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A/UX: What is A/UX? (2/95)

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TOPIC -----

What is A/UX?

DISCUSSION -----

A/UX is Apple's implementation of UNIX (it's Apple's/UNix) for various Macintosh computers. A/UX merges two computing environments, UNIX and the Macintosh Finder OS, and provides the full functionality of both.

A/UX is based on AT&T UNIX System V.2.2 with numerous extensions from V.3, V.4 (such as streams), and BSD 4.2/4.3 (such as networking, the Fast File System, job control, lpr, NFS with Yellow Pages, SCCS, and sendmail 5.64). It also provides full POSIX compliance. A/UX provides SYSV, BSD and POSIX compatibility switches and libraries.

A/UX is fully compliant with the System V Interface Definition (SVID). A/UX provides all three standard shells: sh, csh, and ksh. X-Windows is also provided standard.

A/UX 3.0 and later incorporates System 7 for the Macintosh allowing for the use of the vast majority of Macintosh applications under A/UX. System 7 and UNIX are fully-integrated under A/UX 3.0 and later with the UNIX file system being seen as a disk drive by the Finder.

There are people who feel that A/UX is a near-perfect implementation of UNIX. Of course, every operating system has its share of devotees, so that's not a very valid scale of whether the system is any good. A/UX is UNIX -- it's not some form of pseudo-UNIX. It insulates the user from UNIX, if required, but the System Administrator needs to become UNIX-aware. Furthermore, if you want straight UNIX, you can get it. People may also complain that A/UX is based on an "obsolete" version of AT&T UNIX (V.2.2). In many ways, Apple's extensions make A/UX very V.3-like (V.3 is in many ways an enhanced V.2 -- it even uses the V.2

kernel). The list of extensions to A/UX are impressive. Compare what you get standard with other systems and you'll be shocked! On some, 'cc', 'f77', NFS, etc... are costly options.

The main consideration (and opposition) to A/UX is the platform it runs on: the Macintosh. Some consider this a boon, others a bust. As of February 1995, Apple computers with the 68030- and 68040-based workstations run A/UX. All Power Macintosh computers are not compatible with A/UX.

If you need super-fast state-of-the-art number crunching capability then A/UX may not be for you; you can get faster workstations with other platforms. Of course, you'll have to "settle" for their operating systems, but if you need it, then that's how you'll get it. Of course, this doesn't mean that A/UX "crawls".

There are very few people who need this type of performance though. If you need (or just want) a UNIX workstation with the speed and power of UNIX and the user interface and application selection of the Macintosh then A/UX is the way to go. In many ways, A/UX is the UNIX "for the rest of us" even if we are long-time UNIX users. If you love the Macintosh, you'll love A/UX; if you love UNIX, you'll love A/UX. And if you want a near-perfect marriage of the two, then you'll love A/UX.

Note: This article and a full list of frequently asked questions about A/UX can be found on the ftp server jagubox.gsfc.nasa.gov (128.183.44.1).

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27 Feb 1995 - Corrected address for the ftp server.

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