

and data structures are similar, but there are some differences. To make the examples concrete, it is best to choose one of them and describe it consistently. Since most readers are more likely to have encountered Linux than any of the others, we will use it as our running example, but again be aware that except for the information on implementation, much of this chapter applies to all UNIX systems. A large number of books have been written on how to use UNIX, but there are also some about advanced features and system internals (Bovet and Cesati, 2005; Maxwell, 2001; McKusick and Neville-Neil, 2004; Pate, 2003; Stevens and Rago, 2008; and Vahalia, 2007).

10.1 HISTORY OF UNIX AND LINUX

UNIX and Linux have a long and interesting history, so we will begin our study there. What started out as the pet project of one young researcher (Ken Thompson) has become a billion-dollar industry involving universities, multinational corporations, governments, and international standardization bodies. In the following pages we will tell how this story has unfolded.

10.1.1 UNICS

Back in the 1940s and 1950s, all computers were personal computers, at least in the sense that the then-normal way to use a computer was to sign up for an hour of time and take over the entire machine for that period. Of course, these machines were physically immense, but only one person (the programmer) could use them at any given time. When batch systems took over, in the 1960s, the programmer submitted a job on punched cards by bringing it to the machine room. When enough jobs had been assembled, the operator read them all in as a single batch. It usually took an hour or more after submitting a job until the output was returned. Under these circumstances, debugging was a time-consuming process, because a single misplaced comma might result in wasting several hours of the programmer's time.

To get around what almost everyone viewed as an unsatisfactory and unproductive arrangement, timesharing was invented at Dartmouth College and M.I.T. The Dartmouth system ran only BASIC and enjoyed a short-term commercial success before vanishing. The M.I.T. system, CTSS, was general purpose and was an enormous success in the scientific community. Within a short time, researchers at M.I.T. joined forces with Bell Labs and General Electric (then a computer vendor) and began designing a second-generation system, **MULTICS** (**MULTIplexed Information and Computing Service**), as we discussed in Chap. 1.

Although Bell Labs was one of the founding partners in the MULTICS project, it later pulled out, which left one of the Bell Labs researchers, Ken Thompson, looking around for something interesting to work on. He eventually decided

to write a stripped-down MULTICS by himself (in assembler this time) on a discarded PDP-7 minicomputer. Despite the tiny size of the PDP-7, Thompson's system actually worked and could support Thompson's development effort. Consequently, one of the other researchers at Bell Labs, Brian Kernighan, somewhat jokingly called it **UNICS** (**UNiplexed Information and Computing Service**). Despite puns about "EUNUCHS" being a castrated MULTICS, the name stuck, although the spelling was later changed to **UNIX**.

10.1.2 PDP-11 UNIX

Thompson's work so impressed many of his colleagues at Bell Labs that he was soon joined by Dennis Ritchie, and later by his entire department. Two major developments occurred around this time. First, UNIX was moved from the obsolete PDP-7 to the much more modern PDP-11/20 and then later to the PDP-11/45 and PDP-11/70. The latter two machines dominated the minicomputer world for much of the 1970s. The PDP-11/45 and PDP-11/70 were powerful machines with large physical memories for their era (256 KB and 2 MB, respectively). Also, they had memory protection hardware, making it possible to support multiple users at the same time. However, they were both 16-bit machines that limited individual processes to 64 KB of instruction space and 64 KB of data space, even though the machine may have had far more physical memory.

The second development concerned the language in which UNIX was written. By now it was becoming painfully obvious that having to rewrite the entire system for each new machine was no fun at all, so Thompson decided to rewrite UNIX in a high-level language of his own design, called **B**. **B** was a simplified form of BCPL (which itself was a simplified form of CPL, which, like PL/I, never worked). Due to weaknesses in **B**, primarily lack of structures, this attempt was not successful. Ritchie then designed a successor to **B**, (naturally) called **C**, and wrote an excellent compiler for it. Working together, Thompson and Ritchie rewrote UNIX in **C**. **C** was the right language at the right time, and has dominated system programming ever since.

