

ASD

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Chapter 1

ASD

1.1 Archimedes Sprite Displayer V2.14: Contents

***** Archimedes Sprite Displayer V2.14 *****

©1996-97 Tim Jackson

Revision Date: 01-May-98

What is Archimedes Sprite Displayer?

Limitations/tips on usage

System requirements

Files which should be in this distribution

At-a-glance guide to recent changes

How Archimedes Sprite Displayer came about

Configuring ASD

Usage

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Support and latest version

Copyright and Distribution

Disclaimer

CONTACT ME!!!

1.2 What is Archimedes Sprite Displayer?

Archimedes Sprite Displayer (ASD) is a program to load and display sprite files from Acorn Archimedes computers (or Acorn Risc PCs in Archimedes mode).

It will display any Archimedes sprite which is in a 16, 256 or high colour mode. This means almost any sprite you're likely to have.

1.3 System Requirements

Any Amiga with WB2.04+.

An Amiga with the AGA graphics set will be required to view images in 256 colours.

1.4 Files in this distribution

In this distribution, there should be the following files:

ASD * The main program

ASD.info

ASD.guide * This document file

ASD.guide.info

Arc16.palette * Palette data for 16 colour sprites

Arc256.palette * Palette data for 256 colour sprites

All these files should be present in any distribution of ASD.

1.5 At-a-glance guide to recent changes

V2.13 -> V2.14

AT LAST!! 256 colour loading for ALL 256 colour sprites, including those with no palette or limited palette data! This is one feature which I know will come in useful. I finally gave up trying to decipher the Acorn Programmers Reference Manuals and have included standard Archimedes palette data as separate files, which is loaded if required.

ASD now has a few settings which can be configured via tooltypes.

I've also done a few bugfixes.

V2.11 -> V2.13 (V2.12 unreleased)

- Speeded up
- Sprites with 256 colour PALETTES should load absolutely fine, as support for these is now complete.
- Can view ALL sprites within a file
- Improved WB support
- Keyboard commands

1.6 Copyright & Distribution

Archimedes Sprite Displayer is FREEWARE. That means you can copy it and freely distribute it (including uploading to BBS/Aminet etc.), as long as:

- You don't charge anything for it (except a nominal charge for disk+copying)
- You include ALL the files listed above in any distribution.
- You don't modify any files.

(For inclusion on compilation CDs or magazine coverdisks/cover CDs, contact me. Any other queries, contact me. No permission is necessary for inclusion on Aminet or Fred Fish CDs.)

The copyright of the program remains with me at all times.

1.7 Disclaimer

You use this program entirely at your own risk. The author will accept no responsibility whatsoever for any loss or damage caused by this program including but not limited to loss of or damage to data.

1.8 How ASD came about

I wrote this program because I use Archimedes computers regularly and I haven't yet found a program on the Amiga which will load Archimedes Sprite files.

So, Archimedes Sprite Displayer was born. It took me many months to develop it into the program you're (hopefully) about to use.

1.9 Limitations/tips on usage

Archimedes Sprite Displayer will not SAVE the sprite out as anything, just display it. However, if you want to convert the sprite to IFF, all you need is a screen grabbing utility (I recommend QuickGrab by Steve Hines - find it on Aminet in gfx/misc/QuickGrab1_1.lha). This shouldn't prove too much of a problem. I'm sorry there isn't a save function, but I'm a fairly new programmer on the Amiga (better late than never!) so I haven't worked out how to save IFFs yet. If you know how to do this in C or E, let me know and I'll implement it.

Only 16, 256 and high colour modes are supported. If you want to load sprites with 2 or 4 colours, you can easily do this by converting them to

16 colour sprites on the Archimedes. High colour images, whilst not supported fully, can be loaded with a greyscale palette.

Flashing colours will not be displayed. If Archimedes Sprite Displayer encounters a flashing colour, it will just display the first colour of the two. This shouldn't be a problem - I don't think anyone actually uses this useless part of the sprite specification.

Sprite masks will be ignored. This shouldn't cause too much of a problem unless you've done a lot of sketching with transparent ink in which case it might look a bit messed up. I'll hopefully sort this problem out soon.

