Free with Atari World magazine

ST Source

Issue 2 June 1995

THE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO WORKING WITH YOUR ST

Neat 'n' Tidy

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Everything you always wanted to know about alternative desktops for your ST...

Don't miss our Reader Disk with the Thing desktop!



DIY desktops

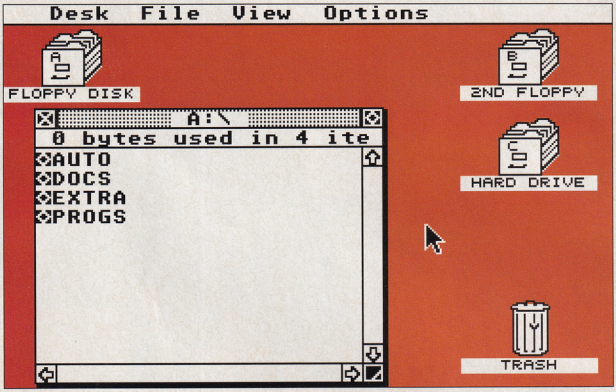
First of all, welcome to the second issue. If you've subscribed as a result of reading issue one or from enjoying this issue, thanks for your vote of confidence – you won't regret it.

As we promised, there really is something for everyone in this magazine. However, ST Source is aimed directly at the beginner and it's here that new users will feel most at home. You won't be treated like a fool and you won't be made to feel small. All you'll get is help and advice from expert users like Joe Connor and Graeme Rutt. No flannel and no frippery.

The good thing about Atari World is that we're the first magazine that can take a single subject and cover it in minute detail. This month we're delving deep into desktops – how they work, what they can do for you and where you get them. We've even included a detailed tutorial on Thing, the replacement desktop on our Reader Disk.

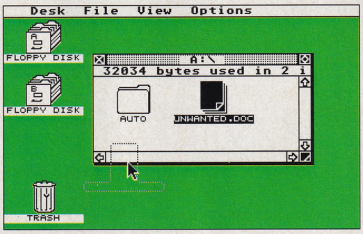
If you've ever wondered why people install replacement desktops or how you could do some things more easily, it's all here, ready and waiting. And so is the third issue – so fill out that subscription form!

Andrew Wright, Assistant editor



Deskbo

What is a desktop? And why do you need one? Andrew Wright has some answers.



Top: A customised ST desktop

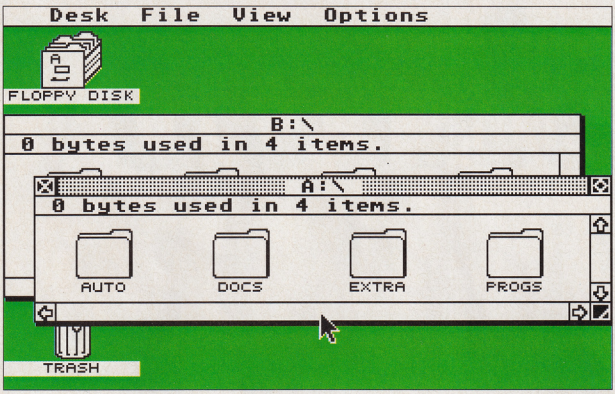
Bottom: Desktops make file handling much more intuitive

To many new users, it might seem a little strange to put a feature on replacing a desktop inside a computer magazine. Let's face it, it sounds more like a hammer and nails job than a simple disk operation.

In this case, the term "desktop" has an entirely different meaning. Far from being the coffee-cup-cluttered workspace you spend so much time hunched over, the computer's desktop is really the heart of the machine.

Now that most computers have ditched the old flashing prompt as a means of communicating with humans, most of the models sold today have what are called graphical user interfaces.

These GUIs – pronounced "gooeys" – represent the biggest step forward we've ever seen in computing terms because the simple point and click method of carrying out routine tasks has made computers much more friendly and accessible.



The default GEM desktop on an Atari ST/STe

Understanding the desktop

In an Atari the desktop is called GEM. In the ST and STe models the default desktop has two drive icons (filing cabinet drawers) and a trashcan (waste bin) on a green background. The analogy with a real office environment is fairly obvious.

The main advantage of such a working environment is that most actions are intuitive and easy to remember.

Using the mouse, you drop things in the bin, drag things around your desk and file things away in folders and drawers.

On the other hand, the basic GEM desktop is just that – basic. You can change the position of the icons to suit your own way of working or you can change the background colour but there's little more to it than that.

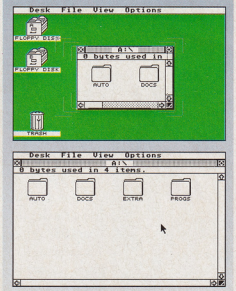
But there is an alternative: to put real power in your mouse pointer, you need either a replacement desktop or to upgrade your computer to TOS version 2. We're here to help you decide…

Down to size

Windows can be irritating objects if you don't arrange them how you want them and then make sure they stay that way. You can do this by saving the desktop (under the desktop's Options menu) so that whenever you boot your machine with that DESKTOP.INF file in the root directory, the windows will be in the same place.

Note that if you have a version of TOS prior to 2.0x, the DESKTOP.INF file can store the positions of four windows. You may never need that many open at once but it's a good idea to open four, position them as you want them, close two or three of them and then save the desktop. That way, if you ever open four windows again, they will open in the places you want them to.

Sometimes there are many more folders and files in a window than you can possibly display on screen at once. This can be awkward if you're looking for a particular file. One way to quickly glimpse a window's contents is to use the button (sometimes termed a gadget) in the top right-hand corner of the window. Clicking on this will expand the window to fill the screen. You can locate a file – or at least check that it is or isn't there – and then click the button again and the window shrinks back to its original size.



