BYTE

BYTE is an often encountered computer term, and though it is no more than 30 years old, its origins are already lost in obscurity. Until the eight-bit microprocessor appeared, a byte was enough bits to encode a single character — sometimes six, sometimes eight. At that time, computers rarely used a word of less than 24 bits; and some machines, chiefly those designed for scientific applications, went as high as 64 bits. The eccentric spelling of byte has led to the coining of the term **NYBBLE** — half a byte! Straining the analogy a little further, a **GULP** is a small group of bytes.

LOGIC BOMBS

TROJAN HORSES

The media are always very quick to latch on to imaginative pieces of jargon, and in recent years they have taken to making up some of their own. The subject of computer crime is particularly fertile ground for buzzword generation: **LOGIC BOMBS** and **TROJAN HORSES** are two of the methods supposedly used for fraudulent purposes. The former describes a piece of code that is written into an applications program but which remains dormant (has no effect) until the program has been running for a sufficient length of time for the fraud (moving money from one account to another perhaps) to go undetected. A Trojan Horse, we are led to believe, is a program which is disguised as another program in order to gain entry to the system.

TIME BOMB

A similar expression, but one referring to an authentic practice, is **TIME BOMB**. This describes a particularly ingenious technique for protecting business software against piracy. It is a piece of code within the package, which would normally be disabled when the system is installed by the bona fide dealer. On a pirated copy, however, the Time Bomb will wait until a certain date is reached (often April 1), by which time there is a good chance that the company will be heavily dependent on the package. The day after the bomb has 'exploded', not only will the user's files have been turned into garbage, but the copy of the program will also have been destroyed (unless the disk was protected against being overwritten).

GARBAGE

GARBAGE is a word that occurs in several phrases in a computer user's dictionary of jargon. For example, the acronym **GIGO** stands for 'Garbage In, Garbage Out', and this is really just a reminder that computers are only processing information, and therefore you can't expect accurate results if you don't feed in accurate data in the first place.

GARBAGE COLLECTION is the name given to an internal process that may well be used in your home computer, if it uses a version of BASIC that permits dynamic strings (i.e. strings that can change in length during a program). Every time a string increases in length, a complete new copy will be made in RAM. So if there are a lot of statements of the form LET A$=A$+"*" (particularly within loops) then it won't take long for the memory to fill up completely. At this point, the program execution will automatically come to a temporary halt, and a routine in ROM called the 'garbage collector' will tidy up the string area, and remove all the sections of strings that have been left over from previous manipulation. Though the program will resume when the garbage collector has finished, the process can take seconds or even minutes, during which the computer will cease all operations.

HANDSHAKE

Many computing buzzwords derive from analogy. When a business deal has been agreed, for example, the participants may well shake hands: so in computing terms a **HANDSHAKE** is the name given to the electronic signal that signifies that an exchange of data is complete.

0. Integrated	0. Database	0. Network
1. Interactive	1. Situational	1. Capability
2. Buffered	2. Top-down	2. System
3. Digitised	3. Diagnostic	3. Algorithm
4. Stochastic	4. Addressing	4. Processor
5. Peripheral	5. Linear	5. Array
6. Heuristic	6. Graphic	6. Module
7. Relational	7. Alphanumeric	7. Facility
8. Customised	8. Image	8. Hierarchy
9. Programmable	9. Schematic	9. Generator

Generator Hum
The term 'buzzword' was first used to describe a simple game that could create meaningless but convincing technological jargon phrases. You can devise your own 'buzzword generator' by thinking up three columns of ten words each, as we have done here. Choosing a three digit random number will 'generate' a resounding phrase