Formation

COLLABORATORS

	TITLE : Formation		
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WRITTEN BY		August 22, 2024	

REVISION HISTORY

NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

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Chapter 1

Formation

1.1 Formation

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##########################################
#           #
#           #
#     F O R M A T I O N   #
#     -----------------   #
#              #
#       (Release 1.2b)    #
#               #
#        © 1997,8 Tim Cribbin   #
#           #
#           #
##########################################
```

Welcome to Formation. This guide is the full instruction
manual for the program. I have attempted to offer a full and clear
explanation of all Formation's features. If any aspects are still unclear
once you have read this document, please do not hesitate to email me with
your query. Please also remember that this program is shareware - register if you
find it useful. Doing so will not only remove the random requester present
in the demo and allow you to define more Groups (up to 25) but will also help
to ensure Formation's future development.

Formation provides Amiga users with a completely new way of accessing
files. At it's core is a system based upon on my own concept of
'Virtual Directories' which I shall hereafter refer to as 'Groups'.

Put simply, Groups allow the user to rearrange files and directories
into an unlimited number of combinations. Viewed through the Formation
GUI a group looks like any ordinary directory, appearing as a list of
files and sub-directories. The difference lies in the fact that the
actual physical location (e.g. CD, Hard-Disk) of these items is
unimportant - each item could be stored on a completely different device.

This provides the user with a fast and intuitive means of data navigation.

In short, the main features are...

* Files and Directories can be grouped together by theme or type

  (e.g. animations, movies, help-files)

* An item can appear in any number different groups

* Access to any file is never more than 5 mouse-clicks away

* Directory lists may be cached (saved) to hard-disk to allow seamless
  browsing of files located on both fixed and removeable media.

* Works like a catalogue system for your data. If the item exists on
  removeable media (e.g. floppy-disk), Formation will prompt you for the
  appropriate volume when you wish to access it - "Now which CD is that
  cool demo on?"

* Formation is filetype sensitive. Click on a file and a range of
  user-defined actions are presented to the user. Double click and
  the primary action is performed instantly.

* Creating groups is made simple by means of a sophisticated search engine.
  Devices can be searched by text string, date and filetype. You never
  need lose a file again!

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1.2 Legal Notice

CopyRight

This program is a shareware product. The demo version may be
copied and redistributed with the following limitations:

a) The Formation executable must not altered in any way.
b) Formation may not be included in any product that is to be sold for
   profit unless prior permission, in writing, has been granted by the author.

The full version of Formation may only be used by those persons who have already
paid the registration fee to the author. This distribution may not be copied
and redistributed, under any circumstances, without the prior written
permission of the author.

Disclaimer

This program was subjected to extensive testing prior to it's release. To the
best of the author's knowledge it is safe to use on any system. However the

author cannot be held responsible for any damage that may occur, in whatever
form, whilst using this program.
If you do not accept these terms, please delete the Formation distribution
from your system immediately.

1.3 Installation

INSTALLATION

System Requirements:

OS 3.x
Atleast 500K of SPARE memory
Hard-Drive

reqtools library|_ Contact a PD library for these if you don't have them
lha |

Simply copy the entire Formation directory over to your hard-disk.

Formation requires it's own font to be installed in your 'sys:fonts' directory.
Formation will install it automatically when you first boot up if you haven't
already done so yourself.

And that's about it. No assigns need to be made to the Formation directory.

Please note that Formation reads from 3 prefs files on start-up ...

default.grp - Group file
default.act - Action Prefs file
default.prg - Program Prefs file

You can configure any number of different prefs files, but it is those named
default.*** that will be loaded on start-up. Configurations carrying different
names may be loaded subsequently.

Please also note that when you select a file, Formation uses Multiview as it's
internal default tool, if no other has been specified for that file type.
It looks in 'SYS:Utilities' directory for Multiview. You can change this location
or the tool itself from the Action prefs menu.

1.4 What are Groups?

Groups are the core of the Formation system. Group files can be created containing
a number of different groups (up to 25 per file) arranged around different
themes. These Groups are displayed to the user by means of a list gadget on
the main interface window. Each Group may contain a combination of directories

and files holding data relating to that Group's theme. These can be accessed
in the same way as you would normally access files and directories in a file
manager.

The main differences are...

