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1. New features

Version 2.7

Now supports configurable icons for DOS apps! Fixed some minor bugs. Improved Program Manager group support.

Version 2.6

Big improvements to the Run box. Added configurable wildcards as buttons. Slick! Added support for running .SCR screen savers.

Version 2.5

Now you have the option to switch back to a program which has been previously launched rather than always launching a new copy. This applies only to programs launched from hotkeys. The reason is that you should always have the ability to launch a second copy of an application by using the menu. Several users requested this new feature.

Improved LSetup. Now it includes the special command keywords on-line so you don't have to look them up. This makes it easier for everyone.

Improved the Run box so you can now conveniently switch drives and directories.

Version 2.4

Added support for the Program Manager (PM) groups! You can now put them anywhere in your Launch menu (though the new (Groups) keyword). There were a lot of requests for this. Originally I had planned to put this feature in version 3.0 but it is so useful that I didn't want to wait. Launch also supports hotkeys which are configured for PM items. With PM the hotkeys are accessible only when PM is the current window. Now you can use your PM hotkeys from within any Windows application!

2. Distribution files

Launch is comprised of these four files:

LAUNCH.WRI The file you are reading now.
LAUNCH.EXE Launch.
LSETUP.EXE The configuration program.
L-ORDER.TXT An order form.

If any of these files are missing you have an incomplete distribution.

Please feel free to distribute Launch to others.

Launch may be copied and distributed under these conditions.

1. The program and its documentation are not modified in any way.
2. All four files (LAUNCH.WRI, LAUNCH.EXE, LSETUP.EXE and L-ORDER.TXT) are included.
3. No charge other than a media and handling charge is made. This is limited to \$7.00 (US).
4. Launch is presented as Shareware.

3. Installation

Installation is a snap- just copy Launch to your hard disk and run it from the Program Manager or File Manager. That's all there is to it! Launch will create a default configuration the first time you use it.

Installation notes:

- o All the files should go into the same directory.
- o It is not necessary to put any of the files in the Windows directory.
- o It is not necessary to put Launch on the PATH.

The default hotkey is Ctrl Alt L. The default mouse button is the left button. Just press the hotkey or click anywhere over the empty desktop and your menu will pop up.

If you are upgrading from any previous version we recommend uninstalling the old version and exiting Windows before installing the new Launch. This is to avoid any problems with running the wrong LAUNCH.EXE or having the wrong path in your WIN.INI or SYSTEM.INI file.

If you are upgrading from a 1.X version of Launch you cannot use your old configuration file (LAUNCH.INI) with Launch 2.7. The file format is different from earlier versions so you must delete (or rename) your old LAUNCH.INI and let Launch build a new configuration file for you.

If you are upgrading from a 2.X version you can continue to use your old LAUNCH.INI file with no problems but you should uninstall your previous version, exit Windows and then install the new version. Windows tends to get confused when dealing with different versions of programs which have the same name.

4. LSetup, the Launch configuration program

You no longer need to edit your LAUNCH.INI by hand! Launch now includes a configuration program.

Usage is generally self-explanatory. From the setup screen you can:

- o Change the mouse button or hotkey which pops up the Launch menu.
- o Select whether the Launch icon appears or is hidden.
- o Choose the Launch installation option.
- o Choose how to treat launching an application for a second time.

4.a Hotkeys

Hotkeys are entered in the natural manner. If you want Launch to pop up on "Ctrl Shift L" you would simply enter "Ctrl Shift L" for the hotkey. Launch supports "Ctrl", "Alt" and "Shift" as well as all the function keys (F1 through F16). The default hotkey for Launch is "Ctrl Alt L".

Avoid specifying hotkeys which programs are already using. For example, "Alt F4" is a bad choice because Windows uses ALT F4 to close a window.

You can bind any menu item to a hotkey. The default configuration assigns these hotkeys to these commands:

Ctrl Alt L	The Launch menu
Ctrl Alt R	The Run box
Ctrl Alt C	Calculator
Ctrl Alt N	Notepad
Ctrl Alt W	Write
Ctrl Alt F	File manager
Ctrl Alt X	Exits Windows

You may find that you rarely even see the Launch menu! Starting programs under Windows couldn't be faster.

4.b Load Options

There are three load options available in the Installation section: "Not installed", "Load with Windows" and "Windows shell".

The default is "Not installed". Launch will not install itself with Windows. You will have to start Launch from the Program Manager or File Manager.

If you want Launch to load automatically when you start Windows you can select "Load with Windows". (This will install Launch in the WIN.INI LOAD= line.)

Select "Windows shell" to replace the Program Manager with Launch as your Windows shell. If you wish to continue using Program Manager you can install it in Launch's "Startup" list or put it in the Launch menu. (The file name for Program Manager is PROGMAN.EXE) Note that Launch must be the Windows shell for it to load the programs listed in your "Startup" list.

4.c Relaunching applications

When a hotkey is pressed to start an application which has already been loaded Launch can switch back to the previous one instead. For example, assume you have assigned CTRL-ALT-C to the calculator. If you have chosen to switch back to the first program then when you press CTRL-ALT-C you will get the first calculator instead of loading a new one each time. If the calculator is not present Launch will load a new one.

This feature applies only to programs launched from hotkeys. The reason is that you should always have the ability to launch a second copy of an application by using the menu.

The LSetup menu

There are three options on the LSetup menu:

- Menu... The Launch menu.
- Startup... The programs loaded automatically with Windows.
- Registration... Your registration name and number.