In 1974, Ritchie and Thompson published a landmark paper about UNIX (Ritchie and Thompson, 1974). For the work described in this paper they were later given the prestigious ACM Turing Award (Ritchie, 1984; Thompson, 1984). The publication of this paper stimulated many universities to ask Bell Labs for a copy of UNIX. Since Bell Labs' parent company, AT&T, was a regulated monopoly at the time and was not permitted to be in the computer business, it had no objection to licensing UNIX to universities for a modest fee.

In one of those coincidences that often shape history, the PDP-11 was the computer of choice at nearly all university computer science departments, and the operating systems that came with the PDP-11 were widely regarded as dreadful by professors and students alike. UNIX quickly filled the void, not in the least because it was supplied with the complete source code, so that people could, and

did, tinker with it endlessly. Numerous scientific meetings were organized around UNIX, with distinguished speakers getting up in front of the room to tell about some obscure kernel bug they had found and fixed. An Australian professor, John Lions, wrote a commentary on the UNIX source code of the type normally reserved for the works of Chaucer or Shakespeare (reprinted as Lions, 1996). The book described Version 6, so named because it was described in the sixth edition of the UNIX Programmer's Manual. The source code was 8200 lines of C and 900 lines of assembly code. As a result of all this activity, new ideas and improvements to the system spread rapidly.

Within a couple of years, Version 6 was replaced by Version 7, the first portable version of UNIX (it ran on the PDP-11 and the Interdata 8/32), by now 18,800 lines of C and 2100 lines of assembler. A whole generation of students was brought up on Version 7, which contributed to its spread after they graduated and went to work in industry. By the mid-1980s, UNIX was in widespread use on minicomputers and engineering workstations from a variety of vendors. A number of companies even licensed the source code to make their own version of UNIX. One of these was a small startup called Microsoft, which sold Version 7 under the name XENIX for a number of years until its interest turned elsewhere.

10.1.3 Portable UNIX

Now that UNIX was written in C, moving it to a new machine, known as porting it, was much easier than in the early days. A port requires first writing a C compiler for the new machine. Then it requires writing device drivers for the new machine's I/O devices, such as monitors, printers, and disks. Although the driver code is in C, it cannot be moved to another machine, compiled, and run there because no two disks work the same way. Finally, a small amount of machine-dependent code, such as the interrupt handlers and memory management routines, must be rewritten, usually in assembly language.

The first port beyond the PDP-11 was to the Interdata 8/32 minicomputer. This exercise revealed a large number of assumptions that UNIX implicitly made about the machine it was running on, such as the unspoken supposition that integers held 16 bits, pointers also held 16 bits (implying a maximum program size of 64 KB), and that the machine had exactly three registers available for holding important variables. None of these were true on the Interdata, so considerable work was needed to clean UNIX up.

Another problem was that although Ritchie's compiler was fast and produced good object code, it produced only PDP-11 object code. Rather than write a new compiler specifically for the Interdata, Steve Johnson of Bell Labs designed and implemented the **portable C compiler**, which could be retargeted to produce code for any reasonable machine with a only a moderate amount of effort. For years, nearly all C compilers for machines other than the PDP-11 were based on Johnson's compiler, which greatly aided the spread of UNIX to new computers.

The port to the Interdata initially went slowly because all the development work had to be done on the only working UNIX machine, a PDP-11, which happened to be on the fifth floor at Bell Labs. The Interdata was on the first floor. Generating a new version meant compiling it on the fifth floor and then physically carrying a magnetic tape down to the first floor to see if it worked. After several months of tape carrying, an unknown person said: "You know, we're the phone company. Can't we run a wire between these two machines?" Thus was UNIX networking born. After the Interdata port, UNIX was ported to the VAX and other computers.

