

# **AMan**

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A documentation browser for the Amiga  
Edition 0.9b for version 1.15.  
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# 1 Introduction

**AMan** is a documentation browser for the Amiga. The idea is very simple and the implementation is simple as well: Similar to the Unix `'man'` command it locates documentation files on your disk and spawns an external viewer. **AMan** uses the **FDB** tool by Klaus Melchior to locate the files and opens a minimal MUI window to allow a selection. See Chapter 5 [FDB], page 17, and Chapter 6 [MUI], page 19, for details. Of course these tools are **not** included in this archive.

Actually, **AMan** is only a quick hack. I initially wrote this tool for my private use only and I wrote it simply because I didn't want to use **MrMan** anymore. Nevertheless, **AMan**'s concept is quite close to that of **MrMan**, however it makes heavily use of the said tools which are installed on my system anyway. And why should I invent the wheel over and over again? Even Stuntzi's **MagicFileRequester** (MFR) makes use of **FDB**!



## 2 Installing AMan

### 2.1 Requirements

AMan makes heavily use of some tools which therefore **must** be installed on your system. Of course these tools are **not** included in this archive.

- Kickstart/Workbench V37 or better (including 'More' and 'AmigaGuide' or 'MultiView' respectively).
- The MagicUserInterface 'MUI'. See Chapter 6 [MUI], page 19, for details. I tested AMan with `muimaster.library` version 10.0.
- The FindDB clone 'FDB'. See Chapter 5 [FDB], page 17, for more information. The archive 'util/cli/FDB1\_3.lha' can be obtained (e.g. via ftp) from the Aminet. Please make sure that the 'FDB' executable is in your path!

Besides that, a pager like 'Most' or 'MuchMore' is recommend but not required.

### 2.2 Installation

Installing AMan is quite simple. You only have to copy the file 'aman.000' (or 'aman.030' if you have an MC-68030 Amiga) somewhere into your path (e.g. to 'C:') and rename it to 'aman'.

```
Copy aman.030 TO C:aman
```

You might as well want to install the `ldb2db` tool. See Chapter 4 [Hints], page 15, for a description. Simply copy it somewhere into your path as well.

Since AMan needs FDB, you have to install FDB if you don't already have it. You should now make a database via UDB. Note that by default, AMan will only find files which are listed in 'FindDB:aman.codes'. For example you might want to try the following:

```
UDB DB=aman help:
```

This will create the database 'FindDB:aman.codes' which contains all files in 'help:'. If you are using AMan regularly then you might want to create a file 'FindDB:aman.config' which contains all the pathnames that should be scanned if you type 'UDB DB=aman'. For example,

```
Echo >FindDB:aman.config "help: docs: autodocs: gnu:man/"
```

Before running AMan for the first time, you should make sure that MUI is installed on your system. See Chapter 6 [MUI], page 19, for details.

AMan is now ready for a first take-off. However, AMan will assume you want to use MultiView to view all types of documents. If you prefer some other pagers then you have to create a file

'ENV:aman.config'. This file will be parsed by AMan via ReadArgs() in order to find out which viewer to use for the selected filename. The following example is included in this archive:

```
; Template: PATTERN/A,COMMAND/A

"?.(doc|readme|txt)"  "Most *"%s*""
"?.dvi"               "ShowDVI *"%s*""
"?.guide"             "AmigaGuide *"%s*""
"?"                   "MultiView *"%s*""
```

Empty lines and lines beginning with a semicolon ';' are ignored. If no pattern matches or if 'ENV:mrman.config' does not exist, then AMan uses the following default:

```
PATTERN "?" COMMAND "Run <NIL: >NIL: MultiView *"%s*""
```

As you can see it is also possible to run viewers asynchronously. For those among you who like it even more complex: I use the following command for the pattern "#?/man[1-9]/#?.[1-9]" in my 'aman.config':

```
"NewWSH CONSOLE NIL: COMMAND *"groff -Tascii -man ***"%s***" | More*"
```

**Example:** Okay, lets try out AMan now. First we will create an FDB database for AMan from the 'gnu:man' directory:

```
UDB db=aman gnu:man/
```

Now let's see whether AMan knows something about 'gcc'.

```
aman gcc
```

AMan should now open a MUI window with a listview containing some alphabetically sorted entries like that:

```
gnu:man/man1/gcc.0
gnu:man/cat1/hunk2gcc.0
gnu:man/cat1/gcc.0
gnu:man/man1/gcc.1
```

Simply select one of those with your cursor keys and press RETURN. Your viewer should spawn and show the selected document. Press ESC to quit AMan.

## 3 Invoking AMan

### 3.1 Running AMan From A Shell

When invoked from within a shell, AMan uses `ReadArgs()` with the following template in order to parse command-line arguments:

```
DB=DataBase/K,H=Hide/K,E=Exact/S,P=Pattern/A/M
```

The `'DB=DataBase'` parameter can be used to force AMan to use a different database than `'FindDB:aman.codes'`. For example,

```
aman db=find .texi
```

will use the default database `'FindDB:find.codes'` to locate `Texinfo` files. Especially when using other databases there might also appear non-doc files in AMan's listview which you might want to `'Hide'`... For example, to avoid the listing of icons you can invoke AMan as follows:

```
aman hide #?.info .dvi
```

This will show all the `'.dvi'` files listed in `'FindDB:aman.codes'` but not their icons.

