Unit Test: glossary.001

Jargon File 4.2.3 (abridged)

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Just some test data

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There's a `firstterm` here: *1TBS*.

And there's a couple of `glossterms` here: *1TBS*, *@-party*.

Glossary

0

0

Numeric zero, as opposed to the letter `O' (the 15th letter of the English alphabet). In their unmodified forms they look a lot alike, and various kluges invented to make them visually distinct have compounded the confusion. If your zero is center-dotted and letter-O is not, or if letter-O looks almost rectangular but zero looks more like an American football stood on end (or the reverse), you're probably looking at a modern character display (though the dotted zero seems to have originated as an option on IBM 3270 controllers). If your zero is slashed but letter-O is not, you're probably looking at an old-style ASCII graphic set descended from the default typewheel on the venerable ASR-33 Teletype (Scandinavians, for whom /O is a letter, curse this arrangement). (Interestingly, the slashed zero long predates computers; Florian Cajori's monumental "A History of Mathematical Notations" notes that it was used in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.) If letter-O has a slash across it and the zero does not, your display is tuned for a very old convention used at IBM and a few other early mainframe makers (Scandinavians curse *this* arrangement even more, because it means two of their letters collide). Some Burroughs/Unisys equipment displays a zero with a *reversed* slash. Old CDC computers rendered letter O as an unbroken oval and 0 as an oval broken at upper right and lower left. And yet another convention common on early line printers left zero unornamented but added a tail or hook to the letter-O so that it resembled an inverted Q or cursive capital letter-O (this was endorsed by a draft ANSI standard for how to draw ASCII characters, but the final standard changed the distinguisher to a tick-mark in the upper-left corner). Are we sufficiently confused yet?

1TBS

n

The "One True Brace Style"

See Also indent style.

120 reset

wuhn-twen'tee ree'set n

[from 120 volts, U.S. wall voltage] To cycle power on a machine in order to reset or unjam it. Compare *Big Red Switch*, *power cycle*.

infix. In translation software written by hackers, infix 2 often represents the syllable *to* with the connotation "translate to": as in dvi2ps (DVI to PostScript), int2string (integer to string), and texi2roff (Texinfo to [nt]roff). Several versions of a joke have floated around the internet in which some idiot programmer fixes the Y2K bug by changing all the Y's in something to K's, as in Januark, Februark, etc.

@-party

at'par`tee n

[from the @-sign in an Internet address] (alt. `@-sign party' at'si:n par`tee) A semi-closed party thrown for hackers at a science-fiction convention (esp. the annual World Science Fiction Convention or "Worldcon"); one must have a {network address} to get in, or at least be in company with someone who does. One of the most reliable opportunities for hackers to meet face to face with people who might otherwise be represented by mere phosphor dots on their screens. Compare *boink*.

The first recorded @-party was held at the Westercon (a U.S. western regional SF convention) over the July 4th weekend in 1980. It is not clear exactly when the canonical @-party venue shifted to the Worldcon but it had certainly become established by Constellation in 1983. Sadly, the @-party tradition has been in decline since about 1996, mainly because having an @-address no longer functions as an effective lodge pin.

A

abbrev

*-breev' *-brev' n

Common abbreviation for "abbreviation".

ABEND

a'bend *-bend' n

[ABnormal END] 1. Abnormal termination (of software); {crash}; {lossage}. Derives from an error message on the IBM 360; used jokingly by hackers but seriously mainly by {code grinder}s. Usually capitalized, but may appear as `abend'. Hackers will try to persuade you that ABEND is called `abend' because it is what system operators do to the machine late on Friday when they want to call it a day, and hence is from the German `Abend' = `Evening'. 2. [alt.callahans] Absent By Enforced Net Deprivation - used in the subject lines of postings warning friends of an imminent loss of Internet access. (This can be because of computer downtime, loss of provider, moving or illness.) Variants of this also appear: ABVND = `Absent By Voluntary Net Deprivation' and ABSEND = `Absent By Self-Enforced Net Deprivation' have been sighted.