After AT&T was broken up in 1984 by the U.S. government, the company was legally free to set up a computer subsidiary, and soon did. Shortly thereafter, AT&T released its first commercial UNIX product, System III. It was not well received, so it was replaced by an improved version, System V, a year later. Whatever happened to System IV is one of the great unsolved mysteries of computer science. The original System V has since been replaced by System V, releases 2, 3, and 4, each one bigger and more complicated than its predecessor. In the process, the original idea behind UNIX, of having a simple, elegant system, has gradually diminished. Although Ritchie and Thompson's group later produced an 8th, 9th, and 10th edition of UNIX, these were never widely circulated, as AT&T put all its marketing muscle behind System V. However, some of the ideas from the 8th, 9th, and 10th editions were eventually incorporated into System V. AT&T eventually decided that it wanted to be a telephone company, not a computer company, after all, and sold its UNIX business to Novell in 1993. Novell subsequently sold it to the Santa Cruz Operation in 1995. By then it was almost irrelevant who owned it, since all the major computer companies already had licenses.

10.1.4 Berkeley UNIX

One of the many universities that acquired UNIX Version 6 early on was the University of California at Berkeley. Because the full source code was available, Berkeley was able to modify the system substantially. Aided by grants from ARPA, the U.S. Dept. of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency, Berkeley produced and released an improved version for the PDP-11 called **1BSD (First Berkeley Software Distribution)**. This tape was followed quickly by another one, called 2BSD, also for the PDP-11.

More important were 3BSD and especially its successor, 4BSD for the VAX. Although AT&T had a VAX version of UNIX, called 32V, it was essentially Version 7. In contrast, 4BSD contained a large number of improvements. Foremost among these was the use of virtual memory and paging, allowing programs to be larger than physical memory by paging parts of them in and out as needed. Another change allowed file names to be longer than 14 characters. The implementation of the file system was also changed, making it considerably faster. Signal handling was made more reliable. Networking was introduced, causing the

network protocol that was used, **TCP/IP**, to become a de facto standard in the UNIX world, and later in the Internet, which is dominated by UNIX-based servers.

Berkeley also added a substantial number of utility programs to UNIX, including a new editor (*vi*), a new shell (*csh*), Pascal and Lisp compilers, and many more. All these improvements caused Sun Microsystems, DEC, and many other computer vendors to base their versions of UNIX on Berkeley UNIX, rather than on AT&T's "official" version, System V. As a consequence, Berkeley UNIX became well established in the academic, research, and defense worlds. For more information about Berkeley UNIX, see McKusick et al. (1996).

10.1.5 Standard UNIX

By the late 1980s, two different, and somewhat incompatible, versions of UNIX were in widespread use: 4.3BSD and System V Release 3. In addition, virtually every vendor added its own nonstandard enhancements. This split in the UNIX world, together with the fact that there were no standards for binary program formats, greatly inhibited the commercial success of UNIX because it was impossible for software vendors to write and package UNIX programs with the expectation that they would run on any UNIX system (as was routinely done with MS-DOS). Various attempts at standardizing UNIX initially failed. AT&T, for example, issued the **SVID (System V Interface Definition)**, which defined all the system calls, file formats, and so on. This document was an attempt to keep all the System V vendors in line, but it had no effect on the enemy (BSD) camp, which just ignored it.

The first serious attempt to reconcile the two flavors of UNIX was initiated under the auspices of the IEEE Standards Board, a highly respected and, most important, neutral body. Hundreds of people from industry, academia, and government took part in this work. The collective name for this project was **POSIX**. The first three letters refer to Portable Operating System. The *IX* was added to make the name UNIXish.

After a great deal of argument and counterargument, rebuttal and counterrebuttal, the POSIX committee produced a standard known as **1003.1**. It defines a set of library procedures that every conformant UNIX system must supply. Most of these procedures invoke a system call, but a few can be implemented outside the kernel. Typical procedures are *open*, *read*, and *fork*. The idea of POSIX is that a software vendor who writes a program that uses only the procedures defined by 1003.1 knows that this program will run on every conformant UNIX system.

