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OPERATING SYSTEMS

Operating systems are just programs. But special privileges on the hardware let them run and manage other programs. They got their start in the 1950s. The very first OSES augmented the manual task of loading programs by hand.

Interfacing with early peripherals was at a very low level, so as to make it easier for programmers. Operating Systems stepped in as intermediaries between software programs and hardware peripherals.

In the late 50s, the University of Manchester, in the UK, started work on a supercomputer called Atlas. A program called the Atlas Supervisor, finished in 1962, could run several programs at the same time on its single CPU.

By the 1970s, computers were sufficiently fast and cheap. Now operating systems has to handle not just multiple programs, but also multiple users.

The most influential of early time-sharing Operating Systems was Multics, or Multiplexed Information and Computing Service, released in 1969. Then a simpler operating system was created, it was Unix. Microsoft's Disk Operating System, or MS-DOS, was just 160 kilobytes, allowing it to fit, as the name suggests, onto a single disk. First released in 1981.

Today, computers run modern operating systems, like Mac OS X, Windows 10, Linux and Android. Their OSes all have multitasking and virtual and protected memory. So, they can run many programs simultaneously.