Dennis Ritchie is known for his aid in the creation of the UNIX operating system and the C programming language. He first joined Bell Laboratories in 1967. Shortly after, he began working on the first iteration of the UNIX operating system with his co-worker Ken Thompson. The two were motivated by the need for a simple and extensible computing platform that could support general purpose research.

UNIX was initially developed using the BCPL programming language. After becoming frustrated with BCPL, Ken Thompson began the development of the programming language, B. B was the predecessor to C, and was much simpler. B had been used in development of early UNIX kernels, but it lacked the finesse and power needed to support complex data structures. It was eventually was superseded by the language C, again developed by both Dennis Ritchie and Ken Thompson.

The C programming language is one of the most widely used programming languages in the world. C has had a strong influence on many other programming languages. Java, C++, C# and Objective-C all borrow concepts and syntax from C. Ritchie’s ideas of simplicity and clarity have persisted in these languages.

Ritchie not only made contributions in software, but he also has had lasting contributions that have affected modern technical writing. According to Ritchie’s colleague Brian Kernighan, Dennis Ritchie had a talent for writing; Ritchie could express complex concepts in very simple terms. Two of Ritchie’s publications, *The C Reference Manual* and *The C Programming Language*, are famous for their concise prose and clear examples. *The C Reference Manual* documents all aspects of the C language in a only 30 pages. The book *The C Programming Language* has become one the standard examples of proper technical writing and has influenced hundreds of technical publications in the last few decades.

Dennis Ritche passed away in October of 2011. His simple and succinct writing style has had a profound and lasting impact on many future technical publications, and his work at Bell Laboratories has influenced the way programs are written today.