* Entries within a particular Group can be physically located absolutely
  anywhere. This allows you to create catalogues of files and directories
  along various different themes, making browsing and accessing files a
  much simpler process. Directory lists located on removeable media may also
  be cached (saved) to hard-disk to allow seamless browsing of files.

  What this means is you don't need to buy a gargantuan hard-drive
  in order to keep all your related files together, although you must obviously
  have any relevant disks to hand if you ever wish to access a file.

* Entries are stored within a structure containing a maximum of three levels
  Using this approach no file is ever more than five mouseclicks away.

  At the top of the structure (level 1) you have a list of Groups.
  Each Group contains a main directory (level 2) and possibly
  sub-directories (level 3). When in a main directory you can choose to
  view files and directories by their full path name or by user-defined
  aliases. An alias can be anything you want it to be, although an abbreviation
  of the full path is often most logical i.e. 'dh1:movies/' would have the
  alias 'Movies'.

  Put simply, you select a Group and the lister will display it's contents or
  virtual directory listing. This can include both files and whole directories
  as per a normal directory.

  Clicking on a file will bring up an Action requester showing information on the
  file and two or three gadgets providing user options.

  Clicking on a sub-directory will bring up a new list containing that directory's
  contents. If the directory is stored on removeable media you may have to insert
  the disk first (not necessary if it has been cached to HD). Again, clicking on a
  file will bring up the Action requester. Formation will display only files at
  this level. If you want to view any sub-directories of that directory, you
  can switch to 'Browser' mode using the cycle gadget and continue your browsing
  from there.

1.5 User Options

FORMATION WINDOWS
=================

The Main Interface
The Search Interface
Action Preferences
Program Preferences

1.6 The Main Interface

GADGETS

When Formation first loads up you will be presented with a window containing
a lister and a row of icon gadgets.

Along the top of the Formation window is a series of icon gadgets.
These provide quick links to the main functions.

From left to right, these are...

Parent   Same as a normal file requester. Takes you up one level in
                the group structure.

Devices   Displays a list of volumes and assigns. If in Groups
                mode the GUI will be toggled to Browser mode (see below).

Search   Opens the file search interface.

New Group   Create a new Group

Add Dir   Add a directory to an existing Group. You must select
                a group, or be in Browser mode to use this function.

                In Groups mode, the selected directory will be added to the
                current Group.

                In Browser mode, a requester appears allowing the user to select
                an existing Group or create a new one. The current directory is
                then added to that Group.

Add File   Add a one or more files to an existing Group. As with
                Add Dir, you must have selected a Group or be in Browser mode.
                In both modes a multi-select file requester will appear. Once the
                selection has been made the files will be added to:

                The current Group (Groups mode) or..

                A user selected Group (Browser mode).

Underneath the icons are several further gadgets.

Immediately below the icons are 3 gadgets. From left to right these are...

Mode Toggle A cycle gadget that enables the user to toggle between
        'Groups' and file 'Browser' mode. Browser mode turns the
        lister into a standard file manager style directory lister
        that may be used in to navigate through all mounted devices in
        the conventional way.

Cached   A check box which indicates whether the current directory
        list has been cached to disk or not. Please see Directory Caching
        for more info on this. Clicking on a blank box will create a new
            cache file for that directory. Clicking on a checked box will

                   delete the existing file.

List source Indicates where the directory list was read from.
          'Disk Mounted' means that the relevant disk is available and
          that the directory was read straight from the disk.
          'Cache List' means that the disk was unavailable so a cached
          directory list was used instead. The user must insert the
          relevant disk if they wish to access any files.
                   N.B. This info is redundant in File Browser mode.

Underneath that row are two more gadgets. The leftmost gadget simply displays
the current directory.

The other smaller gadget is there for the user to enter a file extension
pattern. Just type in the extension, e.g. 'WAV' or 'lha' (no dot) and
hit RETURN. Only file names with this extension will then be displayed.