Sprites which have left hand wastage set to anything except 0 and right hand wastage set to anything but 31 will have a small border down one or both side(s). If you don't know what this means, don't worry too much. It shouldn't stop the sprite loading and you probably won't even notice it.

It will mean that for some sprites, the width may be reported slightly wrong (by a few pixels)

Again, this minor problem will hopefully disappear soon.

I'm afraid the program is still not terribly fast, even though this version is a big improvement over previous ones. I'm still trying to work out how I can make it faster, though.

1.10 Configuring ASD

ASD has several options which can be configured via the icon tooltypes. They are all optional, and defaults have been inserted as examples of their usage.

WARNPALETTE

Default: TRUE

Indicate whether palette warnings should be displayed or not. If you set this to FALSE, you will not be warned when attempting to load 256 colour sprites with less than 256 colour palettes, sprites with no palette or high colour sprites. They will just load.

DISPLAYINFO

Default: TRUE

Specifies whether information about the sprites being loaded should be written to a console window or not.

MINSRWIDTH

Default: 0

This is a function which I've added to circumvent what seems to be a bug in certain display drivers. Some modes (I use DbINTSC and notice this)

seem to cause screen corruption if you open very small screens. On my system, opening screens smaller than 128 pixels wide causes complete corruption of the display. I don't *think* this is a bug in ASD as I've noticed it with other programs.

So, if you find that when you load very narrow sprites, you get nothing but a flickering mess displayed, try using this option and increasing it's value until the problem goes away.

This has obvious implications if you are grabbing the screen when viewing small sprites; you will notice that the grab will have a width of the minimum width you've specified.

At present, there is no way of using these functions from the CLI. I plan to add suitable options soon.

1.11 Usage

First, you'll need an Archimedes sprite. There are two ways of getting them into your Amiga.

The first way is to use a MS-DOS® disk (don't forget only use 720K unless you have a HD drive on your Amiga). Archimedes computers with RISC OS 3+ can read MS-DOS disks as standard, RISC OS 2 users will need a driver to read them (you can get one but I can't remember what it's called).

Likewise, WB2+ users can use CrossDOS® (supplied with WB3+) to access MS-DOS® disks, otherwise there are programs like MessyDOS which do the same.

The alternative, and more elegant way is to use a program called XFS which can read a variety of disk formats, including Archimedes disks. In other words, Archimedes disks can be used on your Amiga just as any other disks! It can be found on Aminet as comm/misc/xfs.lha (there may be a version number after 'xfs'). XFS is not written by me and I cannot offer any support for it.

Anyway, once you have your sprite file, using Archimedes Sprite Displayer is very easy. Simply run it in the following ways:

>>> From the CLI

Call with the following syntax

ASD <filename>

If you call ASD without supplying a filename, an ASL file requester will be displayed. If ASD cannot open asl.library, an error will be displayed.

>>. From Workbench

Clicking once on the program icon, hold down shift and double click on the

icon(s) of the image(s) you wish to load.

Alternatively, simply double click on the ASD program icon and an ASL file requester will be displayed. If asl.library cannot be opened, an error will be displayed.

Finally, you can of course make ASD the default tool for your sprite files and then simply double click on them.

1.12 Viewing Pictures

Having started the program and selected a sprite, it will begin to load.

At this point, if the sprite is in a 256 colour mode with less than 256 palette entries, or the sprite has no palette, you will be warned that the colours may not look right. (unless you have set the tooltype WARNPALETTE to FALSE)

So far, all the sprites that I have tried *do* look right with the supplied 256 colour palette, but I can't absolutely guarantee that all will. If you find one that doesn't look right, please let me know. The palette files are normal IFF palette files, so you should be able to substitute your own if you want to.

If the sprite is in a high colour mode you will get a requester asking you what you want to do. If you select 'Continue loading', the picture will be loaded with a greyscale palette. If you select 'Skip this picture', the loading of that sprite will be aborted and ASD will move onto the next sprite, if there is one.

You will now see the image of the sprite begin to build up on the screen.

To move onto the next sprite in the file, or the next sprite file selected (if there are no more sprites in the current file), click any mouse button or press a key.

Here's a summary of commands whilst viewing a picture:

Any mouse button.....Move on to next picture

Escape.....Quit program

Any other key.....Move on to next picture

Unless you specified the 'DISPLAYINFO=FALSE' **tooltype**, ASD will write information to a console window showing information about the files you loaded. If you started ASD from Workbench, you'll need to close this window by pressing ENTER.

