Computer Acronyms and Terminology

Operating Systems and Computers

BIOS - This is the Basic Input Output System which controls the basic startup configuration of the computer. BIOS instructions run first, prior to the Operating System; OS.

BIT - A 'bit' (short for Binary Digit) is the smallest unit of data that can be stored by a computer. Each 'bit' is represented as a binary number, either 1 (true) or 0 (false). Network and Internet speed is often referred to in terms of Bits eg: bps – bits per second

BYTE - A byte is a storage unit for data. A 'byte' contains 8 bits, so for example, it could be stored as 11101001. A single typed keyboard character takes up one byte of storage. "KB" is a Kilobyte which is 1024 bytes. "MB" is a Megabyte which is a million bytes. "GB" is a Gigabyte, which equals 1000 megabytes.

BMP – Bitmap, graphics image file format used to store bitmap digital images. BMP images are often big in terms of storage.

CPU - This stands for the Central Processing Unit of the computer. Also referred to as the Processor.

DTP – Desktop Publishing. Software used for producing graphical documents such as newsletters and fliers.

Hard Drive – the main storage hardware of a computer.

JPEG (JPG) – a format for storing images. JPEGs are smaller in size than corresponding BMP bitmaps, but can lose some clarity are they are compressed.

LINUX - An OpenSource Operating System found in many Technical departments and used for Servers. Advantages of being Free, Very Stable and Powerful

MAC - This is an abbreviation for Macintosh, which is a type of personal computer made by the Apple Computer company.

Motherboard – the main circuit board, it has the CPU (Processor) and sockets for for the RAM chips, Wifi chip, Connectors for the Hard Drives and has the ports: USB, Serial..etc.

OS - This is the Operating System of the computer. It is the main program that runs on a computer and begins automatically when the computer is turned on, eg: Windows, LINUX, Apple MacOS..

Open Source – essentially software free to use for the average user, its name comes from the fact that it comes with its source code so allows modification (with license terms). The Linux OS is open source, also some application software falls under this licence, much of it excellent.

PC - This is the abbreviation for personal computer. It refers to computers that are IBM compatible.

PDF - This represents the Portable Document Format which displays document files in a format that is web compatible and also fixed format: the reader cannot change. Adobe has the rights to this format.

RAM - This stands for Random Access Memory which is the amount of memory that can be accessed or used by the processor.

ROM - This is Read Only Memory which holds the startup (BIOS) instructions for the computer.

VGA - The Video Graphics Array is a system for displaying graphics. It was developed by IBM.

WYSIWYG - This initialism stands for What You See Is What You Get. Often used in DTP programs.

Connecting to the Internet

ADSL – Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line. The method used to share the phone line between Voice calls and Internet access.

FTP - This is a service called File Transport Protocol which moves a file between computer using the Internet.

HTML - HyperText Markup Language formats information so it can be transported on the Internet.

HTTP - Hypertext Transfer Protocol is a set of instructions for the software that controls the movement of files on the Internet.

IP - This stands for Internet Protocol which is the set of rules that govern the systems connected to the Internet. IP Address is a digital code specific to each computer that is hooked up to the Internet.

ISP - The Internet Service Provider is the company which provides Internet service so you can connect your computer to the Internet.

LAN - This stands for Local Area Network which is the servers that your computer connects to in your geographic area.

URL - This is the Uniform Resource Locator which is a path to a certain file on the World Wide Web.

USB - The Universal Serial Bus is used for communications between certain devices. It can connect keyboards, cameras, printers, mice, flash drives, and other devices. Its use has expanded from personal computers to PDAs, smartphones, and video games, and is used as a power cord to connect devices to a wall outlet to charge them.

VR - Virtual Reality simulates a three-dimensional scene on the computer and has the capability of interaction. This is widely used in gaming.

VRML - Virtual Reality Mark-up Language allows the display of 3D images.