GUI and command-line folders and files

Information on a computer is stored in files. The files on a computer are organized by placing them in folders, just like physical file folders. To continue the analogy, file folders can be organized in drawers in a filing cabinet. A filing cabinet in a computer is called a root folder, that contains ‘file cabinet drawers’ which can be translated as folders within the root folder that may contain even more folders. The file folders within a drawer in a cabinet are translated as folders that contain files. We can imagine our virtual computer ‘desktop’ as a real desktop that contains folders with files. To summarize, information is organized in a computer with folders that can contain other folders, and/or contain files of information.

There are two main ways to interface with a computer via these folders of information. Most people are familiar with GUI, whether they know the terminology or not. GUI, (“gooey”) refers to a Graphic User Interface. This refers to the visual interface we see when we open most computers, where folders of files are visually represented as labeled icons, usually in the shape of a classic file folder, that can be selected and opened to access other folders or files with a hovering, moveable cursor. Files look like labeled icons of the sort of information they contain, such as documents or images. Files can also be selected and opened to view or manipulate them.

These same files and folders can also be accessed through the command line. This is a different type of interface where you open a window that connects you with the inner hardware of the computer behind the GUI. You type in code in sequence to do things like create new files or folders, access existing files or folders, and make changes to them. This code is an organized series of letters, numbers, and symbols called commands. Commands are short sequences you use to perform different tasks. Command-line takes up less memory on a computer than GUI and can easily make very precise and specific changes. GUI is more user-friendly to less advanced computer users and is an easier interface for networking purposes.