

The text below - hardware & software terms - was originally in the Introduction of the UIRR Data Entry User's Manual (GUI version). Cindy suggests it may go into the glossary.

Hardware

Hardware is the physical equipment that operates the system, such as the *central processing unit* (CPU), terminal, modem, and printer. The CPU inside the computer receives data from information entered from the keyboard, another input device, or program.

The *terminal* is the screen (monitor) and the keyboard. More than one terminal can use a single CPU. There are two ways to join the terminal with the CPU. One way is directly (hard-wired) through electrical cables. The other way uses a *modem* that sends the signals from the keyboard over a telephone line to the CPU.

The *printer* produces a paper or hard copy of information contained in the computer.

A *disk* is a flat, circular plate with a magnetic surface where data and programs reside. The *hard disk* is a permanent, internal part of the computer. A *floppy disk*, also called a *diskette*, is portable and stores copies of the software or other information produced by the computer.

Magnetic tape is like a floppy disk but stores much more information. The computer system currently uses only magnetic tape, specifically either 9-track tape or 8 mm cartridge Exabyte. A tape (or a floppy disk) can transfer its contents to other machines, archive old data, or restore information accidentally removed from the hard disk.

Software

Software is a collection of step-by-step instructions, called *programs*, written in a language the computer understands and can execute. Some programs do a particular task that the user initiates, while other programs work without the user's knowledge to internally control the computer's operation.

A *menu* is a list of options appearing on the monitor. It may be a list of programs or commands. This section describes different types of menus used in the UIR system. A menu-driven system allows you to execute complicated tasks without knowing technical computer language and commands.

Data are an aggregate collection of information stored in the system. Data reside in *files*. The *file structure* is a logical way of storing data. Understanding this structure helps you to find the data you need and to create new databases.

Files reside in *directories*. A *directory* is a hierarchical way of grouping data and programs contained on the system. The software contains a standardized directory structure for each account.