Clicking on the expand button makes the GEM window leap to full screen size. Another click shrinks it back again.

Tidying tips

Unlike their real life counterparts, computer desktops have to be kept tidy. You can hide scraps of paper for years on a real desk – at least you can on mine – but try treating files that way on the GEM desktop and you'll probably never see them again.

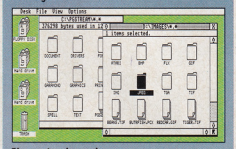


Figure 1 – icon view

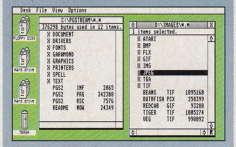
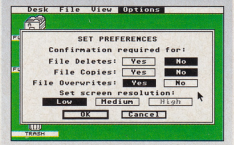


Figure 2 – text view

There are two ways of looking at your files and folders, the icon view or the text view. Most experienced users prefer the text view as you can see more files at once but if you're happy looking at the icons then that's fine. Figure 1 shows icon view – files are represented by icons in more or less square windows. In Figure 2 the windows have been moved (using the top window bar) and resized (using the small box in the bottom right corner) so that the contents of two floppy or disks or folders can be viewed side by side at the same time.

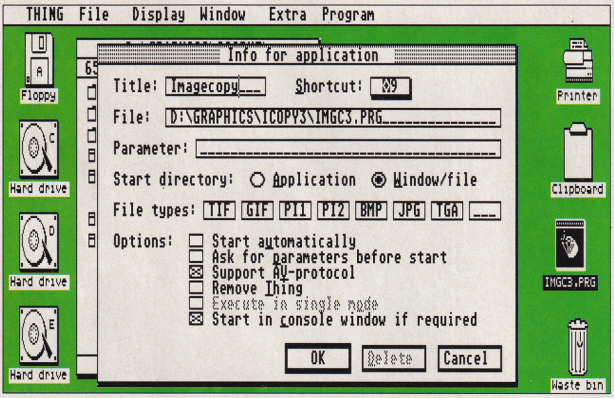
Once you get some practice in, you'll move round your Atari's desktop like greased lightning but some things will slow you down. One of these is your computer constantly asking you for confirmation before it carries out any action. You can turn off confirmation for deleting files, copying files or over-writing files but remember, that way you don't get a second chance if you actually delete the wrong one.



Confirmation options – best used when you've grown confident you know what you're doing!

Desktop *desires*

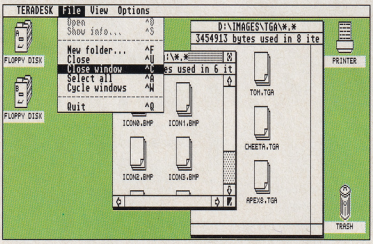
Andrew Wright gets down to the meat and shows you just what a replacement desktop can do...



Thing (which is on this month's Reader Disk) offers keyboard shortcuts, a very useful feature.

Having looked at some desktop basics, it's time to move on and look at what replacement desktops have to offer. Replacement desktops are programs that can be run from the GEM desktop in the usual way but they replace part of the operating system, namely the part that contains the Atari's built-in desktop. The result is a completely new desktop but in fact most of them look broadly similar – you'll see the same green background (on a colour monitor) and icons for each drive and the waste bin.

The most obvious difference is that the icons have changed. Instead of the standard TOS filing cabinet drawers, alternative desktops tend to have separate icons for floppy and hard drives as well as additional desktop icons for the clipboard and printer. This means, for example, that you can drag and drop files onto the printer icon for hard copy.



Teradesk's Close Window command.

On many desktops the windows look no different at all until you dig beneath the surface. You generally get a choice of icon or text view, but far more useful is the ability to alter the display fonts. A smaller font means you can see many more files in a window at a given screen resolution. Some desktops, such as Ease, let you display text in larger point sizes, making them much more legible.

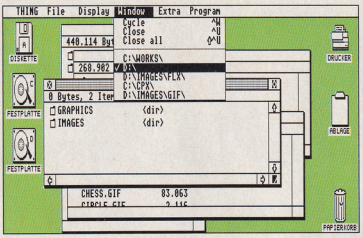
Windows get in the way sometimes and it helps if your replacement desktop has commands to clear them away quickly. For example, in TOS 1.x you have to navigate back up through folders to the root directory before you can close a window. Many programs, like Teradesk, have a Close Window command that shuts down the windows completely with a single action.

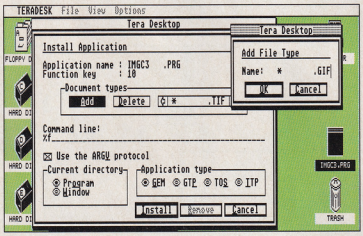
Thing even lets you cycle between open windows (useful if one is hidden at the back), close one down or close them all down. You can also select which open window to top from the same drop-down menu.

Is it for me?

Replacement desktops have a number of advantages. They add more functionality to your everyday working environment so you can do simple housekeeping tasks much more quickly. On the other hand, they can use up almost all your spare memory and take a lot longer to load than the built-in desktop that is stored entirely in ROM, particularly if you're booting from a floppy disk.

Our round-up will tell you more, but in general 1Mb is the minimum memory for a replacement desktop and a hard disk is preferred because of the extra loading time.





(above top) Thing's window navigation commands make life a lot easier on a crowded desktop.

(above bottom) Installed applications can be loaded much more easily.

Taking shortcuts

One thing that might sound strange when we're talking about graphical interfaces and desktops, is keyboard shortcuts. It's almost a contradiction in terms but, nice and easy to use as most desktops are, the mouse can sometimes be impossibly slow.