1.13 Future Improvements (subject to support)

I would like to improve ASD in the following ways in the future:

- Implement an IFF save function (if someone will tell me how to do it...)
- Speed it up even more (any suggestions?)
- Add full support for sprite masks
- Implement proper wastage handling
- Make it possible to scroll around pictures which are bigger than the screen.
- Improve CLI interface (support for patterns etc.) and add QUIET and NOPALETTEWARNINGS switches.
- Add a tooltype to specify where the program output goes to when started from WB

1.14 Known Bugs

Sometimes sprite sizes are reported a few pixels wrong. I know what's causing this (wastage handling, as mentioned earlier), and I will hopefully fix it sometime in the future.

When an image has loaded and ASD is waiting for you to press a key or click the mouse, it seems to hog the processor time and slow everything else down to a crawl. I think I know what's causing this, and I'll try to sort it out soon.

If you find a sprite file which is in any of the supported modes but doesn't load, please let me know so that I can find out what's wrong. Equally, if you find any other bugs (especially Enforcer hits) or just have a suggestion, please write to [me](#).

1.15 Version History

V1.x Initial test versions. Didn't work very well.

V2.00 First decent version but bugs galore.

V2.01 Added auto-resolution selection, corrected bug in mode handling.

V2.02 Tidied up a bit, big loading bug sorted out.

V2.03 Added WB loading & file requester plus abort while loading option. Also made mouse detection OS friendly.

V2.04 Corrected bugs in error handler and file requester loading routine.

V2.05 Corrected bug in file requester startup. (File requester causing a few probs, as you can see...)

V2.06 Messed around with mode parsing and auto-resolution selection a bit.

V2.07 Corrected bug which meant ASD sometimes got x-size of sprites wrong.

V2.08 Corrected bug which corrupted display if very small sprites were loaded with certain screenmodes.

V2.09 Corrected bug which caused a software failure if an attempt was made to load a sprite with no palette.

V2.10 Implemented recognition (but not loading) of all modes.

V2.11 FIRST PUBLIC RELEASE. A 'tidied-up' version for distribution. File requester also improved.

V2.12 Optimised to speed up significantly. Corrected bug which sometimes caused crashes if loading was aborted. Corrected (yet another) bug in filerequester - this time it didn't load files which were in a root directory/ the root of an assign eg assign:file

V2.13 Loads of improvements: some 256 colour loading, loading of sprites with no palette and high colour sprites, improved WB support, extension area support. Removed bug which sometimes meant clicking left mouse button didn't abort program. Keyboard commands implemented.

V2.14 All 256 colour sprites or sprites with no palette should load.

Introduced WARNPALETTE, DISPLAYINFO, MINSCRWIDTH tooltypes.

1.16 Support and latest version

ASD is still under development, which means new versions will appear from time to time. I will release new versions as soon as they are in a fit state to be placed in public distribution.

The latest version of this program, along with some other programs I have written, can always be downloaded from my program support web pages, which can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.radiolink.net/timjackson>

New versions will also be uploaded to Aminet as soon as they become available.

E-mail enquiries are always welcome, see my [contact](#) page for details.

1.17 » Contact me! «

I want to know what you think of Archimedes Sprite Displayer. There's no point in me developing it further if nobody uses it. So, if you like it, please contact me. I don't ask for any money (ASD is FREeware), just that you write.

I must stress, PLEASE WRITE!! If you don't write, I don't know you're out there, using ASD! Even if you just want to say hi and tell me what you think of ASD, please e-mail me. I WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

You can also help me. I want to know how to save IFFs. If you know how to do this in C or (preferably) E, TELL ME ABOUT IT! I'm sure it can't be that hard, there's loads of programs that do it. Also, if you can explain the file format of 256 colour sprites (with 16 or 64 colour palettes) better than the Acorn PRMs, let me know so I can implement this properly!

My e-mail contact address is as follows:

`tim_jackson@bigfoot.com`

I occasionally use IRC and when I do, my usual nick is Arcline. I tend to hang around on IRCnet. A list of IRCnet servers can be found at:

<http://www.irchelp.org/irchelp/networks/servers/ircnet.html>