MENUS

Formation

About   Information on the program

Hide   Minimise the window
Quit   Exit Formation

Environment

Edit Group-
          |-New   Create a new Group
          |-Delete   Delete an existing Group
          |-Rename   Rename an existing Group
          |-------
          |-Add Dir Add a directory to the current Group
          |-Del Dir Delete one or more directories from the current Group
          | The mouse pointer will invert to indicate that delete
          | mode is in operation. Click the right mouse button to
          | exit delete mode.
          |-------
          |-Add File Add one or more files to the current Group
          |-Del File Delete one or more files from the current Group.
          | As with 'Del Dir', the pointer will invert to indicate
          | delete mode.
          |-------
          |-Search   Open the Search window

Group File-
          |-Load   Load another Group file
          |-Save   Save the current Group file
          |-Save As Save the current Group file under a new name
----
Action Prefs   Opens the Action preferences window
Program Prefs   Opens the Program preferences window

Show Aliases   Toggles between full-path and alias mode on the 2nd level.
.info   Toggles the display of info files on the 3rd level.

KEYBOARD

The user is also able to move through the Group structure using cursor keys.

Hitting the UP & DOWN CURSOR keys will change the change the contents of the
current list to that of the previous or next item in the parent list. Hence when
you select a Group (move to level 2 of the Group structure) using these keys
will change the currently selected Group. Move down to the third level (access
a directory) and these keys enable movement through the list of directories in
the currently selected Group.

The CURSOR LEFT key performs the same function as the 'Parent' gadget.

1.7 Editing Groups

CREATING GROUPS

Creating a Group is simple. Simply click on the New Group icon button or select
the sub-item 'New' from the 'Groups=>Edit Groups' menu item. You can specify
up to 25 Groups if you are a registered user (the demo only allows 3 Groups).

Input a name for this Group and it is now ready to use. Open it by clicking
on it's name in the lister. You can now select a range (up to 100 items) of
files and directories to include using the relevant icon buttons or menu items.
Alternatively you use the search function and include the
results.

Adding Directories

Including whole directories can be useful for two main reasons. First you may
have a lot of files that relate to the Groups theme and they are probably
already organised into specific directories on your disks. It would be pointless
and messy to extract them individually into the Group. The second reason is that
the files inside Group directories always remain current - the list is re-read
every time you access it.

On selecting the 'Add Directory' option, you will be presented with a path
requester from which you can make your selection. You will also be asked to
input an Alias, to display when in Alias mode, for that directory. This should
be an abbreviated form of the full path (e.g. just the directory name) or
something similar.

Repeat this for each directory you want to include. When you have finished
select Save or Save As from the 'Groups=>Group File' menu item to store your
changes.

Adding Files

Sometimes you will not want or need to add whole directories to a Group.
For example you may only possess a handful of related files or they may be
scattered all over your disks with perhaps only one or two in each directory
(e.g. ReadMe or AmigaGuide docs).

When you select the Add File option a multi-select Reqtools file requester will
open. If you have not used one before, it works like a normal file requester
except with a couple of added features. To select more than one file you must
keep the SHIFT key held down until your selection is complete. Alternatively
you can select ALL files at once or MATCH files according to a particular
pattern. You won't need to nominate aliases for each file as the filename
will be used automatically. When you have finished, Save the changes to make
them permanent.

DELETING FILES AND DIRECTORIES FROM A GROUP

To do this select either Delete Dir or Delete File from the menu. You will
notice that the mouse pointer has changed and is now pointing down. This simply
indicates that you are in delete mode. Click on all the items you want to
remove. When you have finished you can exit delete mode by either clicking
the right mouse button or clicking outside of the lister with the left button.

1.8   Directory Caching

A new feature for v1.1., directory caching allows the user to save directory
lists to their hard-drive so that they may browse through their Groups without
constantly swapping disks. When adding a new directory to a Group, the user
will be asked if they wish to cache it. If the response is positive, that list
will be added immediately. Subsequently, the cache file may be deleted by
clicking on the check-box gadget labelled 'Cached'. If a cache file has been
deleted, or one was not required when the directory was first added, clicking
on the blank check box will create a new cache file so long as the relevant
disk has been inserted.

Cache lists may become out of date if files have been added to directories since
the creation of a list. Formation does it's best to stay current by updating
a cache list each time you view a directory with it's parent disk mounted.

Caching is only useful for directories located on removeable media. Caching a
directory on your hard-disk, for example, would just be a waste of disk space.

1.9   Formation Search

GADGETS

Selecting a Root Directory

Along the top of the window are an editable string gadget displaying the current
root directory path and a button which brings up a path requester. Either of
these can be used to specify the directory from which will begin the next search.

Specifying a Text String Search Filter

Underneath is another string gadget labelled 'Search Terms' and a cycle gadget.

The string gadget allows you to enter up to two text strings to search for.
