OCR is the abbreviation for Optical Character Recognition. It is the software process of converting a scanned document into text that a computer word processor, editior or other text based software can understand. A similar but different technology is MICR. OCR refers to the branch of computer science that is often called imaging. The process “reads and translates” images into a form that the computer can manipulate (for example, into ASCII codes). An OCR system enables you to take a book or a magazine article, feed it directly into an electronic computer file, and then edit the file using a word processor. All OCR systems include an optical scanner for reading text, and sophisticated software for analyzing images. Most OCR systems use a combination of hardware (specialized circuit boards) and software to recognize characters, although some inexpensive systems do it entirely through software. Advanced OCR systems can read text in large variety of fonts, but they still have difficulty with handwritten text. The potential of OCR systems is enormous because they enable users to harness the power of computers to access printed documents. OCR is already being used widely in the legal profession, where searches that once required hours or days can now be accomplished in a few seconds. The industry has spawned other forms of imaging such as fingerprint, eyeprint, voice and other forms of recognition for security.

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Last update: **2006/10/15 09:35**