn't do what we didn't do".

trailing-edge *adj.* Slow to change (*cf. leading-edge*). Used in marketing to denote an account who are not interested in SNA, MVS, PROFS, *etc.* Usage: "XYZ are a real trailing edge account". (Note that "account" describes people in this usage, hence the plural is correct.)

translucent 1. *adj.* Of a change: claimed to affect a user or system **very** slightly. Used when a claim of *transparency* (*q.v.*) is obviously untenable. **2.** *adj.* Of a change: requiring a huge effort to accommodate.

transparent 1. *adj.* Of a change: claimed to have no adverse effects on a user or system. Used when talking to *change control* to clinch an argument. "But it's transparent!" Sadly, transparency seems a relative thing [relatively rare] – after all, if truly transparent, why make the change? See also *seamless*. **2.** *v.* **to go transparent.** To avoid responsibility for something by providing no solid place on which blame can be rested. As in: "When they found out that a GPD person caused the problem, they went transparent on it".

trap D *v.* Of a program running under the OS/2 operating system: to *crash*. From the identifier, the number 13 in hexadecimal, of the interrupt (and its handler, or trap) raised when a program tries to access a resource, such as storage, which it does not own. Usage: "Whenever I run your program from diskette it trap Ds".

trawl *v.* To find out, by sending out large numbers of automatic requests, what information is available from newly set-up *service machines*; to look for new service machines.

trick 1. *n.* A piece of *code*, or a programming algorithm, that cannot be understood by a newly trained programmer. The term is used during programming phase reviews: "The use of the translate function to reverse the string is a neat trick, but it can be made clearer and more understandable by the use of a DO loop". **2.** *n.* On an engineering model, a quick design change made to *flatten* a *bug*. If good, it will eventually go into the official design. If bad (the bug is still there, or another bug appears) then another trick will be tried.

trickological *adj.* Written more to glorify the tricks than to get the function performed. A trickological program of the highest order can be comprehended only by its author. It is especially easy (indeed, almost trivial) to write one of these in APL. Perhaps a pun on "trichological" [referring to the study of hair or hairiness]?

tri-lead *n.* A wire that consists of a central conductor with an earth (ground) wire each side. Effective as a signal carrier, but the contacts have been known to be less than ideal – so it is just as well that the number of wires in central processors is actually going down with complexity, rather than increasing. If the bad connection happened to be the ground wire (which was only connected to ground at one end) then the resulting floating conductor acted as a marvellous antenna; the noise it picked up was then efficiently coupled to the signal wires.

tri-lead trichinosis *n.* A condition in which the silver signal (centre) conductor of a Tri-lead causes a short-circuit between that conductor and one or both of the adjacent ground conductors due to chemical migration. Nothing to do with the worm infestation resulting from the eating of infected and insufficiently cooked pork, and in no way a religious statement.

trivial 1. *adj.* Possible. Used to convey the impression that the speaker is an expert in a subject and that the method of solution should be immediately obvious to everyone else in the room. Normally used when no one in the room (including the speaker) can think of a solution. **2.** *adj.* Of passwords: predictable. As in: "Your husband's name is a trivial password". **3.** *adj.* Easy. This usage implies that if the speaker had the responsibility of carrying out the task, it would be done in a matter of minutes. But, alas, it is someone else's job. **4.** *adj.* **non-trivial**. Too long, or simply uninteresting, so that the speaker does not really want to do it. "That's a non-trivial change".

Trouble Came Back, TCB *n.* A problem that has failed to succumb to its solution. This colloquialism is used by maintenance people to describe an intermittent or difficult-to-reproduce problem which has failed to respond to neglect. See *no problem found, go away*.

true blue *adj.* Of a customer account: using only IBM equipment. See also *all-blue*.

tube 1. *n.* A display screen. **2.** *v.* To send for display. "Can you tube me that ADMGDF file?"

tube-jockey *n.* A person who spends all of his or her working time (that is, time not spent at a coffee machine) pushing buttons on a keyboard without any noticeable results. This is the modern version of "a paper-pusher". The most visible kind spend all day appending to non-technical *forums*, and can be recognised by their compulsion to sign every append with self-bestowed titles showing how clever they are.