If two strings are entered, they may be seperated by an AND or OR operator

to further refine the search.

The cycle gadget allows the user to specify how these strings are used in the
search. The options are TITLE ONLY, TEXT ONLY and TEXT & TITLE. The final option
switches off the text string filter.

Specifying a File Type Search Filter

Further down and to the left of the window is a list gadget. This list contains
all stored filetypes which possess file header information. In practice
this includes all those derived from DataTypes along with all UserTypes where
the user has specified a file header signature. See Action Prefs for more
information on filetypes.

Clicking once on an filetype will select it. A second click will deselect it.
Any number of filetypes may be selected for a particular search.

If you want to search for a filetype that doesn't have any associated header
information, enter the file name extension into the 'Search Term' gadget
e.g. '.mpeg'.

Specifying a Date Search Filter

You may also select a range of dates within which to search. To the right of
the 'FileType Filter' lister is a text gadget displaying the current date
range and a cycle gadget to toggle the filter on and off. To edit these dates
click on the 'Set' gadget and this will bring up another window.
(N.B. 'Date Filter On' must be selected before you can edit dates).

A particular 'root' date can be specified by typing values into the three
text string gadgets. At the top of the window is a cycle gadget which allows
you to select the period length – day, calender week, month or year. Thus if
you select 'Day' the search engine will only select files last saved on the
specified date (assuming all other search criteria are also met).
If you select 'Calender Week' it will select files last saved during the week
in which the root date lies and so on for 'Month' and 'Year'. A new option has
also been included in v1.2. Selecting 'Up to Today' will allow searching for
files saved from the specified date up to the current system date (today if your
clock is set correctly).

Please note that these all selected filters need to be satisfied for a file
to appear in the search results window, that is they work together in an AND
as opposed to an OR fashion.

Two check boxes are also available...

Check Sub-dirs   When this is selected, the search engine will search all
      directories beneath the root directory.

Count Text Reps   If you have specified a TEXT search, i.e. searching the
      contents of files, selecting this will force the engine
                to count the number of recurrances of each specified string.

Finally clicking on the big 'SEARCH' gadget will start a search. This gadget
will only work if there is a legal configuration i.e. atleast one search filter
has been specified by the user.

MENUS

Last Search   Will bring up a hidden Search Results lister.

Include Icons   Select icons if they fit the search criteria.
Check Sub-Dirs   See above.
Count Text Reps   See above.
Case Sensitive   Valid when 'Search Terms' are specified.

Chunk Size   Allows the user to select how far into the file the engine will ↩
    search.

Deselect Types   Deselect all selected filetypes.

Exit Search   Closes the Search window.

THE SEARCH

Once the search has begun, a window will appear displaying the current search
results. This display is dynamic and is updated every time a new file is found.

It is also interactive. The window may be resized and items selected, even
while the search is in progress! Be patient, however, as user input priority
during a search is set deliberately low.

Any selections made from the list will bring up an info requester which also
contains gadgets from which you can use to execute actions on the file.

The results window also contains various gadgets...

Save   This gadget will bring up a requester asking providing options to
          save some or all of the files that have been found. Currently these
          options are...

              * NEW DIR Save files to a new directory
              * FILE2GROUP Save files to a Formation Group
        * DIR2GROUP Save whole directories to a Formation Group
        * ARCHIVE Create an lha archive of specifed files

The user is then prompted to select which files/dirs to Save. A menu provides
options to Select/De-select All items in the list at once.

A number of further requesters will then follow depending on the Save format
you have chosen.

Delete   This gadget allows you to delete some or all of the files that have
          been found.

STOP   Clicking this gadget, only active during a search, will abort the current
          search process.

Hide   Hide the window. This window, including the search results, can be
          'unhidden' using the 'Last Search' option in the menu.

1.10   Action Preferences

This window provides the user with a range of options that determine how Formation
reacts when you click on a file.

GADGETS

The are two list gadgets available. The top one displays the list of known
DataTypes as scanned from your 'SYS:Devs/DataTypes/' directory at startup.
The bottom one shows the current list of User Types. These are file types that
that do not have DataTypes but are configured by the user. I have included a
few User Types with this distribution. They are common filetypes that you
may find useful. You will still have to configure appropriate tools for these
types.

