

Vladyslav Shalamai
National Aviation University
Kyiv

THE POWER AND ORIGINS OF THE COMPUTER WORLD TERMS

Most of us use common computer terms everyday but don't take the time to think about how these words came to being in the computer world. There are some interesting stories as to the origins of these terms.

“Bug”. This may be the most well-known word because of its interesting story. While Grace Hopper, a pioneer of computer programming, was working on the Harvard Mark II, she traced the cause of a glitch in the computer to an actual moth trapped in a relay. The moth she found can still be seen on display in the Smithsonian Museum. As some of you may be desperate to point out, this was not actually the first use of the term “bug” to describe a malfunctioning system. Thomas Edison, for example, used the word in his notebooks. However, since Admiral Hopper brought the word into the world of computers as we know it today, this lister gives credit to her.

“Cookies”. Cookies are used to save a user’s information and relay this information between a website and a browser. This is used to authenticate a user, provide easier access to password controlled sites, or save various preferences of the user. The reason the word cookie is used seems to come from a comparison to fortune cookies – the dessert common from fast-food Chinese inside which there is a slip of paper with a fortune. Early internet programmers must have been overwhelmed by the similarities of a program that saves information within its code and the treats that save fortunes within their cookie walls. Incidentally, those delicious looking cookies above are bacon and chocolate chip cookies with maple glaze.

“Wiki”. As you may or may not know, a wiki on the internet is a group of interconnected sites that is built from user interaction. Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Dramatica and Metapedia are all examples of this “wiki” model. The origin of the name itself is quite simple. In Hawaiian, “wiki wiki” means “quick.” Creator Ward Cunningham decided that a “wiki” online would be a quick, easy way to access and manipulate multiple sites and information.

Throughout human history, great leaders have used the power of words to transform our emotions, to enlist us in their causes, and to shape the course of destiny. From Winston Churchill’s focus on the “finest hour” to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s depiction of a “dream” we are well aware that beliefs are formed by words – and they can be changed by words.