ACK

ak interj

1. [common; from the ASCII mnemonic for 0000110] Acknowledge. Used to register one's presence (compare mainstream *Yo!*emphasis>). An appropriate response to {ping} or {ENQ}. 2. [from the comic strip "Bloom County"] An exclamation of surprised disgust, esp. in "Ack pffft!" Semi-humorous. Generally this sense is not spelled in caps (ACK) and is distinguished by a following exclamation point. 3. Used to politely interrupt someone to tell them you understand their point (see {NAK}). Thus, for example, you might cut off an overly long explanation with "Ack. Ack. Ack. I get it now". 4. An affirmative. "Think we ought to ditch that damn NT server for a Linux box?" "ACK!"

There is also a usage "ACK?" (from sense 1) meaning "Are you there?", often used in email when earlier mail has produced no reply, or during a lull in {talk mode} to see if the person has gone away (the standard humorous response is of course {NAK} (sense 1), i.e., "I'm not here").

B

B5

[common] Abbreviation for "Babylon 5", a science-fiction TV series as revered among hackers as was the original Star Trek.

back door

n

[common] A hole in the security of a system deliberately left in place by designers or maintainers. The motivation for such holes is not always sinister; some operating systems, for example, come out of the box with privileged accounts intended for use by field service technicians or the vendor's maintenance programmers. Syn. {trap door}; may also be called a `wormhole'. See also {iron box}, {cracker}, {worm}, {logic bomb}.

Historically, back doors have often lurked in systems longer than anyone expected or planned, and a few have become widely known. Ken Thompson's 1983 Turing Award lecture to the ACM admitted the existence of a back door in early Unix versions that may have qualified as the most fiendishly clever security hack of all time. In this scheme, the C compiler contained code that would recognize when the `login' command was being recompiled and insert some code recognizing a password chosen by Thompson, giving him entry to the system whether or not an account had been created for him.

Normally such a back door could be removed by removing it from the source code for the compiler and recompiling the compiler. But to recompile the compiler, you have to *use* the compiler -- so Thompson also arranged that the compiler would *recognize when it was compiling a version of itself*, and insert into the recompiled compiler the code to insert into the recompiled `login' the code to allow Thompson entry -- and, of course, the code to recognize itself and do the whole thing again the next time around! And having done this once, he was then able to recompile the compiler from the original sources; the hack perpetuated itself invisibly, leaving the back door in place and active but with no trace in the sources.

The talk that suggested this truly moby hack was published as "Reflections on Trusting Trust", "Communications of the ACM 27", 8 (August 1984), pp. 761-763 (text available at `http://www.acm.org/classics'). Ken Thompson has since confirmed that this hack was implemented and that the Trojan Horse code did appear in the login binary of a Unix Support group machine. Ken says the crocked compiler was never distributed. Your editor has heard two separate reports that suggest that the crocked login did make it out of Bell Labs, notably to BBN, and that it enabled at least one late-night login across the network by someone using the login name `kt'.

backbone cabal

n

A group of large-site administrators who pushed through the {Great Renaming} and reined in the chaos of {Usenet} during most of the 1980s. During most of its lifetime, the Cabal (as it was sometimes capitalized) steadfastly denied its own existence; it was almost obligatory for anyone privy to their secrets to respond "There is no Cabal" whenever the existence or activities of the group were speculated on in public.

The result of this policy was an attractive aura of mystery. Even a decade after the cabal {mailing list} disbanded in late 1988 following a bitter internal catfight, many people believed (or claimed to believe) that it had not actually disbanded but only gone deeper underground with its power intact.

This belief became a model for various paranoid theories about various Cabals with dark nefarious objectives beginning with taking over the Usenet or Internet. These paranoias were later satirized in ways that took on a life of their own. See {Eric Conspiracy} for one example.

See {NANA} for the subsequent history of "the Cabal".