If no tool has been specified for a filetype, then each time you click on a file
of that type, Formation will check to see if the file has a default tool. If
it has, and the tool is available, then this will be used as the primary tool.
Formation can also has it's own default tool preference which can be configured
by the user. If a file has it's own default tool, the internal default tool will
become the secondary tool for that file. If not, then the Formation default
tool will be the only action available to the user.

The Formation internal default tool is stored in the tooltypes lister on the
program icon and can be edited from the 'Information' window. It can also be
set from inside the program by selecting 'Set Def Tool' from the Action Prefs
menu. I recommend using an all purpose viewer for this feature such as 'Multiview ←
    '.

Clicking on an item in either of the two lists will bring up the known information
on that file type in a number of text gadgets on the right hand side of the window ←
    .

File Type   The name of the file type. User Types may be renamed using the
    'Rename' gadget at any time.

Header   This gadget displays file header information for that file type.
    This information is a kind 'signature' that can be read from
    the beginning of a file to determine what type it is. You may
    enter this information manually or get Formation to 'sniff out'
    the relevant info using the 'Get Header' option from the menu or by
    clicking on the adjacent 'Get' button.

Extension   Allows the user to enter any filename extensions associated
    with that file type. Where multiple extensions are applicable
    you must seperate each one with a single SPACE...
    e.g. 'mpeg mpg' or 'htm html'.

Tool 1   Displays the primary action command for this filetype. This is also
    the action that occurs when you double-click on a file. Clicking
    on the adjacent button brings up a file requester.
    A number of argument codes may be added to the tool's path.
    By default you must include the code '%f' after the tool's path
    Normally you should seperate the each argument with a space as you

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      would when issuing a Shell command (with the exception perhaps of
      Web-browsers i.e. dh1:Ibrowse file://localhost/%f ).

      The full list of argument codes are...

      %f     Indicates where the source file path should be inserted
      %d     Where any destination file path should be inserted
      %o     Bring up an output console (useful for cli based utilities)
      %r     Brings up a string requester containing the full command
             prior to execution so that it may be edited by the user

      If used, the last two codes (%o & %r) MUST be put at the end of
      the action command line and must still be seperated by spaces.


Tool 2         Same as Tool 1. Specifies the secondary action.


SAVE           Save the current file


USE            Return to the main window


MENU


Load           Load another Action Prefs (.act) file
Restore        Reload the current file - useful for discarding unwanted changes
Save           Save the current file
Save As        Save the current file under a new name
--------
Get Header     Brings up a window allowing the user to search for the file header
      signature associated the current file type.
      Click on GO and a multi-select file requester asks you to
      select THREE examples of the particular file type. Hold down
      the SHIFT key to make a multiple selection.
      N.B. These files must all reside in the same directory.

      If the search was successful the result will appear in the
      'Best Match' string gadget. If you want to discard this result
      for any reason (e.g. it found 'FORM' or something) click on
      'Ignore' and click GO again. You can manually enter expressions
      to ignore in the 'Ignoring' gadget. Remember to seperate each
      one with a '/' character.

Set DblClick   Allows you to set the left mouse double click interval used
      when making a quick file selection.

Set Def Tool   Set the internal default tool.

Quick Set Up   Allows the user to set global tools for the five main
                    datatype classes (eg. pictures, sounds etc.). This should
                    save a lot of hassle, particularly during the initial  ←
                       configuration
                    process.


Configuring DataTypes

These are the easiest filetypes to configure. If you click on one of these types
the first thing you will notice is that the 'Header' and 'Extension' gadgets
become disabled. It is unnecessary to provide this information to Formation
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as 'DataTypes' automatically provide adequate info. Just set Tool 1 and, if
required, Tool 2 to your preferred settings. See above for command line arguments.

Configuring User Types

Click on an item in the 'User Type' list to select an existing type. Click ADD
to create a new type. Click DELETE to remove the currently displayed type from
the list.

These filetypes require the user to enter either header or filename
extension information or preferably both. If you are creating a new type,
then you will be prompted to enter a label first. The exact wording of this
label is up to you e.g. 'Lha archive' or 'Lharc' and can be changed at any
time using the 'Rename' gadget.

The header info may be entered manually if you know what it is (see above) or
you can get Formation to look it up for you by using the 'Get Header' option from
the menu.

File name extension info must be entered manually by the user. Seperate each
extension string using a SPACE.

Set up Tool 1 and Tool 2 as per DataTypes.

