

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

PROJECT MAC

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March 9, 1971

TO: Outside recipients of the MPM System Programmer's Supplement

FROM: J. H. Saltzer, Project MAC Computer Systems Research Group

SUBJECT: System Programmer's Supplement distribution

As the Multics System Programmer's Supplement grows in size it becomes clearer that the present collection of manuals about Multics does not match the needs of a subsystem implementor. The SPS is much too large, contains huge quantities of information not of interest to a subsystem implementor, and is really directed toward maintainers of the system itself, rather than the subsystem writer. It also does not distinguish among features which are intended properties of the implementation, under development and likely to change, and completely inappropriate.

To develop a more reasonable pattern of documentation for subsystem writers, the following steps are currently planned:

1. All routine distribution of the System Programmer's Supplement, and updates, outside of the personnel responsible for Multics itself, will be discontinued.
2. A new manual, the "Subsystem Writer's Supplement," will be started. It will contain those subroutine writeups from the present SPS which have been found necessary for the survival of a subsystem writer. Initially, this manual will be created exclusively by reproducing old SPS sections, but it is planned to someday review and upgrade this material to make clear which interfaces are not likely to change, and which are still under development.
3. The list of subroutine writeups which should be moved from the SPS to the SWS is not yet very clear, since there is no way of knowing what parts of the SPS are most often referenced by subsystem writers. Therefore, the aid of the present recipients of the SPS is requested in providing a list of subroutine writeups which should be candidates for the SWS. Please send such suggestions to

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As an incentive to the returning of such suggestions,
please note that if no suggestions are received, it will
be assumed that no SWS is needed.

Your comments on this plan, which is now in effect, are invited.