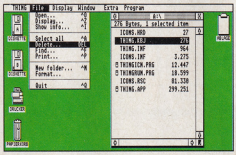
Take deleting a file for example. The intuitive way you can "pick up" a file and "drag" it into the waste bin is a big advantage for beginners to computing. When you're further along the road, though, speed is more important and it becomes much more important to have keyboard shortcuts available. For instance, to delete a file you simply highlight it using the mouse (guided by your right hand) and delete it by pressing the Delete key, or whatever combination the desktop requires, with your left hand.

As an alternative, many replacement desktops have a menu option for deleting files which can be quicker than dragging and dropping and works when the waste bin icon is concealed by a window.

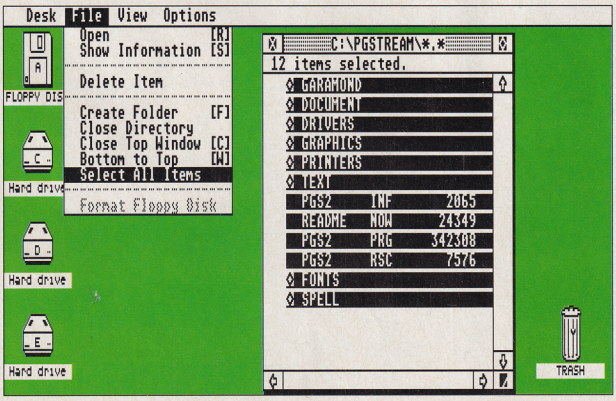
Later versions of TOS – and replacement desktops – have an under-used but amazingly powerful feature. Application programs can be installed so that they are loaded whenever one of their data files is double clicked. This method of program launching can be used as well as placing the application's icon on the desktop, providing real flexibility.

Many replacement desktops let you link several different extenders to a particular application so that, for example, you can automatically load a program like Imagecopy when you click on GIF, IMG, TIF or JPG files.

Another menu command found in most replacement desktops is Select All. This is a big time saver if you have a folder containing more files than can be displayed in the window but you want to move them all elsewhere or back them up on to a floppy. Instead of drawing a rubber band around all the files visible in the window, moving the scroll bars and adding more to the selection (by holding the shift key), you simply top the window in question and click on Select All. With a keyboard shortcut it's even quicker!



Thing makes extensive use of keyboard shortcuts.

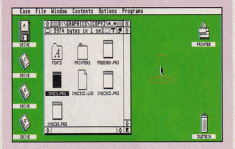


Select All is a very useful command – but not found in TOS 1.xx.

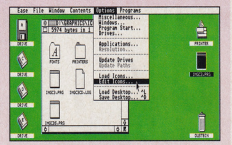
Dump it on the desktop

By far the most powerful feature of all the replacement desktops is the ability to place program icons – and in some cases ordinary files and folders – on the desktop.

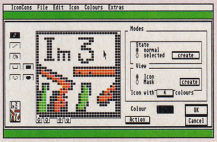
This means that if you have a program you use almost every day, you don't have to click your way through several folders to get at it. It can be stored permanently on the desktop and launched with just one double click.



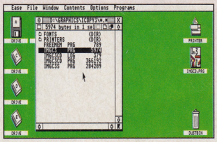
The first stage is to select the Imagecopy program icon and drag it onto the Ease desktop.



Once the program icon is in position, you can edit the icon itself using Ease's built-in editor.

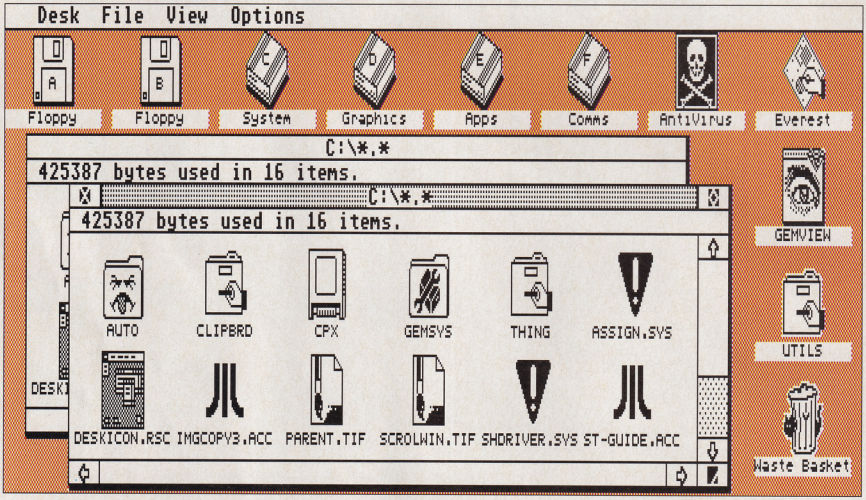


In medium resolution you can use up to four colours in the icon.



When you've finished, just save the desktop configuration to make the icon appear on the desktop every time you reboot. From now on, if you want to run Imagecopy you can double click on it to start it up or drag and drop an image file onto it, which will then automatically load.

New ROMs



The desktop in all its glory – user defined icons, program icons and a rather interesting trashcan icon!

TOS 2.06 is in the incongruous position of being something more than just a replacement desktop – it's a full replacement for your old TOS and you have to open up your machine to install it.

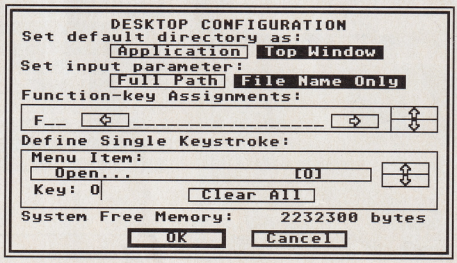
This means that whenever you switch on your machine the new desktop is available immediately – you don't need to load it first. The desktop itself can't compete with other disk-based replacements in terms of features but it comes pretty close.

