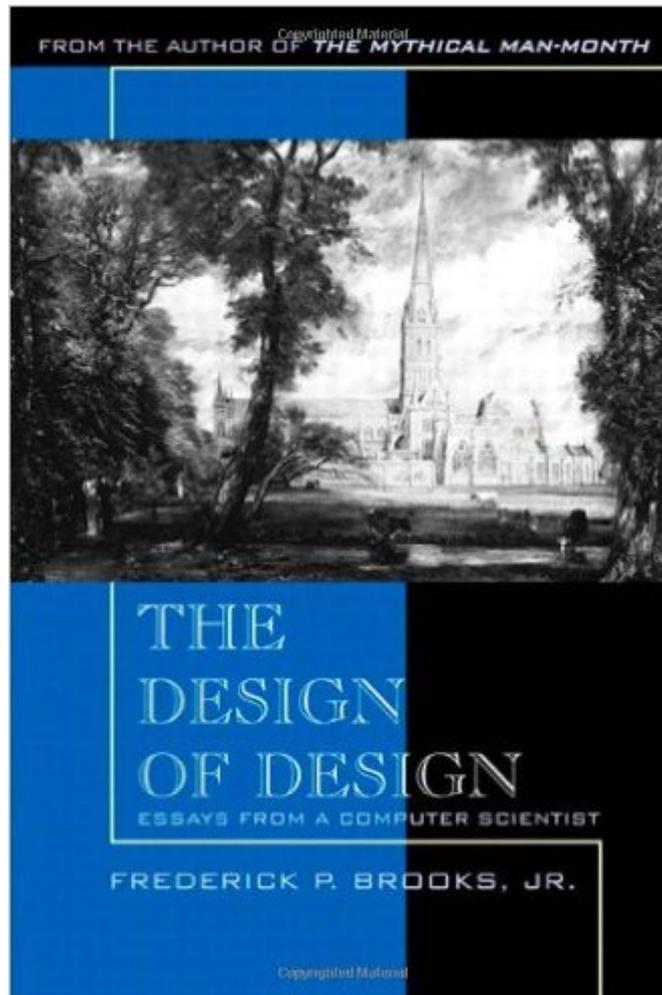


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# The Design Of Design: Essays From A Computer Scientist



## Synopsis

Making Sense of Design Effective design is at the heart of everything from software development to engineering to architecture. But what do we really know about the design process? What leads to effective, elegant designs? The Design of Design addresses these questions. These new essays by Fred Brooks contain extraordinary insights for designers in every discipline. Brooks pinpoints constants inherent in all design projects and uncovers processes and patterns likely to lead to excellence. Drawing on conversations with dozens of exceptional designers, as well as his own experiences in several design domains, Brooks observes that bold design decisions lead to better outcomes. The author tracks the evolution of the design process, treats collaborative and distributed design, and illuminates what makes a truly great designer. He examines the nuts and bolts of design processes, including budget constraints of many kinds, aesthetics, design empiricism, and tools, and grounds this discussion in his own real-world examples—case studies ranging from home construction to IBM's Operating System/360. Throughout, Brooks reveals keys to success that every designer, design project manager, and design researcher should know.

## Book Information

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In 1989 I started a new kind of software company, and considering that I had no financial, business, nor management experience, things went fairly well. Indeed, we doubled revenue every year for the first five years and grew from 3 people to more than 60. Somewhere along the line we hit our first real management crisis, and I was given the assignment to read *The Mythical Man-Month: Essays on Software Engineering, Anniversary Edition (2nd Edition)* as a first step in understanding why our

scheduling and deliverables process had become so protracted and precarious. It was an eye opener, and it gave me my first real understanding of the fundamental limits of the industrial model. (Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* was the second, and perhaps even more profound.) Thus, when I discovered that Brooks had written a new book to treat one of my favorite new topics--Design--I decided to order it right away. Then, while it was sitting in my shopping cart, I read through some of the comments, and though several of them spread doubt about the quality or validity of this latest effort, I decided that I would risk the purchase. And I am glad I did. I recently gave a four star review to another book on the topic of design: Roger Martin's latest book

There are few people who can be described as part of the foundation of modern business computing technology and IT management. Fred Brooks is one of them. His book "The Mythical Man Month" (MMM) is one of the seminal works on IT management. Now he follows that book up with "The Design of Design." Like MMM this book is a collection of essays and thoughts from someone who has been thinking and working on the deep systems behind information technology. This book is thought provoking, informative and makes a contribution to our understanding of IT and the nature of design. A word of caution however, this book, like MMM is not for the casual reader. People who are looking for a book similar to the other 'silver bullet' books about tech will be sorely disappointed because there is no silver bullet. Brooks told us that in the MMM. However, serious students of the evolution of design and IT management however will find much in this book to debate, disagree and discussion. Overall the 20 essays and 7 case studies provide an in-depth view on Brook's thinking and experience concerning design. Brook's approach tends toward a more academic treatment of these issues than other more solution oriented books. A strength of these essays is their ability to go back to the founding ideas and principles based on Brook's study or often first hand knowledge of the pioneers in IT. Two disclosures here. First I wrote my dissertation about the design of enterprises, so I am very interested in the topic and found the book enjoyable. Second, a while ago I was leading a class about IT for some MBA students and I added MMM to the reading list. Unfortunately it did not work, as the MBA students did not have a grounding or appreciation of the ideas in MMM.

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