While it is true that most standards bodies tend to produce a horrible compromise with a few of everyone's pet features in it, 1003.1 is remarkably good considering the large number of parties involved and their respective vested interests. Rather than take the union of all features in System V and BSD as the starting point (the norm for most standards bodies), the IEEE committee took the intersection. Very roughly, if a feature was present in both System V and BSD, it

was included in the standard; otherwise it was not. As a consequence of this algorithm, 1003.1 bears a strong resemblance to the direct ancestor of both System V and BSD, namely Version 7. The 1003.1 document is written in such a way that both operating system implementers and software writers can understand it, another novelty in the standards world, although work is already underway to remedy this.

Although the 1003.1 standard addresses only the system calls, related documents standardize threads, the utility programs, networking, and many other features of UNIX. In addition, the C language has also been standardized by ANSI and ISO.

10.1.6 MINIX

One property that all modern UNIX systems have is that they are large and complicated, in a sense, the antithesis of the original idea behind UNIX. Even if the source code were freely available, which it is not in most cases, it is out of the question that a single person could understand it all any more. This situation led the author of this book to write a new UNIX-like system that was small enough to understand, was available with all the source code, and could be used for educational purposes. That system consisted of 11,800 lines of C and 800 lines of assembly code. It was released in 1987, and was functionally almost equivalent to Version 7 UNIX, the mainstay of most computer science departments during the PDP-11 era.

MINIX was one of the first UNIX-like systems based on a microkernel design. The idea behind a microkernel is to provide minimal functionality in the kernel to make it reliable and efficient. Consequently, memory management and the file system were pushed out into user processes. The kernel handled message passing between the processes and little else. The kernel was 1600 lines of C and 800 lines of assembler. For technical reasons relating to the 8088 architecture, the I/O device drivers (2900 additional lines of C) were also in the kernel. The file system (5100 lines of C) and memory manager (2200 lines of C) ran as two separate user processes.

Microkernels have the advantage over monolithic systems that they are easy to understand and maintain due to their highly modular structure. Also, moving code from the kernel to user mode makes them highly reliable because the crash of a user-mode process does less damage than the crash of a kernel-mode component. Their main disadvantage is a slightly lower performance due to the extra switches between user mode and kernel mode. However, performance is not everything: all modern UNIX systems run X Windows in user mode and simply accept the performance hit to get the greater modularity (in contrast to Windows, where the entire **GUI (Graphical User Interface)** is in the kernel). Other well-known microkernel designs of this era were Mach (Accetta et al., 1986) and Chorus (Rozier et al., 1988).

Within a few months of its appearance, MINIX became a bit of a cult item, with its own USENET (now Google) newsgroup, *comp.os.minix*, and over 40,000 users. Many users contributed commands and other user programs, so MINIX became a collective undertaking done by large numbers of users over the Internet. It was a prototype of other collaborative efforts that came later. In 1997, Version 2.0 of MINIX, was released and the base system, now including networking, had grown to 62,200 lines of code.

Around 2004, the direction of MINIX development changed radically, with the focus becoming building an extremely reliable and dependable system that could automatically repair its own faults and become self healing, continuing to function correctly even in the face of repeated software bugs being triggered. As a consequence, the modularization idea present in Version 1 was greatly expanded in MINIX 3.0, with nearly all the device drivers being moved to user space, with each driver running as a separate process. The size of the entire kernel abruptly dropped to under 4000 lines of code, something a single programmer could easily understand. Internal mechanisms were changed to enhance fault tolerance in numerous ways.

In addition, over 500 popular UNIX programs were ported to MINIX 3.0, including the **X Window System** (sometimes just called **X**), various compilers (including *gcc*), text-processing software, networking software, Web browsers, and much more. Unlike previous versions, which were primarily educational in nature, starting with MINIX 3.0, the system was quite usable, with the focus moving toward high dependability. The ultimate goal is: No more reset buttons.