**Note:** The patterns given to AMan are directly passed to FDB. Especially the `'E=Exact/S'` switch is an FDB switch which allows real AmigaDOS patterns instead of only a sub-strings. Please consult your FDB documentation for details. (E.g. via `'aman fdb'`)

**Note also:** AMan internally makes use of the FDB switch `'F=Files/S'`. Nevertheless, FDB returns directories together with files every now and then. It's a good idea to invoke AMan with the option `'HIDE #?/'` as a workaround to avoid the listing of directories in AMan's listview.

### 3.2 Running AMan From The Workbench

Especially when starting AMan from the Workbench the `'Pattern'` string gadget is needed. It is active automatically when run from the Workbench, however it can be easily toggled by pressing the `TAB` key when inactive.

After pressing `RETURN` in the string gadget, AMan will parse it's contents via `ReadArgs()` using the same template as when invoked from the shell. This guarantees full functionality without too much effort. ;-)





## 4 Hints & Tips

**AMan** always strives to allow intuitive usage. Nevertheless, some of the following hints might help you to make full profit of what **AMan** offers.

### 4.1 Extracting ‘aman.codes’ From Other Databases

Good applications, especially if they have their own drawer, want their documentation located inside this drawer as well. This makes sense since uninstalling such an application by simply deleting its drawer will leave no trails. However, this way the documentation files are spread all over your disk(s) in their application drawers which makes maintaining the FDB configuration ‘aman.config’ quite hard. This is why I wrote `ldb2db`, a quick hack which converts a list of files into a FDB compatible database. Let me explain how to use `ldb2db`:

I regularly perform an UDB of my three main partitions: ‘System:’, ‘Work:’ and ‘Devel:’ via CyberCron. My ‘CronTab’ entry looks like this:

```
15 1 * * * UDB System: Work: Devel: :PRI -5
```

Now of course all the documentation files have already been collected into this database! The LDB tool, which is part of the FDB distribution, can be used to list the files in a database to `stdout` and here it comes to `ldb2db`:

```
LDB find | pgrep -x -i #?.(doc|guide) | ldb2db >FindDB:aman.codes
```

This extracts all ‘.doc’ or ‘.guide’ files listed in ‘FindDB:find.codes’ to ‘FindDB:aman.codes’. Of course you can also specify a larger pattern for `pgrep` such as

```
pgrep -x -i #?.(guide|doc|man|txt|readme|dvi|ps|texi|texinfo)
```

**Note:** `pgrep` is FreeWare and was written by Angela Schmidt, [angela@rz.uni-karlsruhe.de](mailto:angela@rz.uni-karlsruhe.de). It is available with her `pattern.library` distribution.



## 5 FDB – A FindDB/UpdateDB Clone

The FDB and UDB tools base on FindDB and UpdateDB by Larry Phillips and Martin Stepler. UDB collects filenames from a couple of path names into a database file and FDB locates patterns in these databases. AMan uses FDB in order to retrieve the documentation files.

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## 6 MUI – MagicUserInterface

AMan uses

MUI - MagicUserInterface  
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# Master Index

## A

AMan	9
aman.000	11
aman.030	11
aman.codes	11
aman.config	12
AmigaGuide	11
Aminet	11
Arguments	13

## C

Configuration	12
CronTab	15
CRSR-Down	12
CRSR-Up	12
CyberCron	15

## D

DB=Database/K	13
Disclaimer	1

## E

ENV:aman.config	12
ESC	12

## F

FDB	9, 11, 17
FDB1_3.lha	11
FindDB	17
FindDB:aman.codes	11
FindDB:aman.config	11

## H

Hide/K	13
Hints	15

## I

Installation	11
Introduction	9
Invokation	13

## K

Kickstart, Required Version	11
kMel	9, 17

## L

LDB	15
-----	----

ldb2db	15
--------	----

## M

MagicFileRequester	9
MagicUserInterface	19
Melchior, Klaus	9, 17
MFR	9
Most	11
MrMan	9
MuchMore	11
MUI	9, 11, 19
muimaster.library	11
MultiView	11

## P

P=Pattern/A/M	13
pattern.library	15
Patterns	13
pgrep	15
Phillips, Larry	17

## R

ReadArgs()	13
Requirements	11
Return	12, 13

## S

Schmidt, Angela	15
Shell, Invoking from	13
ShowDVI	11
Steppler, Martin	17
Stuntz, Stefan	9, 19

## T

TAB	13
Template	13
Tips	15
Tricks	15

## U

UDB	9, 17
UpdateDB	17

## W

Workbench, Invoking from	13
Workbench, Required Version	11





## Table of Contents

<b>GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Preamble .....	1
TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR COPYING, DISTRIBUTION AND MODIFICATION .....	2
How to Apply These Terms to Your New Programs .....	6
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>2 Installing AMan</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1 Requirements .....	11
2.2 Installation .....	11
<b>3 Invoking AMan</b> .....	<b>13</b>
3.1 Running AMan From A Shell .....	13
3.2 Running AMan From The Workbench .....	13
<b>4 Hints &amp; Tips</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1 Extracting ‘aman.codes’ From Other Databases .....	15
<b>5 FDB – A FindDB/UpdateDB Clone</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>6 MUI – MagicUserInterface</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Master Index</b> .....	<b>21</b>