Tuesday *n.* The Day of the Announcement. For various reasons, most (if not all) IBM *Domestic* products are announced on a Tuesday. [It is said that this originally came to pass because T. J. Watson went sailing at weekends, and could not be sure of returning on a Monday if winds should fail him.] The major exception to this rule occurs when April Fool's Day is a Tuesday (as in

1986), in which case announcements are delayed until the Wednesday – 2nd April.

turbo *adj.* Of a revised program: better, faster, and bigger. This term is a spin-off from the automobile industry, though of course before it can be used in a computing environment it has to be acronymised. The most interesting acronym so far is TURBO: The Ultimate Really Better Overall. This was used to describe a *non-strategic* project at Yorktown that aimed to develop an improved CMS.

tweak *v.* To change in a small way, to tune. May be applied to software or to hardware. See also *one-line fix.*

twenty-pounder *n.* A particularly brassy form of wing-tipped shoe. As in: "There he was, all dressed out in his power suit and twenty-pounders".

twin-tail *n.* A method for connecting an IBM communications controller to two different computers so that they share access to a common communications network, or to connect two BSC lines to work like a single full-duplex line. Carries all the usual human problems and implications of trying to serve two masters. (From the electronics term for a balanced two-transistor – often FET – amplifier, "twin-tailed pair".)

type one *adj.* Of software: fully supported, as for System Products. This term refers to one of the old IBM software service agreement levels of support. The term has come to mean "high quality" software, though (since much of it is very old) it is not necessarily up to today's standards. [This author has campaigned for some time for "Type Zero" code – software that is guaranteed correct and reliable.] See also *home-grown.*

Tyranosaure *n.* REXX, when used in France.

T3 *n.* Teach The Teachers time. The beginning of the spreading of the marketing information for a product which typically occurs about a week before a product's announcement.

UKUS (*yuke-us, you-kay-you-ess*) *adj.* Of syntax, pronunciation, punctuation, or spelling: differing between UK and US (British and American) English. Usage: "That flavour of 'flavor' is ukus."

umbrella PTF *n.* A PTF (*q.v.*) that contains fixes to several (related and inter-dependent) products. Almost always a nightmare for users, because the complexity of the change means that human error will prevail, something will get overlooked, and something will break after the PTF has been applied.

uncork 1. *v.* To bring a problem to public view. As in: "Who uncorked that mess?" **2.** *v.* To lose one's temper. As in: "He really uncorked when he found out what it was going to cost." See also *come out of the bottle.*

undercover micro *n.* A microprocessor whose presence is neither documented nor obvious to the user of the hardware in which it is contained.

unit *n.* By U.S. law, something that can be purchased separately. Note that for this reason, IBM (and other computer manufacturers) no longer make CPUs (Central Processing Units), but CPs (Central Processors).

up *adj.* Working normally. The opposite of *down* (*q.v.*). "Is the system up yet?"

update *n.* A change to a piece of software or hardware made in order to enhance its capabilities or to correct a problem. Often refers to a particular portion of software (the *delta*) that can be merged automatically with the *source* of a program (if you have it) to form a new, updated, version. "Can you send me the update that lets it work with RSCS Version 2?" See also *OCO.*

UP-genned (*you-pee-genned*) *adj.* Of a system: generated to use only one processor of a multiprocessor hardware complex. Often a "trick" that simplifies the work of the *sysprog*, who then hopes that no one notices that the system is not running as fast as it might do. [Usually applied to avoid software that simply does not work on multi-processors.] Also used to describe a person who can only deal with a single problem at a time.

uplevel *v.* To install a more recent version of a program (not necessarily the most up-to-date). "When are you planning to uplevel RSCS?"

uplift *n.* An increment. Commonly used in pricing discussions. It has nothing to do with emotional or moral effects. Usage: "If we vendorize that unit, what will be the uplift on the price tag?"

user *n.* One who uses (rather than creates) a product.

user-cuddly *adj.* Of software or documentation: especially *user-friendly.* [This phrase was first heard from a customer at the SHARE conference in March 1984, describing the VM REXX interpreter.]

user error 1. *n.* Documentation error. **2.** *n.* Poor design. **3.** *n. (rare)* A mistake made by a user. As used in the MVS/XA System Programming Library: "Because user errors often produce unpredictable results, the user should try to avoid them."

user exit *n.* A published external *interface* that allows access to the internals of a piece of software.

user-friendly 1. *adj.* Of a program: usable by someone who is not a computer expert. A program that was used by more than twenty people (whose comments were acted upon) before being distributed. **2.** *n.* Of hardware or software: not easy to use, but needing to be sold. See also *user-cuddly, user-hostile.*

user-hostile *adj.* Of a program: actively unpleasant to the user; not *user-friendly.* Often due to the use of ill-chosen words for messages, as when the user mistypes a command, and the program responds, brusquely, "`Illegal Command`" [Go Directly To Jail].

