

# ***Preface***

When we were writing the first edition of this book in the mid-1980s, we were eager to compare our manuscript with other books about system administration. To our delight, we could find only three. These days, you have your choice of hundreds. Here are the features that distinguish our book:

- We take a hands-on approach. You already have plenty of manuals; our purpose is to summarize our collective perspective on system administration and to recommend approaches that stand the test of time. This book contains numerous war stories and a wealth of pragmatic advice.
- This is not a book about how to run UNIX or Linux at home, in your garage, or on your PDA. We describe the management of production environments such as businesses, government offices, and universities.
- We cover networking in detail. It is the most difficult aspect of system administration and the area in which we think we can be of most help.
- We cover the major variants of UNIX and Linux.

## **THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK**

This book is divided into three large chunks: Basic Administration, Networking, and Bunch o' Stuff.

Basic Administration presents a broad overview of UNIX and Linux from a system administrator's perspective. The chapters in this section cover most of the facts and techniques needed to run a stand-alone system.

The Networking section describes the protocols used on UNIX systems and the techniques used to set up, extend, and maintain networks and Internet-facing

servers. High-level network software is also covered here. Among the featured topics are the Domain Name System, the Network File System, electronic mail, and network management.

Bunch o' Stuff includes a variety of supplemental information. Some chapters discuss optional features such as those that support server virtualization. Others give advice on topics ranging from eco-friendly computing to the politics of running a system administration group.

Each chapter is followed by a set of practice exercises. Items are marked with our estimate of the effort required to complete them, where “effort” is an indicator of both the difficulty of the task and the time required. There are four levels:

- no stars* Easy, should be straightforward
- ★ Harder or longer, may require lab work
- ★★ Hardest or longest, requires lab work and digging
- ★★★★ Semester-long projects (only in a few chapters)

Some of the exercises require root or **sudo** access to the system; others require the permission of the local sysadmin group. Both requirements are mentioned in the text of the exercise.

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

We're delighted that Ned McClain, David Schweikert, and Tobi Oetiker were able to join us once again as contributing authors. With this edition, we also welcome Terry Morreale and Ron Jachim as new contributors. These contributors' deep knowledge of a variety of areas has greatly enriched the content of this book.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Please send suggestions, comments, and bug reports to [ulsah@book.admin.com](mailto:ulsah@book.admin.com). We do answer mail, but please be patient; it is sometimes a few days before one of us is able to respond. Because of the volume of email that this alias receives, we regret that we are unable to answer technical questions.

To view a copy of our current bug list and other late-breaking information, visit our web site, [admin.com](http://admin.com).

We hope you enjoy this book, and we wish you the best of luck with your adventures in system administration!

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