A third edition of the book appeared, describing the new system and giving its source code in an appendix and describing it in detail (Tanenbaum and Woodhull, 2006). The system continues to evolve and has an active user community. For more details and to get the current version for free, you can visit www.minix3.org.

10.1.7 Linux

During the early years of MINIX development and discussion on the Internet, many people requested (or in many cases, demanded) more and better features, to which the author often said "No" (to keep the system small enough for students to understand completely in a one-semester university course). This continuous "No" irked many users. At this time, FreeBSD was not available, so that was not an option. After a number of years went by like this, a Finnish student, Linus Torvalds, decided to write another UNIX clone, named **Linux**, which would be a full-blown production system with many features MINIX was initially lacking. The first version of Linux, 0.01, was released in 1991. It was cross-developed on a MINIX machine and borrowed numerous ideas from MINIX, ranging from the structure of the source tree to the layout of the file system. However, it was a monolithic rather than a microkernel design, with the entire operating system in the kernel. The code totaled 9300 lines of C and 950 lines of assembler, roughly

similar to MINIX version in size and also comparable in functionality. De facto, it was a rewrite of MINIX, the only system Torvalds had source code for.

Linux rapidly grew in size and evolved into a full, production UNIX clone as virtual memory, a more sophisticated file system, and many other features were added. Although it originally ran only on the 386 (and even had embedded 386 assembly code in the middle of C procedures), it was quickly ported to other platforms and now runs on a wide variety of machines, just as UNIX does. One difference with UNIX does stand out, however: Linux makes use of many special features of the *gcc* compiler and would need a lot of work before it would compile with an ANSI standard C compiler.

The next major release of Linux was version 1.0, issued in 1994. It was about 165,000 lines of code and included a new file system, memory-mapped files, and BSD-compatible networking with sockets and TCP/IP. It also included many new device drivers. Several minor revisions followed in the next two years.

By this time, Linux was sufficiently compatible with UNIX that a vast amount of UNIX software was ported to Linux, making it far more useful than it would have otherwise been. In addition, a large number of people were attracted to Linux and began working on the code and extending it in many ways under Torvalds' general supervision.

The next major release, 2.0, was made in 1996. It consisted of about 470,000 lines of C and 8000 lines of assembly code. It included support for 64-bit architectures, symmetric multiprocessing, new networking protocols, and numerous other features. A large fraction of the total code mass was taken up by an extensive collection of device drivers. Additional releases followed frequently.

The version numbers of the Linux kernel consist of four numbers, *A.B.C.D*, such as 2.6.9.11. The first number denotes the kernel version. The second number denotes the major revision. Prior to the 2.6 kernel, even revision numbers corresponded to stable kernel releases, whereas odd ones corresponded to unstable revisions, under development. With the 2.6 kernel that is no longer the case. The third number corresponds to minor revisions, such as support for new drivers. The fourth number corresponds to minor bug fixes or security patches.

A large array of standard UNIX software has been ported to Linux, including the X Window System and a great deal of networking software. Two different GUIs (GNOME and KDE) have also been written for Linux. In short, it has grown to a full-blown UNIX clone with all the bells and whistles a UNIX lover might want.

One unusual feature of Linux is its business model: it is free software. It can be downloaded from various sites on the Internet, for example: www.kernel.org. Linux comes with a license devised by Richard Stallman, founder of the Free Software Foundation. Despite the fact that Linux is free, this license, the **GPL** (**GNU Public License**), is longer than Microsoft's Windows license and specifies what you can and cannot do with the code. Users may use, copy, modify, and redistribute the source and binary code freely. The main restriction is that all

works derived from the Linux kernel may not be sold or redistributed in binary form only; the source code must either be shipped with the product or be made available on request.

