INTRODUCTION TO COMPUTERS & PROCESSING SOFTWARE

A computer is a machine or an electronic device that can solve problems by accepting data, performing certain operations on that data (processing) and presenting the results of those operations (information). Basic characteristics that distinguish a computer from other processing device:

* A computer is electronic that is, all its processing operations are carried out with electrical signal.
* A computer can store information for future reference. This is done on temporary basis with memory circuit and permanently with storage devices such as magnetic disks and tape.
* Computer is programmable unlike other devices built to perform a single function, a computer can be instructed or programmed to perform a variety of tasks.

HOW A COMPUTER WORKS.

Connecting the data (raw facts) into information (organized, usable form) is called processing. Data gets into system by means of an input device e.g. keyboard then computer performs the necessary calculations or manipulations un the data and finally the organized information is displayed by an output device e.g. a monitor.

FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY A COMPUTER.

Although computers have many applications they can only perform only three basic tasks:

* Arithmetic functions on numeric data (adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing)
* Test relationship between data items (by comparing values) store and retrieve data. These skills are really no more than people can do, but the computer can accomplish the task more;
* Faster
* Accurately
* Reliably