



A Day in the Life of... William Stallings

Name: Dr. William Stallings

What I work on: I write computer science textbooks in the areas of networking, security, operating systems, and computer architecture. I occasionally do consulting work.

How I arrived at my present job: I was working in the product management division at Honeywell Information Systems. One of our customers was the Air Force, and a colonel there asked me to help him finish a book on local area networks that was behind schedule in return for my becoming a co-author. I enjoyed the experience and subsequently wrote a textbook on LANs. With the relative success of that book, I began working on other books while keeping my day job. After a few years, I was able to become a textbook author full time.

How I organize my day: I basically have four work-related activities: (1) Doing research for my writing, which includes reading professional journals and doing Web-based research. (2) Keeping up with my email correspondence, which includes questions, suggestions, and comments from students and professors. The feedback I get is very helpful in doing future editions and so I encourage the feedback and try to answer questions that come my way. (3) Writing and revising books. (4) Maintaining Web sites; these include a Web site for each of my books plus the Computer Science Student Resource site. The first three activities are done on a day-to-day basis. On a

typical day, I concentrate on writing in the morning, and do research and email correspondence in the afternoon or evening. I devote a few hours each weekend to the Web sites.

Amount of time spent working daily (at home and office): This is tough to say. I work at home and have a fairly unstructured schedule. I would guess it all adds up to about 50 hours per week.

What I do to get myself thinking creatively: My mind seems to work well on problems in background mode. Quite often I will be trying to come up with a diagram or some text to explain a concept or a new homework problem, and nothing immediately comes to mind. Later in the day or the next day, when I am not thinking about work, a useful idea pops into my head. I have no idea how this works and I don't do anything special to "prime the pump."

My problem-solving strategy: To improve my texts, I rely quite a bit on feedback from instructors and students. When I realize that something is not clearly explained, then I try to put myself into student mode and imagine how I would need this explained to me if it were a new concept. This strategy works quite well for me. It is basically the same strategy I used when working for Honeywell. A lot of my time was spent making presentations on custom hardware and software solutions to military customers. I tried to adopt the viewpoint of the audience and figure out what they wanted to know and what technical level they were comfortable with in putting together my presentation.

What I do to relieve stress: My wife and I share our house with a cat. There is no better way to relax than to watch a cat - sleeping, stretching, or swaggering along.

My hero, mentor, or person that I admire and why: The person I admire most is my wife, who has incredible courage. The second person that I consider my personal hero is Albert Schweitzer. He had a very full and rewarding life - a respected and well-known academic in the field of theology, a minister who loved to preach, an expert on organ music, organ construction, and Bach who was concert-quality organist; a man with a loving extended family and numerous friends. But at the age of 30 he went to medical school and then went to Africa to open a jungle hospital where he worked the rest of his life. Equally important (to me), he developed a unique and compelling philosophy of respect and reverence for life, animals as well as humans, and lived that

philosophy in his daily life.

What I do to mentor those who work with me: I work alone and so do not have that direct opportunity on a professional basis. On a personal level, I try to influence people, without being preachy or intrusive, to adopt a more humane philosophy with respect to animal welfare and animal rights.

How a negative event changed my life in a positive way: It's hard to pick out just one! What I can say is that in a general sense, for many years, I failed to analyze my situation systematically and to plan ahead in any concentrated fashion. But somehow I ended up with a career that is very satisfying and a wife I adore.

One event or decision in my life I wish I could go back and change: That is not part of my philosophy. I try to learn from my mistakes, but it's been my observation that there is nothing to gain by dwelling on what might have been.

What values are the most important to me and what I value in others: Honesty, loyalty, kindness to animals.

What inspires, motivates, or gets me excited about my job on a daily basis: Because I am writing textbooks, I am in constant learning mode. The subject matter is interesting and I am fortunate to be working in a field that is constantly evolving. Although there is a routine to the research and writing process, the underlying material is constantly changing, and that keeps it interesting.

Biography: William Stallings (<http://www.williamstallings.com>) is the author of over a dozen textbooks in the areas of data communications, computer networking, computer architecture, and network security. Seven times, he has been the recipient of the award for the best Computer Science and Engineering textbook of the year from the Textbook and Academic Authors Association.

Bill has designed and implemented both TCP/IP-based and OSI-based protocol suites on a variety of computers and operating systems, ranging from microcomputers to mainframes. As a consultant, he has advised government agencies, computer and software vendors, and major users on the design, selection, and use of networking software and products.

Bill created and maintains the Computer Science Student Resource Site at <http://www.williamstallings.com/studentsupport.html>. This site provides documents and links on a variety of subjects of general interest to computer science students (and professionals).

Dr. Stallings holds a Ph.D. from M.I.T. in Computer Science and a B.S. from Notre Dame in electrical engineering.