One of the most appealing additions to this version of TOS is the ability to place program and data icons on the desktop. Adding an icon is easy; just drag a file or program out of a file window and drop it on to the desktop.

To change the graphic used for the icon you simply click on the Install Icon option and choose from a range of different graphics. The same function is used to change the different shapes for the disk, printer and trashcan icons.

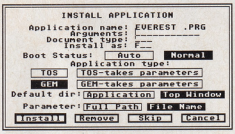
TOS 2.06 does not include an icon editor but they are available in the public domain. In fact you'll find that most public domain libraries also carry a range of ready made icons. Buy the disk, copy the file over and the Install

Configuring the desktop is a breeze with this dialogue box that controls default program launching and keyboard shortcuts.



for old

Graeme Rutt looks at the fastest, most flexible option for floppy owners – an upgrade to TOS 2.06.



Fine tuning the way a single program launches has never been easier.

Icon function will automatically use the new graphics.

Drag 'n' drop

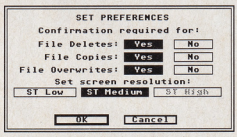
Launching a program by double clicking on a data file has long been a function of TOS. This version refines the process by providing you with a whole range of options covering every possible eventuality. You can even tailor the way a program launches, which gets around a number of problems there have been in the past.

The partner of this function is the drag 'n' drop protocol – new for TOS 2.06. Instead of double-clicking on a file with a certain extender to load a particular program you can drag any one file on top of a program, loading the program along with the dropped file.

Keyboard shortcuts are also available on the desktop – a real boon for those of us who don't like reaching for the mouse at every opportunity. TOS 2.06 enables you to change the keyboard shortcut for each menu item and you can assign different function keys to load different programs.

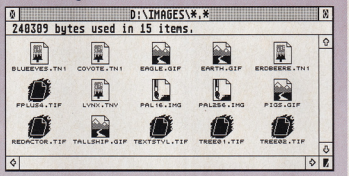
Control over the display inside windows has hardly been touched since earlier TOS versions. Sure, you can use different icons now and you still have the old choice between icons or text and the way they're sorted, but very little else has changed apart from the fact that you can alter the window background colour and pattern as you can the desktop. The main difference is the file filtering – an exceptionally useful method of only showing those files you want in the window. Bring up the dialogue box, set the file mask and away you go.

Unfortunately, there's no way of storing your favourite masks for later use and no way of using more than one mask at a time.

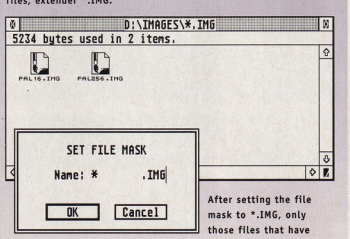


Preferences are hardly changed, maybe an area that could have been strengthened?

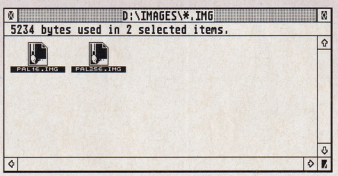
File filtering



Here we have a directory full of images. They come in a wide range of file formats but I want to work with the GEM Image files, extender *.IMG.



After setting the file mask to *.IMG, only those files that have that extender are displayed. The others are still there – they're just not shown.



We've selected the *.IMG files using the Select All command rather than rubber-banding or Shift-clicking as we would have had to do in earlier TOS versions. It's now possible to rename, copy, move, delete or perform any other file operation on the selected files.

TOS 2.06 offers a few more extras. You can select all the files in a window with a simple click of the mouse or keyboard combination but there are no other ground-shaking features. However, it is wrong to think of TOS 2.06 as a replacement desktop alone. It's a new TOS, now the standard operating system on the ST/STe, and it's a fast, clean almost totally bug-free system.

The fact that TOS does not come on disk shouldn't be overlooked. It's there as soon as you turn on your machine and it doesn't take up any more disk or memory space. Replacement desktops such as Ease and NeoDesk only really come into their own when you own a hard disk. If you're an Atari owner who depends on a floppy drive and your desktop is found wanting, then TOS 2.06 must be the choice for you.

An inside job

As TOS comes on two chips, upgrading your computer means opening it up and performing a little minor surgery. However, the procedure is far from difficult and in most cases requires no soldering at all.

If you're worried about this, or if, like me, your hardware skills are on the same par as your ballroom dancing techniques, then you can always pay for someone else to install it. As well as selling TOS 2.06 Compo will install it for £20 plus postage and packaging.

Which option you go for depends on your computer and your personal requirements. If you've got either an STe or a Mega STe, you can buy the two chips for £29, pull out the old ones and replace them with the new ones.

If you want to keep your old TOS, to make sure all your old software will still work, or if you don't have an STe, then you can go for Compo's T-Board. This board plugs on top of your CPU though you may need some soldering depending on your machine. To run TOS 2.06 you must reboot with a small, supplied program in your Auto folder. The T-Board costs £54.

The final option, for STe users who want to keep both versions of TOS, is the STe Switch. This is a new gizmo, designed by Compo, that has a hardware switch instead of an Auto folder program to switch TOS. It costs £39 and it should be available by the time you read this. You can get in touch with Compo by telephoning 01487 773582.

Back Issues...

... for your collection



Prior to Atari World, there were two other great Atari magazines, now sadly lost from the shelves. The much loved ST World sadly disappeared many years ago and is still sorely missed by many diehard Atari owners. The other, Atari ST Review, has now disappeared from the news stands in its original format.

Atari World has been fortunate enough to secure stocks of a limited number of back issues of ST Review and we are pleased to make them available to our readers. If your collection is incomplete, then why not order a copy from us?