1.11   Program Preferences

This window allows you to configure the 'Programs' menu available on the main
window.

You have probably used a similar utility (e.g. Tools Daemon) before.
It simply allows you fast access to any regularly used programs.

Usage should be self explanatory. You have a list of current items in a list
gadget. You may edit a current item by clicking on it, ADD a new one or DELETE
the currently selected one.

Each item posesses a title, which appears in the menu itself and a file path
to the relevant tool. These may be edited at any time by the user.

Click SAVE to make a permanent change and USE to return to the main window.

There are further disk options on the menu.

Load   Load a new (.prg) Program prefs file
Restore   Reload the current file
Save   Save the current file
Save As   Save the current file under a new name

1.12   Getting Started

The operation of Formation may seem perplexing at first. Here is a short tutorial explaining how to create a Group and how to add items to it.

1. Load up Formation.

2. Click on the 'New Group' icon (3rd from right) or select 'New' from the menu. A requester will appear asking you to type in a name for the Group.

3. Once you have named your Group, it should appear in the main lister. Click on it. The lister will be empty, so you'll want to add some items to it.

4. Select the 'Add file' icon (on the far right). A multi-select file requester will appear. Multiple files may be selected by holding down SHIFT while you click on the relevant items. The requester also has options to select files according to a particular pattern (e.g. *.wav – all WAVE files) or to select ALL files in the current directory. Make your selection and click on OK.

5. The selected files should now appear on the main Formation lister. You can access these files immediately by clicking (LMB) or double clicking them. Try using both methods. Double clicking a file will open it immediately using the primary tool specified for that file type. Single clicking will bring up a requester containing file information and a choice of tools with which the file may opened.

6. You may want to add directories to your Group. This is neater and more space efficient if many of the files you are interested in reside in the same directories (remember, there is a limit of 100 items in any single Group). To do this, make sure you have selected a current Group (it's name will appear in the window title bar). Click on 'Add Directory' (second icon from the right) ↩
    .

7. A directory path requester will appear. Select the directory that you want and click OK. Another requester should appear asking you to enter an 'Alias' for this directory. Aliases allow the user to abbreviate directory paths for when they are being viewed from the Formation lister, this can make a Group's ↩
      contents
    more readable. Alias mode can be selected/deselected from the 'Environment' menu. When you are happy with the alias name click OK.

8. Yet another requester appears! This one asks the user if they wish to cache the directory list. This is useful if the directory is located on a removeable disk (i.e. CD or floppy). If you select YES, the list of files in the directory will be saved to your hard-disk. From now on, should you wish to browse this directory, it won't matter whether you have inserted the disk or not. If the disk is not present, Formation will read from the cache file instead. It is important to remember that a cache file is only a list of file names, not the files themselves. If you want to open a file, you will have to insert the disk first. A directory may be cached/uncached at any time by clicking on ↩
      the
    check box labelled 'Cached' above the lister display.

9. The directory should now appear in the Formation lister. Clicking on it will cause Formation to display the files currently residing within it, just as would happen when selecting a directory from within a standard file manager.

10. That's it, you've mastered the basics of using Formation. If you want to save
    your Group configuration, use the menu option 'Environment=>Group File=>Save'.

Have a play around with the other features. Explanations of all Formation's
features can be found somewhere within this guide.

1.13   Registering Formation

Formation has not been crippled in any way. I used to do this on FindMe but
have now realised that it is daft – how can you evaluate a piece of software
if you can't use half of it's functions?

Instead I have implemented a random requester that pops up every minute or so.
I think this is reasonable and not too restricting. After all I have to give you
some reason to register! (Apologies to all you honest supporters of shareware
out there). I have also limited the maximum number of Groups to three. In the
full version this is increased to twenty-five.

The registration fee is £10 (sterling) if you want Formation sent to you
by e-mail. If you want me to post it to you please add another pound to this
fee to cover the cost of disk and postage.

Please send English currency if at all possible. Otherwise send one of
the following (please add 10% for snail-mail) ...

    French Francs – 120 F
    German Marks – 35 DM
    US Dollars   – $20

Please address all orders to ...

    Tim Cribbin
    2 Ashby Court
    Moulton
    NORTHAMPTON
    England
    NN3 7AH

This fee is a ONCE ONLY FEE. You will be entitled to all future upgrades, free
of charge, once you have paid it. Please note that if you don't have access to
e-mail I will have to charge P&P for each upgrade you request (£1 sterling).