userid (*you-zer-eye-dee*) **1.** *n.* "*nom de terminal*". **2.** *n.* A nickname that identifies a person (user) to a computer system or to other users. It is most understandable if selected by the user (and in this case may even be related to the name of the user). If selected by a program written by someone with a tiny mind, it is likely to be cryptic (KR39232E, 86612345). A strange rule was used in the La Gaude laboratory until recently; one could have any userid one wanted so long as it began with the letter "L". Yorktown Research once had a more involved rule: you could have any userid you liked, provided it was no more than seven letters, and did not begin with the letters "IBM" (or any other string that already existed as a userid). [History can cause strange anomalies: "IBMPC" was allowed, "IBMVM" was not.] See also *nodeid, vnetid.*

user orientation *n.* A term for the kind of manual now described as *user friendly.* This was first used in 1968 at a meeting of hardware publications managers, when it was stated that the greatest need was for publications developers to understand who the readers were and why they were readers. It took fifteen years for this truth to be widely appreciated and applied.

utility *n.* A program that provides a general service that may have a variety of uses. For example, sorting and printing programs are often called utilities. The name implies a lack of novelty, and describes a "bread-and-butter" program. See also *facility*.

value add *n.* An improvement in *function* or performance. "What's the value add in release 3?" See *added value*.

vanilla *adj.* Of standard flavour, *e.g.*, as shipped to customers. As in: "You mean it's possible to run vanilla CP?" See also *chocolate, mocha, flavour,* and *PID*.

vaporware *n.* Hardware or software that is announced [not by IBM!] for availability at a later date, but never materializes. In the case of PC-related products, this is often because the announcing company itself has vaporized.

vary *v.* To change a device from *online* to *offline*, or vice versa, usually while the computer it is attached to continues to operate. From the *OS* command VARY, still available on *VM* and *MVS* systems. As in: "We'll vary that CPU on and see if we can come up MP".

Vector Feature, Vector Facility *n.* An optional *vector processor* that can be added to an IBM 3090 *mainframe*. The Vector Feature, developed at the Poughkeepsie Laboratory, is remarkable for being a major hardware product that was developed entirely "on the sly" – so much so that it's said that not even IBM's competitors knew about it. See *hobby*.

vector processor *n.* Any machine with a non-370 compatible architecture that runs at a speed of over 3 MIPS. There is an implicit slight here that it is not a real "commercial" machine, since vector processors typically are used for scientific applications. Presumably (so it is thought) when a "vector processor" is given a commercial job stream, it will not run any faster than the fastest 370. [Attitudes to vector processors have changed dramatically since the announcement of the 3090 Vector product in 1985.] See *minicomputer*.

vehicle *n.* An indirect means to achieve some result (usually in the marketplace). "We will focus on the F machines as the key vehicle for the new user interface."

vendor 1. *n.* A company that either supplies a product or service to IBM, or supplies something to IBM customers. See also *OEM*. **2.** *v.* To release *headcount* (to comply with cuts or to supply a new project) by employing contract labour to carry out maintenance and/or development on a project. Despite the observation that even more people (including contractor personnel) are now involved with the project (since IBM must still perform planning and contract supervision) this is viewed as a wise use of resources.

vendorable *adj.* Allowed to be *vended out*. Usually heard as "Not Vendorable".

vendorize *v.* To hire a sub-contractor (*vendor*) to do something that was previously done in-house. A vendorized product is one that was originally built by IBM but is now largely assembled by a sub-contractor.

vendor technology *n.* Semiconductor technology produced outside IBM. The implication is that any variety of technology can be produced by IBM, but "out there" they can raise only one type. Vendor Technology Logic (**VTL**) was synonymous with TTL (Transistor-Transistor Logic, never manufactured by IBM) in the 1970s.

vend out *v.* To contract production of some item to an outside vendor. A favourite way to avoid security restrictions – quite recently the contract for making the foils for a presentation to the Corporate Management Committee to summarise the IBM corporate five-year plan was vended out.

verb *n.* Any word (*i.e.*, any noun may be misused as a verb). "There is no noun in the American language that cannot be verbed".

verbiage (*ver-bij, ver-bedge*) *n.* A term used to refer to any kind of documentation. The similarity of this word to "garbage" does not seem accidental, and the word is often misspelt as "Verbage". The use of this term has the effect of belittling the documentation, either because one wants to under-emphasise its importance, as in "I have the design flowchart all done. All I have to do is add the verbiage", or because the documentation is wordy, as in: "That user's manual sure has a lot of verbiage in it", or because the reader is too "busy" to be bothered to read it.

vertical *adj.* Specialised (rather than broad-based, or *horizontal*). As in: "...some of the more specialised micro dealers are starting to find themselves up a pretty tight vertical niche."

via *n.* A pathway from one face of a printed circuit *card* (or layer in a *chip*) to the other. Originally always described the plated-through holes in IBM multi-layer printed circuit cards (a scarce *resource*), but now more loosely applied to hardware mechanisms for taking a short-cut from one place to another, or to any construction method that can take advantage of vias.