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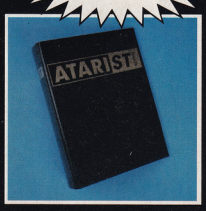
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Desk *to* desk

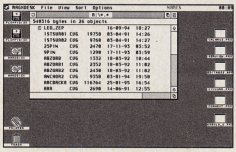
Looking for a new look desktop? You can spend anything from the price of a floppy disk to fifty quid or so – and still not get what you need. Andrew Wright and Graeme Rutt look at a broad selection of replacements that should fit every bill.

MagiC

MagiC is normally thought of as a multi-tasking operating system. Indeed it's probably the best on the Atari though it doesn't yet run on the Falcon. On the other hand, the fact that it also gives you a replacement desktop shouldn't be overlooked. It replaces TOS completely, giving you faster disk access and quicker screen updates – a single program runs faster than under your normal TOS.

MagiC's desktop is functionally similar to TOS 2.06, with a few extras like the ability to change your font size, two extenders from which to automatically launch programs and other MagiC-specific additions. Because it's a multi-tasking system you can carry on using the desktop while you're running a program.

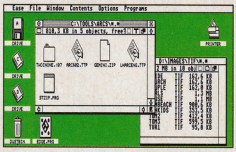
MagiC stays in memory when you reboot and can be configured from a desk accessory which means that it works well without extra disk swapping on a floppy-based system. The big speed gains, multi-tasking and enhanced desktop may make this the best choice if you've a few bob to spare.



MagiC offers a limited replacement desktop along with useful speed enhancements.

Ease

Ease was designed to enhance the more limited desktop built into MagiC but it has a number of features that make it perfect for multi-tasking under MultiTOS or as a straightforward replacement for GEM. It will run in 1Mb (at a squeeze) and is arguably the nicest looking desktop of all.



The Ease desktop – neat and functional.

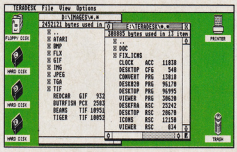
An Ease window has four extra buttons: one to close it quickly without exiting folder after folder; one to size the window to fit the contents; another to switch between text and icon view; and the fourth to cycle through other open windows.

Using Ease you can also iconise windows, a useful feature for multi-tasking and for keeping the contents of a frequently-accessed, nested folder close at hand.

You can change any or all the Ease icons using the comprehensive editor and even specify different GDOS or SpeedoGDOS fonts in different windows. Text can be viewed in any font too and even printed out directly from the desktop. Programs can be launched from icons on the desktop or from a special menu. With or without MagiC, Ease is certainly the desktop to aspire to.

Teradesk

Teradesk is one of the most popular replacements around, if only for the fact that it's freeware. The latest release, version 1.40, offers similar functions to Atari's TOS 2.06 and uses up less than 30Kb of RAM when running programs so it's ideal for 0.5Mb machines.



Teradesk – chunky icons...

The icons themselves are a little plain but a good selection is included so you can change most of the ones that don't suit you. The windows are almost identical to those under the standard

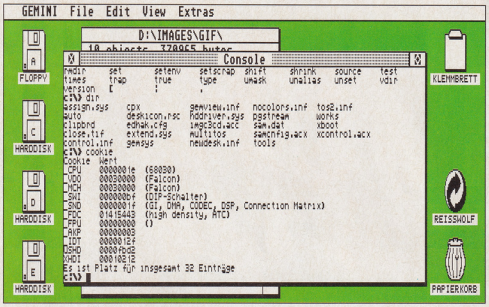
GEM desktop but Teradesk has many more options for viewing and locating files, including multiple file masks, unsorted file lists and the ability to select all the files in a folder. Dialogue boxes can be fixed or movable, and monospaced GDOS fonts can be installed for viewing files or text.

It has the fewest features on offer but it is well worth trying out if you're still not convinced about the worth of a replacement.

NeoDesk

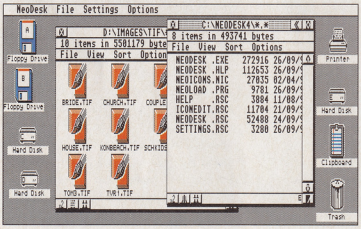
As far as replacement desktops go, NeoDesk is a real veteran, especially when compared with the raw recruits like Ease. The younger ones may be leaner and fitter but NeoDesk has years of solid experience behind it, something that might just give it the edge when it comes to the crunch.

NeoDesk is just as good looking as Ease and probably better designed although some of the dialogue box options are too well hidden. Icon editing is very easy and there are plenty of features to keep you interested, including dozens of configuration options so you can get the desktop looking just the way you want it.



One of Gemini's best features is the excellent Mupfel command line editor.

NeoDesk 4 adds support for multi-tasking and when coupled with Geneva you've got a pretty powerful system on your hands. One unique feature is that the desktop can be placed in its own window and each file window has its own individual menu bar, which makes it superb for multi-tasking or task switching. With Geneva and NeoDesk on one hand, and MagiC and Ease on the other, Atari users are certainly spoilt for choice.



NeoDesk wins friends just by looking good.

Gemini

Gemini's big claim to fame – apart from the length of time it has been on the Atari scene – is the excellent, tightly integrated Mupfel command line editor that runs in a console window. The clean, well-designed interface is a little odd and hasn't proved popular in the past, but version 2 is due out shortly and may well win a few more friends. Indeed, version 2 looks like maturing into an excellent desktop and work is already underway in translating the documentation into English. The icons and dialogue boxes are smart and functional and the program can use GDOS or SpeedoGDOS for the display. There's an icon for the clipboard and two dustbins – one permanent and one recoverable. You can also display files in large icon, small icon or text mode, as on the Apple Mac. Indeed Gemini's start-up message looks distinctly Mac-like so there's no doubt where the author's inspiration came from.