1.14   About the Author

tim@cribbin.demon.co.uk

Hi there,

My name is Tim Cribbin. I graduated from U of Hull in 1996 with an MSc in

Industrial Psychology. I am now working as a Psychology Technician.

Aware of the growing size of storage devices, I have devoted the last year
of my programming life (not my whole life ;-}) to developing ways of facilitating
data navigation and access on Amigas. This started with FindMe which is basically
just a file finder with a couple of novel features (e.g. date searching). The
most recent and last version of this can be found on the Aminet in 'utils/wb'.

Formation grew out of FindMe. File managers, in particular DOpus 5.xx, provide
many similar features but none of the file grouping methods I have seen so far ↩
   have
been as configurable as Formation 'Groups' - for example they don't allow you
to include directories.

See HISTORY for more info on this.

I plan to stick with Amiga for the forseeable future. I never cease to be amazed
by the incredible support and loyalty that is shown towards the Amiga by it's
users. Thanks to Gateway 2000 and the likes of Phase5, I believe an exciting
future lies ahead (hell knows we deserve some reward!).

Formation was developed using Blitz Basic 2.1. It's thanks to accessible languages
like Blitz (and AMOS) that the shareware scene is so big - they encourage ordinary
users to 'have a go' which, to me, is what being an Amiga user is all about.
I would strongly urge the continued development of languages like these. How about
a PPC version of Blitz?

Cheers,

Timothy Cribbin.

A1200/040-33/2+8MB/1.2GB/4xCD/33.6k - waiting for PowerPC!!

e-mail: tim@cribbin.demon.co.uk

1.15 History

Formation is still very much in the early stages of development. It started
out as a logical extension from the last program I wrote called FindMe which
was a simple file finder. Whilst using it I thought to myself "OK I've done
a search, found a whole bunch of relevant files - now what do I do with them?"

The original solution in FindMe was to copy these files to new directory. This
was all very well if you had the space to store them, but even those lucky
individuals with large hard-drives don't want duplicates scattered all over
the place.

Then I thought if you already have copies these files, all you need to do
is make a record of the location of these files and have some user friendly
way of viewing them. Thus Formation was born.

Work began at the end of May 1997. The original idea was to have two different
kinds of Group - Virtual Directories containing just files and Directory Groups
containing sub-directories. I then realised this was nonsensensical distinction
which only served to over complicate the concept. The current method is much

more natural as Groups now simply mimic conventional directories.

This is the third public release of Formation. I am under no illusion that it is
perfect and I would welcome all users to shout at it, slap it about and well
generally put it through the mill to make sure it is well and truly bug proof.

Please inform me of any recurring system crashes or bad design elements that
you come across and I will endeavour to fix the problems. I would also love to
hear any ideas you may have for new features.

v1.0b (4/12/97) – First release

v1.1a (2/01/98) – Second release. Added several new features, the main ones
                  being Directory Caching and the integration of the File
                  Browser into the main window. See 'What's_New?' for more
                  information.

v1.1b (16/1/98) – Fixed a few bugs. Added auto-install of fonts. Now opens
                  an output console when cli-based programs are launched.

v1.2a (27/1/98) – Integrated Browser and Group mode. Now possible to use
                  menu options in Browser mode.
                  Added new option to 'Date Filter' on Search. Fixed bug on
                  Dir2Group option (missed out last '/' when saving paths).

v1.2b (31/1/98) – Now possible to add files and dirs to Groups from within
                  Browser mode. Can also toggle '.info' files in Browser.
                  Added 'Quick Set Up' function to Action Preferences. This
                  allows user to specify a global tool for each datatype class.

1.16 The Future

Formation is still very much in development. I have already started working
on several new features that will be available in future releases.

These are the main ideas although the list is growing...

* History menus. Current plans are for two lists, the first displaying most
  recently accessed files and the second most commonly accessed files.

* Ditching the GadTools interface in favour of MUI. Aspects of the GUI are still
  fairly awkward to use and can't really be improved using GT without a lot
  of extra effort. An MUI interface will look nicer too !

1.17 Acknowledgements

* Thanks to Acid Software for Blitz2 and all those who have supported it by
  writing libraries.

* Machi, my e-mail pal in Argentina who kindly agreed to beta-test Formation.