

IT GLOSSARY

antivirus program or software - A program that will detect and remove computer viruses.

application programs - Programs used directly by the end user, such as word processing and appointment scheduling.

archival backup¹ - 1. A routine that makes it possible to back up only the files that have changed since the last backup, instead of backing up every file. Archival backup saves time and storage space. 2. A backup that will be stored for a longer period of time.

ASP - Application Service Provider. A third-party software distribution and/or management service. Generally provides software via a wide area network from a centralized data center. Allows companies to outsource and more efficiently upgrade software.

automatic postback - A function of computer software that receives Electronic Remittance Advice from an insurance carrier and automatically posts the payments and adjustments and may queue secondary insurance claims or may mark them as crossed over. Also called automatic remittance.

automatic remittance - A function of computer software that receives Electronic Remittance Advice from an insurance carrier and automatically posts the payments and adjustments and may queue secondary insurance claims or may mark them as crossed over. Sometimes called automatic postback.

browser - A client program that allows users to read hypertext documents on the World Wide Web and navigate between them. Examples are Netscape Navigator, Lynx, and Microsoft Internet Explorer. Browsers can be text-based or graphic.

cable modem - A cable modem is an external device that connects to the computer, and instead of getting an Internet connection through a telephone wire (or another system), the connection comes through a cable network (the same as that used for cable TV connections).

capitation - An arrangement between the practice or provider and an insurer in which the insurer pays the practice or provider a certain amount of money per patient for a certain time period to cover the medical needs for a population of patients covered by the insurer. All procedures may be included in the capitation arrangement or only a specific list of procedures may be included with any others being fee for service.

CD - Compact Disk - A small platter on which computer data can be stored and read.

CD-ROM - Compact Disk Read Only Memory - An optical disc that is physically the same as an audio CD, but contains computer data. Storage capacity is about 680 megabytes. CD-ROMs are interchangeable between different types of computers.

CD-ROM drive - A disk drive that reads CD-ROMs and audio CDs. It may be installed in the computer or removable. Recordable CD-ROM drives can also record onto the CDs.

client - The computer in a client/server architecture that requests files or services. The computer that provides services is called the server. The client may request file transfer, remote logins, printing, or other available services. The client also means the software that makes the connection possible.

client/server - An architecture in which one computer can get information from another. The client is the computer that asks for access to data, software, or services. The server, which can be anything from a personal computer to a mainframe, supplies the requested data or services for the client.

¹ Most of the definitions in the Glossary are courtesy of ComputerUser.com.

AAOE would like to thank Susan Jones, author of the AAOE publication, *Selecting and Implementing the Right EMR, Practice Management and Optical System for Your Practice* (Academy Store Product # 012169) and owner of KeyMedical Systems for making the glossary available to our members. She can be reached at susanjones@keymedical.net or (765) 482-7964.

client/server network - A network in which one or more computers are servers, and the others are clients, as opposed to a peer-to-peer network, in which any node can be a client and server.

cluster control unit - A device that manages the input and output of several devices. For example, a cluster control unit may control several disk drives connected to a main computer.

coaxial cable - A cable consisting of a single conductor which is surrounded by insulation and a conductive shield. The shield usually is connected to an electrical ground and prevents the cable from picking up or emitting electrical noise. Coaxial cables are used in communications.

computer cabling - Wires that connect peripherals to the servers, hubs, switches, modems, and routers within a building. A combination of cables, wire, cords and connecting hardware used in the telecommunications infrastructure.

computer hardware - The hardware is the physical part of a computer system; the machinery and equipment.

CPR system - Computerized Patient Records system - Charting medical records via computer. Also called EHR and EMR.

cross connection - A connection scheme between cabling runs, subsystems and equipment using patch cords or jumpers that attach to connection hardware on each end.

DAT - Digital Audio Tape - A kind of magnetic tape originally designed for audio format, now also used in computers to back up data. DAT cassettes are about the size of audiocassettes and can store up to 24GB.

disk cache - A section of RAM that provides a cache between the disk and the CPU. It enables the computer to operate faster. Retrieving data from the hard disk can be slow; a disk caching program or disk caching controller helps solve this problem by placing recently accessed data in the disk cache. Next time that data is needed, it may already be available in the disk cache; otherwise a time-consuming search of the hard disk is necessary.

disk caching controller - A computer card which determines how data is read, written and stored for speed of access.

disk drive - A fast storage device for computers containing spinning platters on which data is stored.

disk drive array - Multiple disk drives which store data either for speed of access or for redundancy.

distributor - A facility enabling the termination of cables as well as their interconnection or cross-connection with other cabling or equipment.