4.d Customizing your menu and startup list

Editing a menu (or startup) item is simple. The only two items you need to enter for a menu are the text which appears on the menu and a command-line to execute when the menu item is selected. A startup item is even easier to create since there is no menu (all it needs is a command-line).

The menu text

The menu text is the just the text as it will appear on the menu. If you wish to make a particular character within your menu "hot" (for faster menu picking) precede it with an ampersand. The character will appear underlined in your menu. For example, "Exit &Windows".

The command-line

Put the program name (include the path if necessary) in the command-line section. You can also pass arguments to programs. For example, "D:\TOOLS\ZIP -p -r *.*". You can enter the command just as you would enter it on the DOS command-line.

Launch understands the WIN.INI Extensions. You can launch data files from the menu too! For example- you could put "WIN.INI" in the command-line section. This applies uniformly to the menu, startup section and Run box.

Launch supports nine special built-in commands for this section

(About)The "About" box. Includes free memory and system resources statistics.

(Run) The "Run" box. (See section 5)

(Groups) Inserts the Program Manager groups into the menu.

(Arrange) Arranges the icons on your desktop.

(Cascade) Cascades the windows on your desktop.

(Tile) Tiles the windows on your desktop.

(Close)Exits Launch.

(ExitWin) Pops up an "Exit Windows" box.

(ExitWin2) Exits Windows immediately (without confirmation).

Don't forget to enclose them in parenthesis.

The working directory

This is optional. Launch will change to this directory just before executing the command-line. Some programs (fortunately not many) expect to be executed from their own directory and will not find their configuration or data files if they are run from another directory. Toolbook is an example of such a program.

If you get this message when you try to Launch a program...

"Cannot find XXXXX.DLL, insert in drive A"

...you need to specify the working directory. It should be the same directory which contains the program you wish to execute.

The working directory can also be handy if you keep your data files in one directory and the program in another. For example, you could specify "C:\WORD\WINWORD.EXE" as the command-line and "D:\REPORTS" as the working directory.

4.e Display Options

The "Display Options" section gives you the ability to specify how the program is to appear. It can be a specific location and size, normal, minimized, maximized or even hidden. Be careful when selecting hidden as you won't be able to see your window! (This option is useful for small programs which require no input and exit quickly.)

To select a specific size and location I recommend using the "Easy Sizing" button rather than entering the screen coordinates by hand.

MS-Windows provides no clear-cut method to predetermine how a window will be displayed (if it's not your own window). Launch does the best it can to make this work but you should be aware that there are some programs which may ignore the initial size request or even display incorrectly. If you have trouble with a particular program you can always fall back on selecting "Normal" for the display option.

5. The "Run" box

The "Run" box can not only launch programs but data files too! Launch will even search your PATH (and the Windows directories) for the program or data file. Launch supports the [Extensions] section of WIN.INI. If you enter "WIN.INI" in the Run box NotePad will be launched with your WIN.INI file.

You can enter a command in the Run box similar to the way you would enter it on the DOS command line. The Run box will keep track of the last 25 commands. Use the arrow keys to scroll through past commands or click on the down-arrow button with the mouse.

The Run box supports multiple wildcards. You can enter "*.TXT *.DOC" for example. You can assign wildcards (or even complete paths and program names) to the five speed-buttons in the Run box. These can be rapidly selected by clicking on the button with the mouse or pressing the accelerator key (Alt-1 through Alt-5).

You can enter a path name and it will change to the appropriate directory.

c:	Change to drive C
d:\bin	Change to D:\BIN
\	Change to the root directory

6. How do I register?

Launch is shareware. If you find it useful please register it. I have continued to improve it over the years and your support has made this possible.

A registration form is available in the file L-ORDER.TXT. You can print this file and fill it out. When you order you will receive:

1. The latest shareware version of Launch.
2. Printed documentation.
3. A registration number which will disable the reminder box.
4. As a bonus, a free set of Windows utilities which work well with Launch.

The single-user price is \$29.95 (including shipping). Quantity discounts are available for site-licenses.

Minor upgrades are free (your registration number is valid for all minor upgrades). If you registered any 1.X version of Launch you are welcome to 50% discount on Launch 2.7.

Support is available via CompuServe, MCI Mail and regular post. If you have comments or ideas you wish to share about Launch we would like to hear from you (even if you haven't registered yet).

7. More information

Launch follows the small-is-beautiful principle. It stays out of your way when you are not using it and requires little computing resources. This is carefully crafted software. I've put a great deal of effort has gone into improving Launch since its inception while avoiding "bloating" the product with unnecessary complexity and dubious features. I hope you will enjoy using Launch as much as I do.

Launch is written in a combination of 286 assembler and 'C'. The majority of Launch itself is assembler in order to keep the program size and run-time memory requirements to a minimum. The majority of LSetup is 'C'. Borland's language tools were used to create Launch.

You can get in touch with the author, David Stafford, via CompuServe at 72411,2670.

8. Tips for networked users

You can put the configuration file (LAUNCH.INI) in the Windows directory rather than the Launch directory if you prefer. The Run history is automatically saved in the same directory as LAUNCH.INI. This way, you can put Launch into a network subdirectory which everyone can share. Each persons configuration file and Run history can be located in their own Windows directory.

9. Disclaimer

This program comes with no warranty. I've put a lot of effort into Launch and I believe it to be reliable but I cannot assume any liability for its use. No guarantee is made nor should be implied regarding the use or fitness of this software for any purpose.

If you have any trouble please let me know and if it turns out to be a problem with Launch I will do our best to correct it.