

386

Search

[Advanced search](#)
Lucent Technologies
 Bell Labs Innovations


Bell Labs
Projects
People
History
Technology
Career Opportunities
Student Aid
Software Downloads
FAQs

From Multics to something else

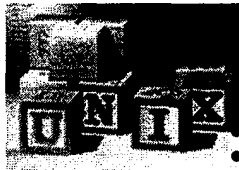
Actually, Multics worked, and eventually became a product, but not initially on the scale its developers wanted. "Even though Multics could not then support many users, it could support us, albeit at exorbitant cost," Ritchie explained. "We didn't want to lose the pleasant niche we occupied. What we wanted to preserve was just not a good environment in which to do programming, but a system around which a fellowship could form."¹

"During 1969, we began trying to find an alternative to Multics," Ritchie said. "Throughout 1969, we lobbied for a medium-scale machine for which we promised to write an operating system. Our proposals were never clearly and finally turned down, but they were never accepted, either.

"Eventually, we presented an exquisitely complicated proposal involving outright purchase, third-party lease, and equipment trade-in, all designed to minimize financial outlay," Ritchie said. But the proposal was rejected. "Rumor soon had it that Bill Baker, the vice president of Research, exclaimed 'Bell Labs just doesn't do business this way!'"

Ritchie conceded, "Actually, it is perfectly obvious in retrospect -- and it should have been at the time -- that we were asking the Labs to spend too much money on too few people with too vague a plan." He also noted that buying a new machine might lead to another expensive Multics project, which management wanted to avoid, or developing another computer center, a responsibility which Research wanted to avoid.

Next: [In the beginning: botched acronyms](#)



[The Creation of the UNIX* Operating System](#)

[An Overview of the UNIX* Operating System](#)

[Dennis Ritchie -- Biography](#)

[Ken Thompson -- Biography](#)

[Bell Labs' Early Contributions to Computer Science](#)

- [Lucent's Contributions to Computer Science, Software and Data Transmission](#)
- [For more information](#)

[Terms of use](#) | [Privacy statement](#) | [Agere](#)

Copyright © 2002 Lucent Technologies. All rights reserved. *