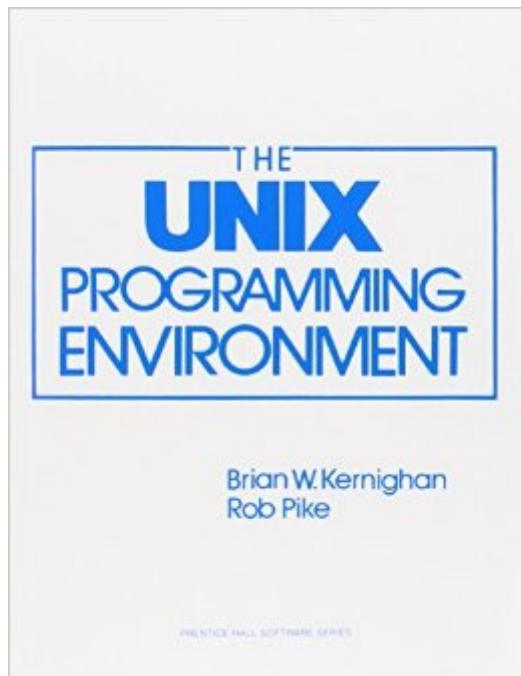


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The Unix Programming Environment (Prentice-Hall Software Series)



Synopsis

Designed for first-time and experienced users, this book describes the UNIX® programming environment and philosophy in detail. Readers will gain an understanding not only of how to use the system, its components, and the programs, but also how these fit into the total environment.

Book Information

Series: Prentice-Hall Software Series

Paperback: 357 pages

Publisher: Prentice-Hall; 1st edition (November 11, 1983)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 013937681X

ISBN-13: 978-0139376818

Product Dimensions: 6.9 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (60 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #234,168 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > APIs & Operating Environments > Unix #86 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Operating Systems > Unix #1868 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Software

Customer Reviews

Elsewhere on I reviewed Kernighan's "Elements of Programming Style." To quote one paragraph from that review -Brian Kernighan has co-authored three books almost essential to learning our craft, this volume, "Software Tools" and "The Unix Programming Environment". "Elements of Programming Style" spells out the fundamental rules, "Software Tools" shows you how to apply them to a number of simple projects and extends the rules to software design and finally "The Unix Programming Environment" shows you how to use them in an operating system designed to reward you for your effort. This volume starts with a short, excellent preface detailing some of the early history of Unix and explaining the structure of the book and the philosophy behind it . The preface states "Our goal in this book is to communicate the UNIX programming philosophy ... throughout runs the themes of combining programs and of using programs to build programs." It delivers on that goal. The book then follows with a series of chapters that start with basic shell commands and then pipes before branching out into shell programming and going on to explore useful Unix tools such as grep, sed, awk, C, the standard libraries, make, yacc and lex through a series of small

useful programs culminating in a small calculator language called 'hoc' - a useful calculator and easily extensible. While most might feel that grep, sed, awk and shell programming have been replaced by tools such as Perl and Python these early chapters provide a good grounding in Unix programming and remind newer users of the power and usefulness of these simple Unix tools.

Merely half an inch thick, and employing the same cover design - or lack of it - as the C Programming Language, this is probably the least pretentious looking book on my bookshelf. However, the look is misleading - there are very few books, regardless of length, that aim to teach you as much as this one, and even fewer than succeed in it. Unix programming environment might sound a rather ambitious title nowadays, when a tutorial on each specialized tool can easily exceed 400 pages. However, this one actually delivers everything that it promises. Kernighan and Pike start with the basic description of Unix file system and the basic set of commands, continue with the command shell, redirection and piping. Next come the filters: regular expressions, grep, sort, sed and awk. At that point, the reader is ready for the full-fledged treatment of the command shell programming. Next come standard I/O and Unix system calls, followed by the program development tools: make, lex and yacc. The course is concluded with a chapter on document formatting with troff. The chapters on I/O and system calls imply familiarity with the C programming language. The already mentioned tutorial on C by Kernighan and Ritchie, written in much the same style and spirit, can serve as the introduction to it. Also, while the book keeps up with its age remarkably well, there are some points where the described Unix system differs from the modern POSIX systems (most user commands are however backward compatible and still accept the old syntax). The required changes are really minor, but can nevertheless annoy an innocent reader. The book belongs to nowadays rare breed of books on computers written for engineers and CS students rather than for dummies and idiots.

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