vibration tested *adj.* Having survived careless or deliberate mechanical abuse, such as being dropped or kicked. [Such treatment cures faults in equipment almost as often as it causes them.]

virgin *adj.* Of a program: unmodified (*e.g.*, as received from *PID*). It is interesting to note that the first modification to such code is usually that which is the most desired. Also used to describe a silicon wafer before the first etching to place transistors or other components on it; a tape or paper before first impression; *etc.* See also *vanilla*.

virtual *adj.* A term used to indicate that things are not what they seem to be. Generally means that you can see it, but it is not really there. As in **virtual disk**, **virtual memory**. (As opposed to something that is *transparent*: "It's really there, but you can't see it".)

virtual Friday *n.* The Wednesday or Thursday before a long weekend in the USA for which the Thursday or Friday (respectively) is a holiday. Usage: "Don't hold that meeting tomorrow afternoon – it's a virtual Friday".

virtualize *v.* Under *VM*, to simulate a resource for a virtual machine. "VM/XA SP virtualizes central processors and central storage but not expanded storage." In other words, VM/XA SP can simulate processors and central storage for an operating system running under it, but cannot simulate expanded storage.

virtual machine *n.* See *VM*.

visibility *n.* Kudos, importance. A project that has "visibility" is much in the eye of others. This makes it high (political) risk; the workers involved may find themselves showered with awards – or may find themselves the scapegoats for others.

visionary *n.* Someone who reads the outside literature.

visual footprint *n.* The apparent size of a piece of computer equipment – such as a terminal – as perceived by a user. For example, many televisions have acres of wasted space each side of the screen; others, with a smaller visual footprint, generally look more elegant.

vital records *n.* Records which are supposed to allow a project to restart with minimal loss in the event of disaster. As they are usually three to six months out of date, and often suffering from inconsistency, it is just as well that they have never really been needed.

VM *n.* Virtual Machine. Used universally within IBM to refer to the VM/370 Operating System, now known as VM/SP (Virtual Machine System Product). VM is the most general IBM operating system for the System/370, since it alone allows all the other operating systems to be run under it (including itself). It is the operating system of choice within IBM for almost all development work, since its single-user Conversational Monitor System (CMS) is faster and more adaptable than the alternatives. See also *SP*.

VMITE (*vee-might*) *n. VM* Internal Technical Exchange. A gathering of many of the IBM VM System Programmers, held for ten years in or near San Jose. With the steadily increasing number of VM systems, this meeting maintained its vitality in a way unusual for this kind of regular conference from its first meeting in 1978 until it was superseded by the *CCITE* (*q.v.*) in 1989. The meeting was originally organized and hosted by Ray Holland, then of the General Products Division VM System Support group at the Santa Teresa Lab. It was first held at the San Jose Research Laboratory, then later at the San Jose Convention Center, and finally at the Almaden Research Center.

VMNews (*vee-em-news*) *v.* To submit an item to the *VM* Newsletter. The VM Newsletter, edited by Peter Capek, ran for 50 editions in the late 1970s and early 1980s and was certainly the most useful communication newsletter within IBM, its usefulness only later being eclipsed by the growth of conferencing systems. Therefore to VMNews a piece of information is to ensure its wide distribution. A different meaning sometimes occurs to the select group of enthusiasts who submitted items to the 51st edition.

VMR *v.* To reject. From Very Much Regret, the wording used in the standard rejection letter for PC Software Submissions "I think we should VMR this one".

VMSHARE *n.* A conferencing system used by the VM project of the SHARE organisation (a user's group of IBM customers). A copy of the conference is provided by SHARE for IBM use; there is also a later PCSHARE conference.

VNET (*vee-net*) *v.* To send by computer network (as opposed to tape or mail). "I'll VNET you the files tomorrow". The verb derives from the name of the original IBM communication network set up within IBM during the 1970s, and now linking over 2600 computers. The V, incidentally, means nothing – the name was chosen to resemble the other familiar acronyms of the time (VSAM, VTAM, and so on). VNET is sometimes described as "a communication network for Service Machines, which humans are sometimes able to use". See also *net*.

vnetid (*vee-net-eye-dee*) *n.* The network address of a computer user or *service machine*. It is usually the combination of an untypeable *nodeid* (*q.v.*) with a cryptic *userid* (*q.v.*). This often makes the identity of the originator of a message very difficult to determine if no real name is included in the message. How is one to guess that XES7208C at GYSVMHD1 is good ol' Kurt in Heidelberg? Sometimes the only way to answer is to begin with "Dear XES7208C at GYSVMHD1..".