Although Torvalds still controls the kernel fairly closely, a large amount of user-level software has been written by numerous other programmers, many of them originally migrated over from the MINIX, BSD, and GNU online communities. However, as Linux evolves, a steadily smaller fraction of the Linux community want to hack source code (witness the hundreds of books telling how to install and use Linux and only a handful discussing the code or how it works). Also, many Linux users now forgo the free distribution on the Internet to buy one of the many CD-ROM distributions available from numerous competing commercial companies. A popular Website listing the current top-100 Linux distributions is at www.distrowatch.org. As more and more software companies start selling their own versions of Linux and more and more hardware companies offer to preinstall it on the computers they ship, the line between commercial software and free software is beginning to blur substantially.

As a footnote to the Linux story, it is interesting to note that just as the Linux bandwagon was gaining steam, it got a big boost from an unexpected source—AT&T. In 1992, Berkeley, by now running out of funding, decided to terminate BSD development with one final release, 4.4BSD, (which later formed the basis of FreeBSD). Since this version contained essentially no AT&T code, Berkeley issued the software under an open source license (not GPL) that let everybody do whatever they wanted with it except one thing—sue the University of California. The AT&T subsidiary controlling UNIX promptly reacted by—you guessed it—suing the University of California. It also sued a company, BSDI, set up by the BSD developers to package the system and sell support, much as Red Hat and other companies now do for Linux. Since virtually no AT&T code was involved, the lawsuit was based on copyright and trademark infringement, including items such as BSDI's 1-800-ITS-UNIX telephone number. Although the case was eventually settled out of court, it kept FreeBSD off the market long enough for Linux to get well established. Had the lawsuit not happened, starting around 1993 there would have been serious competition between two free, open source UNIX systems: the reigning champion, BSD, a mature and stable system with a large academic following dating back to 1977, versus the vigorous young challenger, Linux, just two years old but with a growing following among individual users. Who knows how this battle of the free UNICES would have turned out?

10.2 OVERVIEW OF LINUX

In this section we will provide a general introduction to Linux and how it is used, for the benefit of readers not already familiar with it. Nearly all of this material applies to just about all UNIX variants with only small deviations. Al-

though Linux has several graphical interfaces, the focus here is on how Linux appears to a programmer working in a shell window on X. Subsequent sections will focus on system calls and how it works inside.

10.2.1 Linux Goals

UNIX was always an interactive system designed to handle multiple processes and multiple users at the same time. It was designed by programmers, for programmers, to use in an environment in which the majority of the users are relatively sophisticated and are engaged in (often quite complex) software development projects. In many cases, a large number of programmers are actively cooperating to produce a single system, so UNIX has extensive facilities to allow people to work together and share information in controlled ways. The model of a group of experienced programmers working together closely to produce advanced software is obviously very different from the personal computer model of a single beginner working alone with a word processor, and this difference is reflected throughout UNIX from start to finish. It is only natural that Linux inherited many of these goals, even though the first version was for a personal computer.

What is it that good programmers want in a system? To start with, most like their systems to be simple, elegant, and consistent. For example, at the lowest level, a file should just be a collection of bytes. Having different classes of files for sequential access, random access, keyed access, remote access, and so on, (as mainframes do) just gets in the way. Similarly, if the command

```
ls A*
```

means list all the files beginning with "A" then the command

```
rm A*
```

should mean remove all the files beginning with "A" and not remove the one file whose name consists of an "A" and an asterisk. This characteristic is sometimes called the *principle of least surprise*.

Another thing that experienced programmers generally want is power and flexibility. This means that a system should have a small number of basic elements that can be combined in an infinite variety of ways to suit the application. One of the basic guidelines behind Linux is that every program should do just one thing and do it well. Thus compilers do not produce listings, because other programs can do that better.

Finally, most programmers have a strong dislike for useless redundancy. Why type *copy* when *cp* is enough? To extract all the lines containing the string "ard" from the file *f*, the Linux programmer types

```
grep ard f
```

The opposite approach is to have the programmer first select the *grep* program (with no arguments), and then have *grep* announce itself by saying: "Hi, I'm *grep*,"