DLT - Digital Linear Tape - A type of 1/2" wide magnetic tape used for backup. One of the fastest backup methods that can backup very large amounts of data very quickly. Used mainly on larger system configurations.

dumb terminal - Computer-like device that includes a screen and a keyboard for both display and input. It connects to the server. It is called "dumb" because it can do very little on its own. It is not a computer by itself. The programs it "runs" are located on the server. Also called a terminal.

EHR system - Electronic Health Records system - Charting medical records via computer. Also called CPR and EMR.

electrical surge protection - A device that keeps computer hardware safe from electrical power excesses.

electronic claims - Insurance claims that the computer system files either through a direct modem connection or through the Internet.

EMI - Electrical Magnetic Interference - Interference from electromagnetic waves that come from electrical and electronic devices. These forces can wreak havoc with computer cabling.

EMR system - Electronic Medical Records system - Charting medical records via computer. Also called CPR and EHR.

enterprise network - A network for a large business enterprise. This kind of network may comprise a number of local area networks, which have to interface with each other as well as with a central database management system and many client workstations. The design and management of an enterprise network can be very complex.

FFS - Fee For Service - A payment arrangement in which the provider is paid a fee for each service provided.

fiber-optic cable - A cable that carries laser light, encoded with digital signals, rather than electrical energy. Made of thin fibers of glass, fiber-optic cables can transmit large amounts of data per second. Fiber-optic cables cannot be tapped by remote sensing equipment because they do not emit electromagnetic radiation.

firewall - An electronic boundary that prevents unauthorized users from accessing certain files on a network; or, a computer used to maintain such a boundary.

FRAD - Frame Relay Access Device - A combination of hardware and software that is used to convert communications packets from formats like TCP, SNA, IPX, and others into frames that can then be sent over a frame relay network.

graphical browser - A browser that can display graphic images (pictures) in addition to text; examples are Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer.

GUI - Graphical User Interface - A type of screen display between the computer and the user in which pictures, drawings and text are used to help convey content instead of text only.

hard disk - The main device that a computer uses to store information. Hard disks are rigid aluminum or glass disks about 3.5" in diameter in a personal computer and smaller in a laptop. They are coated with ferromagnetic material and rotate around a central axle. Data is transferred magnetically by a read/write head. A hard disk drive for a personal computer may contain as many as eight hard disks, rotating around the same axle. Most hard disks are permanently connected to the drive, but there are removable hard disks. Hard disk access time (the amount of time it takes to retrieve data) is measured in milliseconds.

hardware - Computer equipment including servers, modems, workstations, terminals and printers.

home-run cabling - A distribution method in which individual cables are run directly from the horizontal cross-connect to each telecommunications outlet. This configuration is also known as star topology.

horizontal cabling - The cabling between and including the telecommunications outlet and the horizontal cross-connect.

host - 1. A computer connected to a network that provides data and services to other computers. Services may include data storage, file transfer, data processing, e-mail, bulletin board services, World Wide Web, etc. 2. A multi-user computer that has terminals attached to it.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language): Coding that is used to indicate how files should be displayed on the World Wide Web.

hub - Equipment that serves as the centralized connection point for a network or portion thereof. Hubs are used for multiplexing, multi-port bridging functions, switching and test access. They can be either passive or active and are not considered to be part of the cabling infrastructure.

incremental backup - Making a copy of only the files that have changed since the last backup, instead of backing up every file. Incremental backup saves a lot of time and can save storage space.

intranet - A local area network, which may not be connected to the Internet, but which, has some similar functions. Some organizations set up World Wide Web servers on their own internal networks, so employees have access to the organization's Web documents.

Internet - The network connected around the world which allows users to send files, e-mails, and access all types of sites for information.

ISP - Internet Service Provider - Companies which offer users access to the Internet.