wait state *n.* A period during which a processor is idle, for example, waiting for input, output, or memory activity to complete. Rare in modern multitasking systems, but common on workstations and personal computers even today. System/360s had a **wait light** which indicated that the processor was in wait state; it's said that some engineers replaced this with a burnt-out bulb to avoid drawing attention to this implied inefficiency.

walk around the block *v.* To convince someone to do something by repeated requests and explanations, sometimes by higher and higher levels of management. "He didn't want to take the assignment, but we walked around the block a few times and he saw the light".

walk in the woods *n.* A time spent out of general circulation or out of power. As in: "The product was a disaster, so they sent him for a walk in the woods". [Hoping, perhaps, that the lions would get him?] See *penalty box, lion food*.

walk up and use *adj.* Of a software application, or a combination of hardware and software: ready to use immediately. "You plug the display, keyboard, and printer into the system unit and you have a walk up and use desktop publishing system."

wall follower *n.* A simpleton, or one who goes by the book. "Joe is a real wall-follower." An early robot-building contest which involved running a maze was won by a mechanism which only sensed and followed the right-hand wall. It was called Harvey Wallbanger. Robots that tried to learn as they traversed the maze did not do as well.

Wansdyke *n.* Mysterious caverns in England, "somewhere" near the ancient Saxon earthwork known as Wansdyke, where vital records are stored. UK equivalent of *Iron Mountain, Salt Mine*.

warm body *n.* A real person (usually a programmer or engineer). A manager's empire is measured by the *headcount* allocated to him or her, but the headcount is not necessarily filled. Usage: "How many warm bodies will you have by April?"

warm fuzzies 1. *n.* The kind of feeling it is alleged that you get when you think you are proceeding in the right direction, or when you are being treated well by your manager. This state of mind is usually of short duration, and is succeeded by *cold pricklies* (*q.v.*). **2.** *n.* Messages produced by a program to indicate that it is alive and well but is likely to take some time to finish its processing.

war room 1. *n.* The nerve centre of the operation to control the development or maintenance of certain products. A room in or near to a development project, filled with displays, telephones, specifications, wiring diagrams, microcode listings, and the like. The purpose is to employ the cream of the crop of engineers associated with a project to "make war" on failing machines. Almost any solution can be used, but the best ones can be translated immediately into *EC*s (Engineering Changes). The modern term for such a place, "Support Center", somehow does not have the same aura (or success).

When *Big OS* was first released (circa 1965) a room was dedicated in building 705, Poughkeepsie, to provide immediate assistance to users. This room was designated the "World-wide APAR Response Room" – a name inevitably shortened to "war room". It was probably the first so named. **2.** *n.* A room set aside in a marketing (sales) location for intensive planning, predicting, and *point* tallying at crucial times in the year. The room looks like a battlefield, since the walls, tables, and floor are generally covered with flipchart paper full of numbers and words, presenting the expected customer installs and the resulting points (until the end of the war).

water *n.* Orders for equipment which the customer does not intend to accept. "The first-day orders set a new record, but they must be at least a third water". Major causes include: place-holding orders while the customer tries to figure out what has been announced; dropout due to multi-year delivery schedules; and Christmas presents to deserving salesmen.

watercool *v.* Usually of a computer: to cool, using chilled water.

water-cooled engineer *n.* A service engineer who refuses to work on machinery that is not water-cooled. "If it isn't water-cooled, it's a terminal!" (Only large processors are water-cooled.)

water MIPS *n.* Processing power that is provided by large water-cooled computers such as 3090s. As in: "Longer term, we see all computing power being delivered by water MIPS or desk MIPS". See also *desk MIPS, MIPS.*

Watson Freeway *n.* The sections of Interstates 684 and 287 which connect Corporate HQ (Armonk) with NCD HQ (*1133*, see below) via Harrison.

Watson's Law *n.* The reliability of machinery is inversely proportional to the number and significance of any persons watching it. (This well-known rule applies to **all** demonstrations of new equipment, software, *etc.*)

wave a dead chicken *v.* To offer a forlorn hope; a burnt offering or witchcraft. As in: "I'll just wave a dead chicken over the dump", which means "I'll give it a go, but don't expect too much".

we agree *response.* "No, we haven't done that yet, and we wish we'd thought of it ourselves." (Response to questions of the form: "Shouldn't you return the misdirected mail to the sender, instead of just throwing it away?")

weenie *n.* The ";" (semi-colon) character on a keyboard. "To get back to the first screen, type in a 2 comma 7 weenie and hit ENTER".

wet *adj.* Of a *mainframe*: cooled by chilled water. This describes water-cooled computers such as the 308x and 309x ranges. Mainly used in the locution "wet box".

whim of record *n.* A *plan of record* (*q.v.*) that changes weekly (or more frequently).

white socks type *n.* Anyone in CSD or FED, divisions now amalgamated to form the NSD (National Service Division [A name unlikely to catch on in the UK, where National Service used to be the euphemism for military conscription]). IBM engineers traditionally wore white socks under dark suits, and it is said that some still do. "Anyone for tennis?"

