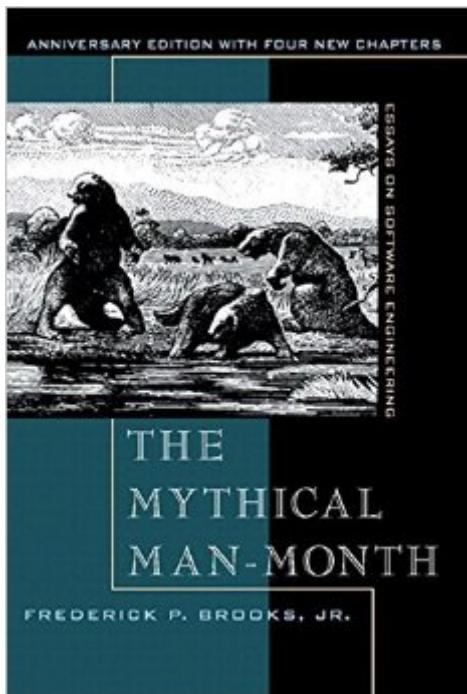


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# The Mythical Man-Month, Anniversary Edition: Essays On Software Engineering



## Synopsis

Few books on software project management have been as influential and timeless as *The Mythical Man-Month*. With a blend of software engineering facts and thought-provoking opinions, Fred Brooks offers insight for anyone managing complex projects. These essays draw from his experience as project manager for the IBM System/360 computer family and then for OS/360, its massive software system. Now, 20 years after the initial publication of his book, Brooks has revisited his original ideas and added new thoughts and advice, both for readers already familiar with his work and for readers discovering it for the first time. The added chapters contain (1) a crisp condensation of all the propositions asserted in the original book, including Brooks' central argument in *The Mythical Man-Month*: that large programming projects suffer management problems different from small ones due to the division of labor; that the conceptual integrity of the product is therefore critical; and that it is difficult but possible to achieve this unity; (2) Brooks' view of these propositions a generation later; (3) a reprint of his classic 1986 paper "No Silver Bullet"; and (4) today's thoughts on the 1986 assertion, "There will be no silver bullet within ten years."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you have managed some software projects or have worked on some non-trivial software systems, undoubtedly you have faced many difficulties and challenges that you thought were unique to your circumstance. But after reading this book, you will realize that many of the things you experienced, and thought were unique problems, are NOT unique to you but are common systemic problems of developing non-trivial software systems. These problems appear repeatedly and even predictably, in project after project, in company after company, regardless of year, whether it's 1967 or 2007. You will realize that long before maybe you were even born, other people working at places like IBM had already experienced those problems and quandries. And found working solutions to them which are as valid today as they were 30 years ago. The suggestions in this book will help you think better and better manage yourself, and be more productive and less wasteful with your time and energy. In short, you will do more with less. Some of Brooks insights and generalizations are:

- The Mythical Man-Month:** Assigning more programmers to a project running behind schedule, may make it even more late.
- The Second-System Effect:** The second system an engineer designs is the most bloated system she will EVER design.
- Conceptual Integrity:** To retain conceptual integrity and thereby user-friendliness, a system must have a single architect (or a small system architecture team), completely separate from the implementation team.
- The Manual:** The chief architect should produce detailed written specifications for the system in the form of the manual, which leaves no ambiguities about any part of the system and completely specifies the external specifications of the system i.e.

There are few must reads in this industry. This is one. First published in 1975, this work is as applicable to software engineering today as it was then. Why? Because building things, including software, has always been as much about people as it has been about materials or technology--and people don't change much in only 25 years. In the preface to the First Edition, Brooks states "This book is a belated answer to Tom Watson's probing question as to why programming is hard to manage." This short book (at just over 300 pages) does a masterful job answering that question. It is here we first hear of Brooks's Law: "Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later." Brooks doesn't just drop that on the reader without explanation. Instead, he walks through the reasoning, discusses how communication in a group changes as the group changes or grows, and how additions to the group need time to climb the learning curve. Those new to the industry or who

are reading the book for the first time might be put off by the examples and technology discussed. Indeed, even in the newly released edition, the original text from 1975 is still present, essentially untouched. So, talk of OS/360 and 7090s, which permeates the text, is perhaps laughable to those not looking deeper. When talking about trade-offs, for example, Brooks offers "... OS/360 devotes 26 bytes of the permanently resident date-turnover routine to the proper handling of December 31 on leap years (when it is day 366). That might have been left to the operator." This is 26 bytes he's talking about! Brooks provides a light, almost conversational tone to the prose. This isn't to say the observations and analysis were not very well researched.

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