Jazz drive - A compact, removable-cartridge disk drive made by Iomega Corporation. A 540MB and a 1GB cartridge are available.

knowledge base - The list of available symptoms and findings in Electronic Medical Records systems.

live - Using your computer system while seeing patients in your normal routine.

local area network - LAN - A network that connects computers that are close to each other, usually in the same building, linked by cables.

modem - A peripheral device that connects computers to each other for sending communications via the telephone lines. The modem modulates the digital data of computers into analog signals to send over the telephone lines, then demodulates back into digital signals to be read by the computer on the other end; thus the name "modem" for modulator/demodulator. Modems are used for sending and receiving electronic mail, connecting to bulletin board systems, connecting remote offices, and surfing the Internet. There are standards to ensure that modems made by different manufacturers can communicate with each other. Modems communicating with each other must use the same speed.

multiplexer - (MUX) - A hardware device that enables two or more signals to be transmitted over the same circuit by temporarily combining them into a single signal. On the receiving end, the signals are divided again by a demultiplexer.

node - A computer in network.

operating system - The program that runs behind the scenes on a computer. Application programs run on top of the operating system.

packet - A unit of data formatted for transmission on a network. Data is broken up into packets for sending over a packet switching network. Each packet has a header containing its source and destination, a block of data content, and an error-checking code. All the data packets related to a message may not take the same route to get to their destination; they are reassembled once they have arrived.

patch cord - A length of cable with connectors on one or both ends used to join telecommunications outlets/connectors.

patch panel - Connecting hardware that typically provides means to connect horizontal or backbone cables to an arrangement of fixed connectors that may be accessed using patch cords or equipment cords to form cross-connections or interconnections.

PC - Personal Computer.

peer-to-peer network - A communications network in which any computer on the network can be a client and/or a server. Any computer can access files on any other computer in the network.

peripheral - Any piece of hardware connected to a computer; any part of the computer outside the CPU and working memory. Some examples of peripherals are keyboards, mice, monitors, printers, scanners, disk and tape drives, microphones, speakers, joysticks, plotters, and cameras. More common office peripherals are printers and modems.

plenum - A compartment or chamber to which one or more air ducts are connected and that forms part of the air distribution system.² Drop ceilings are commonly used as a plenum.

power surge - A sudden rise of current or voltage in an electrical circuit that can last up to several seconds. A power surge can cause damage to a computer or its files if there is no surge protector.

practice hosted system - A computer system where the server is located at the practice's office. Practice hosted systems are accessed through cables in the office or via telephone lines for satellite offices.

practice management system - Computer programs that provide functions for the clerical, administrative and financial needs of a medical office.

RAID - Redundant Arrays of Independent Disks (Originally "Redundant Arrays of Inexpensive Disks") - The use of two or more disk drives instead of one disk, which provides better disk performance, error recovery, and fault tolerance, and includes interleaved storage techniques and mirroring of important data.

Redundant Arrays of Independent Disks - RAID - Originally "Redundant Arrays of Inexpensive Disks". The use of two or more disk drives instead of one disk, which provides better disk performance, error recovery, and fault tolerance, and includes interleaved storage techniques and mirroring of important data.

remote access concentrator - A remote access server that supports one or more T1/E1 lines. Remote access concentrators allow multiple ISDN and analog calls to come in over one port from the telephone company, allowing for higher call densities than remote access servers; they include dial-up protocols, authentication, and greater accessibility. See remote access server.

remote access server - RAS - The host computer within a LAN that gives access to remote users using analog modems or ISDN connections via the host computer's modem. See also remote access concentrator.

remotely hosted ASP - An ASP where the server is not located at the practice's office. Remotely hosted ASPs are usually accessed through the Internet.

RFP - Request for Proposal - A list of questions sent to a vendor for his response. The response helps the sender gain information needed to make a decision on purchasing an item.

Robot or Spider: Special software used by search engines that crawls the web and pulls information from Web pages so they can be indexed.

router - A device that finds the best path for a data packet to be sent from one network to another. A router stores and forwards electronic messages between networks, first determining all possible paths to the destination address and then picking the most expedient route, based on the traffic load and the number of hops. A router can be hardware or a combination of hardware and software.

server - The computer in a client/server architecture that supplies files or services. The computer that requests services is called the client. The client may request file transfer, remote logins, printing, or other available services.

software - Computer programs that tell a computer's hardware what to do. System software is the operating system that controls the basic functioning capabilities of the computer, network software enables multiple computers to communicate with one another, and language software is used to develop programs.

spike - A sudden pulse of extra voltage, lasting a fraction of a second, which can cause the computer to crash and damage files or computer components if there is no surge protector on the line. A burst of extra voltage that lasts longer, perhaps several seconds, is called a surge.