WIBNI (*wib-knee*) *n.* Acronym for "Wouldn't It Be Nice If", usually used to refer to useful but difficult-to-implement additions to software systems. "I have a WIBNI for the zorch function."

wild duck *n.* A creative technical person who does unconventional things, or at least does things in an unconventional way. Implies respect, and an acknowledgement that many of that person's ideas turn out to be valuable. It is said that IBM does not mind having a few wild ducks around – so long as they fly in formation.

This term was created by T. J. Watson Jr., who told a story (by the philosopher Kirkegaard) about a flock of wild ducks that landed near a farm. Some got fed by the farmer and stayed, and either died of obesity or got eaten. The truly wild ones flew away – and survived.

Winchester disk *n.* A hard (rather than floppy) disk whose head rests upon the surface of the disk when stationary. The name "Winchester" was first used as the *code name* for a disk storage device being developed at the IBM San Jose engineering laboratories around 1973, and has since become the industry generic term for that disk technology. The rationale for the name was the original size of the twin storage modules, which were 30 Megabytes each, matching by analogy (30+30) the cartridge used in a Winchester 30-30 rifle. (In this case the first 30 refers to the calibre of the rifle, and the second to the grains [weight] of powder used in the cartridge.) The Winchester was the first device whose read/write head could actually rest upon the surface of the disk without disastrous consequences. The head assembly mass was reduced from 300 grams for the 3330 disk to a feathery 18 grams, thus successfully fulfilling the original aim of eliminating the costly head-unloading mechanism. The direct cost of the head dropped by a factor of four as a consequence of this. The capacity of the disk that was actually released as the 3340 later grew to 35 and 70M, but the name stuck. The name became public during a court case that debated an attempt to misappropriate the technology. The term "Winchester" was a convenient handle for describing the intellectual property, and came up regularly in the court and in the reports of journalists covering the trial.

window **1.** *n.* A timing problem due to a logical error. An unlikely set of circumstances which were not allowed for, although probably understood. Usually the amount of code required to "close the window" is inversely proportional to the size of the window opening. Murphy's Law normally prevails, so the problem caused by the window will not appear until after *FCS* – by which time the person who left the window open is nowhere in sight. **2.** *n.* A portion of a display screen. It can also be used as a verb to mean the process of defining the windows on a screen. "Who did the windowing on this panel?" **3.** *n.* An Early Retirement opportunity. An occasional chance to retire early on favourable terms. There was one such window at the Owego location a few years ago, and many people took advantage of it. Everyone there ['tis said] who is even close to retirement kept wondering (aloud) when the next window would be. Their prayers were answered in 1986.

window-dressing **1.** *n.* Something put in a *business case* (*q.v.*) to make it look better or even good. **2.** *n.* A "graphical" or "window" interface added to an otherwise deficient program to make it appear more attractive.

winged comments *n.* Comments set on the same line as a program statement and which (in the ideal case) only refer to that one statement. If statements are kept short and the winged comments are

descriptive then such commentary can considerably enhance the quality of the code.

wing it *v.* Just go and do it any old way [does not imply any skill in improvisation]. "In this location, we design the hardware, software, and microcode for a project. When no one can figure out why it doesn't function, we then spend a few months writing specifications of what was thought to be developed." When the final result is apparent, it is always discovered that the result of winging-it is not what was intended.

wing-tipped warrior *n.* An experienced and proficient IBM Marketing Representative. A Wing-Tip is a style of dress shoe that has a "wing like" pattern of dots punched in the leather on the toes. See also *rep, power suit.*

wingtips *n.* Official IBMdom. As in: "Yes, Mr. Customer, if this system fails, we'll Darken The Sky With Wingtips". See also *help.*

winnie *n.* A small format (usually 5.25 inch) hard disk. This is a diminutive for *Winchester* (*q.v.*) and [I think] has no connection with the noise often made by the disk.

wishlet *n.* A small wish, more practical than a *WIBNI.*

wishlist *n.* A list of *WIBNI*s and *Nice To Have*s for a program or other tool. When "prioritized", this may become a *priority list* (*q.v.*); but in general the future of the items on the list is very variable, and depends largely on how much spare time the author gets from IBM, family, *etc.* in order to implement items on the Wishlist.