On the downside, Gemini doesn't have a menu delete feature, needs a lot of memory and can't search through drives, but that takes very little away from such a nice-looking, attractive desktop.

Buyer's Guide

	TOS 2.06	NeoDesk 4	Ease	MagiC	Teradesk	Gemini	Thing
Price	£49.95	£49.95	£49.95	£69.95	Free	Shareware	Shareware
Supplier	Compo	Compo	System Solutions	System Solutions	Goodmans	Goodmans	Goodmans
Contact	01487 773582	01487 773582	0181 693 3355	0181 693 3355	01782 335650	01782 335650	01782 335650
Desktop icons	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extra window controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Changeable icons	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Desktop printer icon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
File masking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
File search	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Select all	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
User selectable window fonts	No	Yes	Yes	No	Limited	Yes	Yes
Movable dialogue boxes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Unload facility	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Minimum RAM	None	1Mb	1Mb	1Mb	0.5Mb	1Mb	1Mb
Rating on 1Mb machine	8	7	7	6	6	3	4
Rating on 2-4Mb machine	8	8	8	9	6	5	6

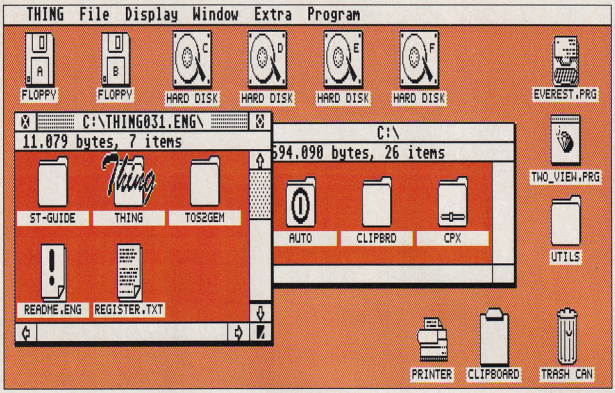
- Thing and TOS 2.06 have been included for comparison – see the appropriate features in this issue for more information on both of these products.
- Extra window controls covers additional buttons and gadgets. Changeable icons means you can choose from a broad selection. An unload facility means that the desktop "shrinks" into a small amount of memory when you run another program – of course it takes longer to reload when you quit the program but this is a good option for 1Mb machines.
- Ratings give you an idea of how much you would gain by installing the product, relative to the standard Atari's TOS 1.x desktop which would score 5.

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Thing looks good and works reliably because all the really clever stuff is hidden under the bonnet

Join Joe Connor for a fling with Thing, the latest shareware desktop to reach the UK...

Do your own Thing

The Atari's built-in desktop might be simple and dull but at least it is stored permanently in your machine's ROM (read only memory). Alternatives are just the opposite – feature packed, addictive and extremely memory-hungry! The upshot of this is that you'll need at least 1Mb of memory to run the special version of Thing that is available on this month's reader disk. If you only have 0.5Mb of memory you'll need a memory upgrade before you can run any replacement desktop with the exception of Teradesk.

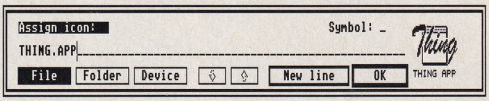
First of all, it is important to make a back up copy of your original Thing master disk. If you lose the default settings it's easy to restore them from your back up. Thing can be started from the desktop by double clicking on the THING.APP icon. If you find yourself using Thing regularly, it can be installed to load automatically each time you boot your machine. To do this from the Atari desktop, highlight the THING.APP icon then select Install Application... from the Options menu and set the Boot status: to Auto. Save the desktop, reboot, and you should arrive at the Thing desktop without lifting a finger!

Feature-rich

With the release of the MegaSTe many of the features previously available in replacement desktops were incorporated into TOS. If you're running an ST/STe machine you can consider replacement desktops such as Thing, NeoDesk, Ease, Gemini and Teradesk as alternatives to a TOS upgrade. Thing supports TOS versions from 1.4 onwards and provides most of the TOS 2 desktop features plus many extras.

In addition to the basic drive, trashcan, folder, program and file icons, Thing adds a clipboard, printer and parent icons. Each different file type can be assigned its own icon using the Edit icons... option from the Extra menu.

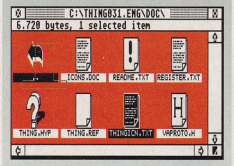
Program, folder and file icons can all be dragged from windows onto the desktop, where a duplicate appears. To run the programs all you do is click on its desktop icon. You can also launch a program by dragging an appropriate



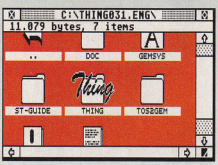
Icons rules are controlled by an INF file. THINGICN is used to manage which icons are used by which file types.

Mission critical

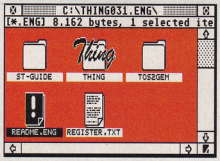
Thing offers flexibility, productivity and extra features in exchange for over 0.5Mb of memory. Only you can decide if this is a fair swap. I've found it's the little things that count. Because I spend a lot of time at the desktop, seemingly minor features are sorely missed when taken away. Here are a few examples...



The parent icon saves opening a second window when copying or moving folders and/or files to their parent directory.



Windows can be scrolled vertically, in real time, using a click and drag right mouse action.

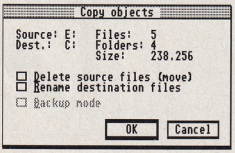


Select files using the autolocator, start entering a mask into the info line and Thing does the rest!