² National Electric Code.

SPS - Stand-by Power Supply - An offline backup power supply system which automatically switches on in case of power failure.

star topology - A method of cabling each telecommunications outlet/connector directly to a cross-connection in a horizontal cabling subsystem.

surge - A sudden pulse of extra voltage, lasting a second or longer, which can cause the computer to crash and damage files or computer components if there is no surge protector on the line. A burst of extra voltage that lasts only a fraction of a second is called a spike.

surge protector - An electrical device that protects a computer from spikes and surges in the power line. All computers have some surge protection built in, but this protection is not always enough. External surge protectors come in the form of a unit that plugs into the wall, with outlets for several electrical plugs. However, not all outlet bars have surge protection.

switch - 1. A communications device that controls the operation and routing of a signal path. 2. A circuit element which enables a device to be turned either on or off. 3. A networking device that can send packets directly to a port associated with a given network address.

Tags: An HTML code. The tags discussed in this article refer to HTML elements that allow the Web designer to supply search engines with extra information, such as key words associated with the site.

tape backup - Using magnetic tape for archiving purposes. Half-inch tape, quarter-inch cartridges, and DAT tape are commonly used.

telecommunications - The transmission of information over a communications line. Telecommunications can include use of a modem, fax, telephone line, etc. to send voice, data, text, images, or video over long distances. A common use of telecommunications is to connect remote office sites to the main office server.

telecommunications outlet/connection - A fixed connecting device where the horizontal cable terminates. The telecommunications outlet provides the interface to the work area cabling. Patch cords are typically plugged into these outlets which then connect the computers. Phones are also plugged into these outlets.

terminal - Computer-like device that includes a screen and a keyboard for both display and input. It connects to the server. It is called "dumb" because it can do very little on its own. It is not a computer by itself. The programs it "runs" are located on the server. Also called a dumb terminal.

text-based browser - A browser that can only read text files, not images or multimedia.

Trojan horse - A program that appears to be useful and harmless but which has harmful side effects such as destroying data or breaking security on the system on which it is run. It is similar to a virus except that it does not propagate itself as a virus does.

twisted pair cable - The type of cable used for most telephone wiring. It has pairs of copper wires twisted together to minimize electrical noise. There are shielded twisted pair (STP) and unshielded twisted pair (UTP) cables. In shielded twisted pair cables, each pair has a metal sheath around it for better protection against interference.

UPS - Uninterruptible Power Supply - A backup power supply that works when electrical power to the computer is interrupted. A small UPS can supply battery power for a few minutes so files can be saved and the computer can be shut down properly; a larger UPS can supply power for much longer.

virus - A program that infects a computer by attaching itself to another program, and propagating itself when that program is executed. A computer can become infected by files downloaded over a network, or by the installation of new software or floppy disks that are infected with viruses. Some viruses are only pranks, and perform harmless actions like displaying a screen with a joke message on it. Others can destroy files or wipe out a hard drive. To avoid damage from viruses, write-protect the boot disk and other important disks, check new software or disks for viruses, and have virus protection software installed on the computer at all times. Disinfectant programs must be updated periodically because new

viruses get into circulation over time. There are some virus protection programs available on the [Internet](#) for free. Disinfectant for [Macintosh](#), written by John Norstad of Northwestern University, is [freeware](#); McAfee Anti-Virus for the [PC](#) is a [shareware](#) program. Knowingly spreading a computer virus is a crime punishable by law. See also [Trojan horse](#) and [worm](#).

virus protection program or software - See antivirus program or software.

wide area network - WAN - A network in which computers are connected to each other over a long distance, using telephone lines and satellite communications. Contrast with local area network (LAN).

workstation - A computer used by a worker that connects to the server. It may contain some programs that are not shared by other users, but it also can access programs and data from the server.

worm - A computer program that can make copies of itself, and spreads through connected systems, using up resources in affected computers or causing other damage.

Zip drive - A 3.5" removable cartridge used with the Iomega Zip drive. Zip disks can store 25MB, 100MB or more, and are used to back up data or transfer data from one computer to another.