woodshed *n.* A figurative [*virtual*?] place where a person is taken for admonition. A place of temporary residence, unlike a *penalty box.* As in: "John Akers took his managers to the woodshed after seeing the Fortune magazine article on Most Admired Corporations". In North America in olden days, the woodshed was far enough from the house that children could be disciplined there without unduly disturbing the rest of the family.

woof and whinny *n.* A high level and perhaps rather theatrical "show and tell" with a lot of yelling and screaming. See *dog and pony show.*

wordsmith *v.* To create or edit a memo, letter, or other document with a word processor or editing program, usually with a view to improving it or making it more acceptable to others; to fiddle with the words in a document. As in: "I have to wordsmith that memo before I send it to anyone".

work-around 1. *n.* A technique suggested by an engineering or programming department for getting around a major blunder until a more permanent repair can be made. "We are aware that the real-time clock will give ambiguous date/time readings at midnight. If you MUST run your on-line applications 24 hours a day, you should instruct your machine operators to put the machine in STOP for the minute or so around midnight. This work-around will have to be employed until 1992, when we plan to release a new feature that corrects this minor imperfection". **2.** *n.* A design change installed in a machine under test. The work-around is usually to allow continued testing by the bypassing of a failing function. The bypassed functions must be fixed (all work-arounds removed) before the machine design can be accepted. [This technique can also be applied while debugging programs.]

working as designed *adj.* Of a program or piece of hardware: not working as a user wants, but nevertheless working as specified. Used as a reason for not accepting a criticism or suggestion.

write-only *adj.* Of program code: unreadable, unfathomable. Used in a derogatory way to refer to others' coding practices, especially when used to refer to APL: "Since his APL code is write-only we'll have to find some other way to communicate with the software folk." The term is also used affectionately between APLers: "I understand your routine perfectly. This proves once again that APL is not write-only..."

wrt *preposition.* With Respect To. Also used (with confusion) as an abbreviation for "write" . See also *btw.*

WYSIWYG (*wizzy-wig*) **1.** *adj.* What You See Is What You Get. Applied to a text, graphics, or image editor that tries to show on the screen exactly what will appear on the printed page. WYSIWYG technology is rather crude at present, prompting the comment "What You See Is **All** You Get", but it seems that this kind of display is appropriate for certain applications. [This term was first used in IBM by the 5520 and text architecture designers, in 1977-78.] Also **WYSLN** (*wizz-lin*) – What You See Looks Natural. **2.** *adj.* Of a display panel: having no *help.* "All of our interactive functions have been rewritten using WYSIWYG panels." See also *user-friendly.*

XA *n.* Extended Architecture. The extension of the System/370 architecture from 24-bit addressing (allowing access to 16 Megabytes of storage) to 31-bit addressing (allowing access to 128 times as much).

yabafu *n.* An *append* that is empty or contains only *boiler plate* text. Originally (1986) meant "Yet Another Blank Append From Uithone", referring to numerous empty appends from that *nodeid* which plagued conferences and which were caused by user interface problems in some Uithone-specific *exec.* Can also describe any major publication blunder (such as the XT/286 advertisement in the Daily Telegraph of 29 December 1986 which featured a [then absurd] 20 *Meg* slimline *diskette*).

yearend *n.* A time, strictly speaking in December, of intense workload (and paranoia) in sales and marketing areas. This is the period when salespeople strive to meet their targets and everyone else tries to keep out of their way. The exact "date" of yearend is around January 7th, depending on flexibility of local systems and the deadlines set by headquarters locations.

yellow brick road *n.* Route 9, Poughkeepsie. The road on which you travel to see the Wizard of OZ. See *OS.*

yellow layer *n.* Communications software. See *layer.*

yellow wire 1. *n.* A hardware fix. Products whose connections were mainly printed-circuits had fixes and *overflows* manually connected using yellow wires. The reliability of a product is inversely proportional to the number of yellow wires. **2.** *v.* To wire-wrap. "Of course they had trouble building the 801 prototype using ECL – it was yellow-wired!" A piece of hardware that is built entirely manually may be connected by wires coated in a yellow plastic, connecting components by wrapping the copper wire around their projecting parts. This technique for prototyping was superseded by meltable-insulation wiring, around 1977. See also *blue wire, purple wire.*

Yorkthorne *n.* The Hawthorne extension of the T. J. Watson Research Laboratory at Yorktown Heights, NY.