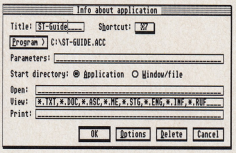
data file onto the desktop icon. Designing the ultimate desktop is one participation sport everyone can enjoy from the comfort of an armchair.

Thing things

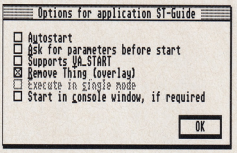
The Window menu includes a list of open windows from which any window can be topped (raised above the other windows and made active). If you're looking for a particular file type in a given window press the asterisk (*) key to activate the autolocator. Now press full stop (.) followed by the first letter of the file type you're looking for.



Information where and when you need it. A progress bar takes over after selecting the OK button.



The Atari desktop supports a single file type for each installed application – I managed no less than eight!



If you run short of memory you can set Thing to unload from memory when running other programs.

If any matching files are found, Thing automatically completes the extension highlighting the files for further attention.

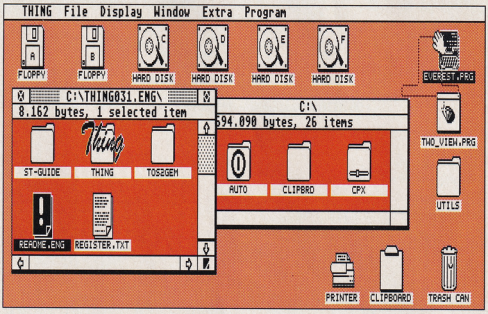
The Atari desktop's Show/Print/Cancel dialogue box offers pretty rudimentary file output to the screen or printer. If you inadvertently display or print anything other than a plain ASCII text file, all hell breaks loose! Thing takes a different approach by calling external programs. There are plenty of superb file viewers, printer managers, search and copy utilities around so rather than program new ones, Thing acts as go-between, calling external programs as required.

It's up to you which programs to install but you're going to need a file viewer and a printer manager. I suggest you take a look at MasterBrowse, 1stGuide and ST-Guide as file viewers and IdeaList or GEMSpooler for your printer manager.

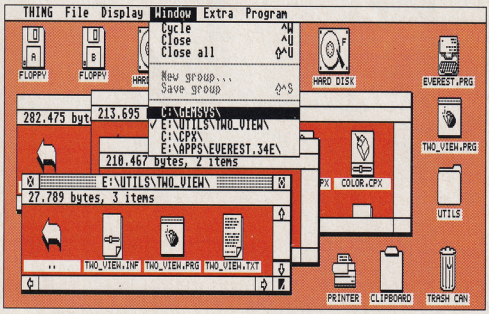
To install a program select New in the Applications... option from the Extra menu which displays the Info about Application dialogue box. Click on the Program button and locate the desired program using the file selector. Enter a single asterisk (*) in the View: field for a file viewer or the Print: field for a printer manager then exit the dialogue using the OK button.

Thing is set up and ready to use so now is a good time to save your desktop. You'll find Save settings... under the Extra menu option. Don't forget that this month's Reader Disk offers a complete version of Thing, already pre-configured and ready to run using some of the best external utilities around.

One of the most useful features of any desktop is the ability to drag and drop files onto programs to start them up.



Even if a window is completely buried you can easily top it using the Windows menu.



The Language

Atari World presents more exclusive excerpts from Mark Baines' definitive A-Z guide to the Atari.

This month we present the second of six excerpts from Mark Baines' A-Z, the essential guide to everything to do with Ataris. If you can't wait – or you want the complete guide – you can order Mark's book direct from Linnhe Computing, Shore Street, Inver by Tain, Ross-shire IV20 1SF, or telephone 01862 871624. If it isn't in the Atari A-Z, it probably doesn't exist!

C (continued)

COMBEL

The Atari custom chip in the Falcon that acts as the manager for all the system functions. Atari claim that the COMBEL is a combination of the MMU, GLUE and Blitter.

Control panel

A desk accessory program called CONTROL.ACC from which certain TOS system parameters can be set, such as the palette colours, mouse and keyboard response speeds, serial port configuration, printer type, time and date. It has mostly been replaced by the more flexible extensible control panel, XCONTROL.ACC.

Cookie jar

The cookie jar is a way to provide programs with information about the type of system they are running on, especially the type of hardware and operating system. It was introduced with TOS 1.6 but can be installed by an AUTO folder program on earlier versions of TOS.

Coprocessor

A processor that is designed to work in tandem with the central processor, such as the Blitter, a floating point maths processor or the DSP chip.

CPX

The file name extender for a Control Panel eXtension, the modules to be used with the XCONTROL accessory. Each module has a standard appearance and format which enables it to be integrated easily into the XCONTROL accessory environment.

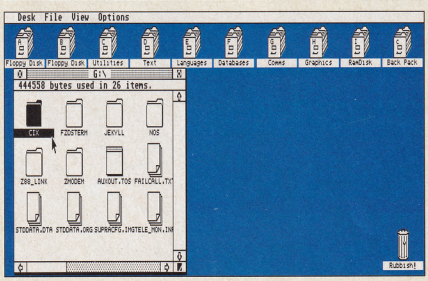
CPZ

The file name extender for a CPX module that has been deactivated by the control panel.

D

Desktop

The main screen that appears after bootup that contains the menu bar, disk icons and a trash can icon. Directory windows can be opened on the desktop to perform disk and file operations or to launch programs. The desktop was extensively updated in TOS 2 and 3 and renamed NewDesk.



TOS 1 style desktops are quite simple – just drive and trash can icons and directory windows. Here, there is a RAM disk as drive I: and a ROM cartridge as drive c:.

