

GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

This glossary covers hardware and software terms not specific to Lafite that are used in this manual.

argument Element of a Lisp function that specifies what that function operates on. For example, when you call (LOAD 'FILENAME), *FILENAME* specifies what file is to be loaded. Note the use of parentheses and the single quote mark—the quote causes *FILENAME* to be taken literally, rather than as the name of a variable to be evaluated.

association list A list of lists that associates a key (usually an atom) with a value. The first element of each sublist is the key; the rest of the sublist is a value.

atom Any continuous string of characters, numbers, letters, or combinations thereof (except some prohibited characters such as parentheses). An atom is the smallest structure in Lisp.

back up To duplicate files to use in case the originals are destroyed in a hardware or software failure.

bit map A representation of any graphical entity as a sequence of bits.

break A state entered by Lisp during error processing that allows you to recover from the error by typing commands in a break window. If you don't know what to do with a break, type ^ after the prompt to abort the operation, then start over.

buffer A temporary storage area in a computer.

bug Any error, malfunction, or problem with hardware or software that produces unexpected or unintended results.

cache To save or store intermediate results to avoid having to recompute them.

caret A blinking pointer indicating where keyboard characters will appear when typed.

case sensitive Sensitive to case, that is, upper- and lowercase letters have different meanings.

Clearinghouse A Xerox Network service that provides a directory function within an internetwork, allowing all other system components to locate requested resources and other registered objects. It is implemented as a distributed system.

cursor A small picture (usually an arrow) on the display that tracks the motion of the mouse.

data base A collection of data organized for rapid search and retrieval.

DEdit The Interlisp-D editor for programming code.

default An action taken (or value specified) unless another action is specified by the user.

directory A set of one or more files that are stored together in the same place on a device.

executive window The window the blinking caret is in when you first start up Lisp on the machine. Note that if this and any other window overlap, the executive window dominates (i.e., covers) the other while control is in the executive window. To transfer control to another window (that accepts type-in), click the mouse in it, which usually also brings the window to the top.

extension The second part of a file name, usually used to indicate the type of file. It is separated from the first part of the file name (which indicates what the file contains) by a period. For example, the extension for Lafite mail folders is Mail, so a typical file name might be Active.Mail.

field A part of a message header, preceded by a field name and a colon. Contains information identifying the sender, recipients, subject, or other information of interest either to the users or to the mail system.

file server A computer on the network that provides a file storage and retrieval service.

format To produce in a specified form; the layout of a document, etc.

function A Lisp procedure that carries out a series of steps to produce some result. A function has a name and zero or more arguments on which it does its work.

global variable A variable accessible globally to all loaded programs, and whose value is usually not changed, except explicitly by the user (e.g., in an init file). Global variables are often used to personalize some aspect of the behavior of a program.

hard copy The physical copy of an on-screen document.

host Any machine on a network. Often used to refer specifically to a machine that provides a network service, such as filing.

icon A pictorial representation, usually of a shrunken window. An icon can be moved about on the screen by clicking on it with the left mouse button, and can be expanded by clicking on it with the middle mouse button.

intialization (init) file A file that is loaded when an Interlisp sysout is first started, and which usually customizes your Lisp environment according to your tastes and the idiosyncracies of your site. The usual arrangement is to have a site initialization file, which supplies information common to all users at your site (e.g., the name of your printer or directory search paths), and a personal initialization file, which supplies information about how you personally like your environment set up (e.g., where on the screen you like your Lafite windows).

keyword A significant word from a title or document used as an index to content.

mail server A computer that stores and distributes mail.

menu A collection of text strings, buttons, or icons on a display screen generally used to present a set of possible actions.

microcode The microinstructions of a computer, especially a microprocessor.

mode A particular functioning arrangement or condition of a computer.

network An interconnection, by some communications medium, of several computers, allowing them to communicate and share resources. Sometimes also used to refer to the medium itself, e.g., a coaxial cable in the case of the Ethernet.

package An Interlisp-D tool, or program, designed to help you carry out some complex procedure or task. Lafite is a package that enables you to read and send mail. A package must be loaded into your environment before you can use it.

parse To analyze something into its constituent parts, either to expose the structure or extract information. Specifically used to refer to the action of locating the message boundaries in a mail folder, or extracting fields from a message header (e.g., to discover who the message is addressed to).

position As a Lisp data type, a pair of display coordinates, in the form (XPosition . YPosition). If you want to know the coordinates of a particular spot on the screen, type (GETPOSITION) and then click the mouse over the desired spot.

protocols Standards specifying how machines exchange information over a network.

random access Access to arbitrary parts of a file in no particular order (contrast with sequential access, which is accessing a file from the start sequentially through to the end).

region As a Lisp data type, a set of numbers describing a rectangular region of the display, in the form (*LEFTCOORDINATE BOTTOMCOORDINATE WIDTH HEIGHT*). If you want to know the region corresponding to any particular rectangular area on the screen, type (GETREGION) and then shape the rectangle as desired.

scavenge To try to fix messages that are not in the proper format.

search path List of directories to be searched for a file in the order given.

stream A programming abstraction that links your display to your message file.

string A sequence of characters. As a type of Lisp data, always entered in double quotes.

sysout A frozen version of an Interlisp-D environment. It contains all the information needed to initialize virtual memory when Interlisp-D is started.

time out To stop waiting for a user response, or to sever a network connection because of inactivity on the part of one of its participants.

value A word or a number that a variable is set to.

virtual memory Large working space on a local disk within which the machine runs Lisp.