Yorktownism *n.* An *incantation* (*q.v.*) that works only on the Yorktown version of a standard operating system. Yorktown is infamous for running the most adulterated VM systems in the company – as many toolsmiths there have discovered when they tried to let others use their work.

yo-yo *v.* To repeatedly *crash* and be restarted; to go *up* and *down* many times. As in: "TOROLAB6 has been yo-yoing all day today".

zap 1. *v.* To alter the machine code of a program by storing directly into main storage, or by running a program (known as SuperZap) to have a similar effect on the disk-resident copy of a program. This practice started in the days when a proper change to program *source* followed by reassembly was a task measured in hours. Now a term for shoddy, incomplete work which is likely to cause trouble in future because the running version of a program no longer agrees with its *source* – a situation that inevitably leads to problems. "We'll just zap it for now and hope tomorrow never comes". Nowadays zapping is a dying art, and can itself take hours, but it may well see a renaissance as *OCO* becomes wide-spread. See also *patch.* **2.** *v.* To use a "Zapper" to discharge static electricity near various sensitive parts of a computer. This test determines whether the machine will survive a visit in the dry winter-time by an active young woman wearing a silk blouse, silk slip, and wool skirt.

Z-Block (*zed-block*) *n.* The first temporary building in Hursley, there before IBM moved in, which was used by Supermarine for Spitfire (a World War II fighter aircraft) design. The legendary birthplace of the Hursley Programming Centre. Now describes the 2nd floor West Wing of D-Block, home of the new CICS design technology (which uses **Z-notation**).

zero-content *adj.* Of a document or presentation: containing no useful information. (Though probably very wordy and beautifully illustrated.) See *content.*

zipperhead 1. *n.* One who has a closed mind. Said to be most frequently used in Development Laboratories, especially those with a high average age of employee. **2.** *n. beamer* (*q.v.*).

zoo *n.* The VM Systems Programming department (*circa* 1978) in Toronto, Canada (now called VM Software Services). The nickname arose because many people in the department collected stuffed animals; in time it became pervasive – software tools designed and written by the Zoo were distributed widely, and there are few VM systems in IBM without at least one module that includes the epithet "*Property of the Zoo*". These modules have the prefix EMS (DMS, which belonged to CMS, with the D changed to E for "Extension").

Students of British broadcasting will recognise the relevance of the Monty Python sketch that ends "and now it's time for the penguin on top of your television set to explode".

& (*ampersand*) **1.** *n.* A character used in many IBM macro and command languages in order to distinguish data from keywords. This helps to make them hard to read and to type, and so adds to the mystique surrounding programmers that use such languages. Sometimes used doubled, for double confusion. See *command language.* **2.** *adj.* Fluid in name. When the name of a project or future product is (or is likely to be) changed many times, the authors of its documentation will often use a variable *symbol* to represent the name that is likely to be changed. In the standard IBM documentation language, SCRIPT, such symbols are identified by a leading ampersand. This usage carries forward into speech, where one speaks of the "ampersand xyz" project, where "xyz" is the current name. See also *symbol.*

***** (*asterisk*) *n.* A character used (among other things) to denote emphasis. Most softcopy text (such as electronic mail and *forums*) is in a single font; to indicate emphasis without the blatancy of *Great Runes* (*q.v.*), text can be enclosed in asterisks. Usage: "Do you *really* want the PURGE RDR default to be SYSTEM ALL?" Since emphasised words are often set in italics, the asterisk is also used to mark items normally presented in italics, such as book titles. See also *splat, star out.*

1133 1. *n.* The multiplexor enclosure for the 1130 Minicomputer. **2.** *n.* A division headquarters building in Westchester Avenue, White Plains, NY. IBM buildings in the USA each have an identifying number, and this number is often used in references. For example, the 801 minicomputer (whose architecture is used in the IBM RT PC product) is named after Building 801, the T. J. Watson Research Laboratory near Yorktown Heights.

80-column mind *n.* A narrow or blinkered mind. Usually applied to people who, conceptually at least, would prefer to be able to lay their hands directly on their data, and to whom the transition from cards to tape was a traumatic experience. Nobody has dared tell them about [magnetic] disks yet. (It is said that these people will be buried "face down, 9-edge forward", "face up, 12-edge first", or "*face down, nine to the throat*" (*q.v.*).)

80x24 artist *n.* Person who can do nice drawings on a non-graphic screen which has 24 or 25 rows of 80 characters.

80-80 listing *n.* A program that could read a *deck* of *cards* and print each 80-character card image as a new line on a printer. It's said that it was possible to write an 80-80 listing program on the initial program card for the IBM 1401. See *boot.*

9-edge *n.* The bottom edge of a standard Hollerith computer *card.* So named because a card had twelve rows; two at the top (variously named) and ten below (named **0** through **9**). The lowest of these was row 9; hence the nearest edge was 9-Edge. (The other edge was often known as the **12-edge**.) See also *face down, nine to the throat.*