DESKCICN.RSC

A standard GEM resource file containing colour desktop icons for TOS 4. This file is searched for at bootup before the DESKICON.RSC file.

DESKICON.RSC

A standard GEM resource file containing desktop icons for TOS 2 and above.

DESKTOP.INF

A file that holds the customised desktop data for TOS 1 versions created by selecting the Save Desktop menu option and read at bootup from the root directory. It contains the settings made with the control panel accessory as well as the default window and icon positions, icon labels and the recognised file name extenders.

Desk menu

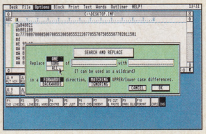
The first, leftmost menu from which accessories are run.

Dialogue box

An interactive message box containing text, buttons and/or icons that a program uses to obtain input from a user.

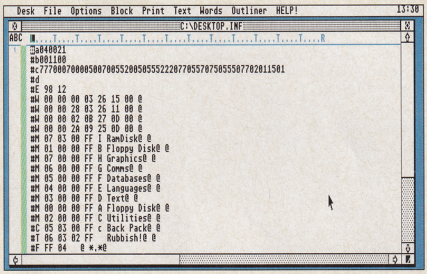
Directory

A list of a disk's files and subdirectories appearing in a drive window on the desktop.

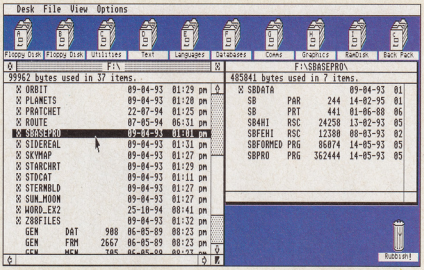


Dialogue boxes can take many forms from simple one line text entry boxes to pass parameters to TTP programs, to those containing buttons, pop-up menus and small windows. This dialogue box has buttons and text entry lines.

The DESKTOP.INF file can be edited in a word processor, but make sure you know what you're doing...



Barrier



A directory is the same as a folder and can be viewed as a list of names or as icons. Here the contents of the highlighted directory on the left are displayed in a separate window on the right.

DMA

Direct Memory Access. Atari custom chip for high-speed data transfer in and out of the computer that bypasses the central processor, thus enabling it to do something else. Used with disk drives and Atari laser printer.

DMA port

The ACSI port on STs, STes and TTs which can be connected up to seven other devices including hard disks, laser printers, tape drives and CD ROM drives.

DMA sound

The 8-bit stereo sound system introduced on the Atari STe coupled to a volume and tone controller chip. This is essentially a sound sampler that plays samples but cannot record them.

Drag

Moving an item around the desktop by simultaneously holding down the mouse button and moving the pointer.

Drop-down menu

A list of options that appear below a menu heading when touched with the mouse pointer.

DSP

Digital Signal Processor. A microprocessor that is designed to manipulate digital signals at very high rates. The Falcon is noted for its DSP which forms part of the sophisticated signal processing and audio system of the Falcon.

E

Environment

The resources available to a program within the computer system. Operating system variables can be defined to point to various locations in memory or on disk where these resources are stored, the most common being the PATH environmental variable which is the search path used to locate program resources and files. For example
PATH=;C:\;C:\UTILS;D:\;E:\LC5\C.

Event

A GEM-generated signal telling a program that an external action has occurred, such as a mouse click or window closure, that has to be acted upon by the program.

Exception

A condition encountered during program execution that causes an immediate transfer of control to an exception routine that can deal with that condition. Exceptions normally occur when the processor has been given an instruction that it cannot perform or when an external device encounters a problem.

Exception vectors

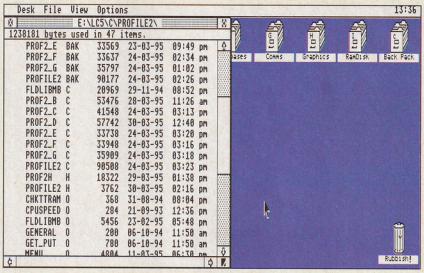
The first 1,024 bytes of memory are reserved by the processor for the exception vectors which are the addresses of routines that the processor needs to execute when an exception occurs.

EXTEND.SYS

A file necessary for the operation of FONTGDOS and FSMGDOS. It contains details of the cache sizes and the point sizes of the scalable outline fonts. Usually found in the root directory of the boot disk.

Extender

The optional last three characters of a file name which, by convention, describe its type, such *.PRG, *.ACC or *.DOC.



File name extenders are a useful means of sorting files on a disk. Here the directory window is Sorted by Type which groups files with matching extenders together.

F

Falcon

The Falcon is the latest and top-of-the-range TOS-compatible computer using a 16MHz MC68030 processor, an optional floating point maths'processor (FPU), a 16MHz Blitter and a 32MHz Digital Signal Processor (DSP). It can use up to 16Mb of memory and has an internal hard disk. What makes it particularly interesting is the very sophisticated sound and digital data processing systems and the availability of true-colour screen resolutions.

FastRAM

The high-speed memory in the TT also called TT or Alternative RAM.

FAT

File Allocation Table. A set of data on a disk representing a map of where all the files on that disk are so that GEMDOS knows where to look for them.

File name

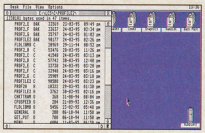
A character string that uniquely identifies a file within a directory. Under TOS it consists of up to eight characters (not punctuation marks) separated by a full stop from the optional three character extender.

Floppy disk controller – FDC

The WD1772 chip controlling the floppy disk drive on the ST range or the AJAX chip on the TT and Falcon.

Folder

A directory containing related files within the main disk directory. It has its own icon which looks like a cardboard folder on the desktop.



The icon for a directory is a cardboard folder and can be thought of as a container for separate files and other folders.

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