

'Fan' defends the virtues of Multics

I am a Multics consultant and have been closely allied with Ford Motor Co. and Honeywell, Inc. over the past four years. I was deeply disturbed by the editorial "Vendor follies, user foibles" [CW, Jan. 13].

I am one of the "fans" of Multics as are most who have ever had the opportunity to work with the system. I strongly object to the contention in the editorial that any DP manager who does not follow the herd shouldn't be on the job and is doing his company a disservice by daring to grow. It is that type of thinking that has put the DP industry in the sorry state that it is in right now, where MVS and IMS reign supreme.

Granted, Ford has a big, expensive problem right now. But the sad truth of the matter is there are no other systems on the market that can do the work that Ford has their Multics systems doing with such ease and cost-effectiveness.

These are not specialty applications but very general engineering tracking and development systems. Usage of the Multics systems at Ford had been growing at a rate of about 40% per year before these threats of canceling the product started more than a year ago.

Hardware resources couldn't be purchased and installed fast enough to absorb the growth of work. The Multics systems are the least expensive systems to use and operate at the computer center.

The technology that makes up the Multics system was created 15 years ago. At that time it was the state of the art. Today, 15 years later nothing else like it exists and probably won't for another three to five years.

Multics has had a relational data base package since 1976, long before Oracle or DB2 ever showed up. Multics' DBMS is far superior in performance and features to any other on the market today.

Most people aren't aware that Unix, the current rage, is based on Multics, although it is missing some of Multics' more significant features, such as consistency; integrated, built-in security; and dynamic linking.

Applications can be brought up on Multics in a fraction of the time needed to do it on other systems primarily because of the fourth-generation tools that are inherent in its design.

Most of the "managers of Multics shops who watched as the product line stumbled along." had

eyewell to keep and market the system. The cost-effectiveness and productivity benefits were just far too great to consider changing to more successful systems.

I think it is very easy to stand back now and say, That's what you get for going with that black sheep system. But if we all sit around waiting for IBM to tell us what the state of the art is, the DP profession will always be 20 years behind. And that is something we can ill afford.

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DBMS: One relation, under Codd

For many years, I believed that Codd's relational model of data was merely mathematics — but very rigorous mathematics, nonetheless. Now thanks to Codd's new teachings in his two-part article "Is your DBMS really relational?" [CW, Oct. 14 and Oct. 21], I know that the relational model has ascended to spiritual heights as well. I have seen the light.

Thus, I read the article "Strained relations: DBMS debate turns bitter" [CW, Jan. 13] with righteous revulsion that certain Eastern merchants have refused, before Codd, to recant their blasphemous desecration of "the word." This sacrilege must be avenged. Let each of Codd's true followers take up the crusade of relational purity. There is only one model, sayeth Codd.

For violating Codd's commandments, each of these sinners must be punished. But, to cries of "off with their pointers!" I say, nay, let their suffering be repeating. Thus, I can think of a no more fitting punishment for these transgressors than condemning each of them to suffer, quarterly, the torments of the Wall Street analysts.

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What the world needs now is Multics

A recent letter to the editor "'Fan' defends virtues of Multics" [CW, Feb. 3] understates the gravity of the loss that Honeywell, Inc. has caused by withdrawing support for its best operating system, Multics.

Although the technology underlying Multics is two decades old, not a mere 15 years, it has not been absorbed into the mainstream. Vendors, including Honeywell, show no sign of adopting more important functions of Multics for release in three to five years; in fact, they show no sign of even being aware of those functions.

Unix is not based on Multics. Although the people who implemented the first few versions of Unix had exposure to Multics, there is nothing in Unix to show that. In fact, the architecture which Unix was originally written lacked the paging and segmentation capability required to implement a unified storage/file system; yet the most important feature of Multics is the integration of the virtual memory with the file system.

The reader who is interested in what he is missing can get an overview from the *Multics Paper* in Section 6 of the 1965 Fall Joint Computer Conference American Federation of Information Processing Societies, Inc. Conference Proceedings published by Spartan Books and Macmillan Co. No other system comes close to fulfilling the design goals set forth there.