

SmoothGuide

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REVISION HISTORY

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Chapter 1

SmoothGuide

1.1 Contents Page

SmoothGuide Beta Test Version 1.3b
By Paul Burkey
(C) 1995 Paul Burkey

Why Another AmigaGuide Reader

Public Domain

SmoothGuide Limitations

What Files Do I Need

Using SmoothGuide

Bug Reports & Beta Testing

Future SmoothGuide

Smooth Guide History

Multi-Tasking?

Contact the Author

1.2 Why Another AmigaGuide Reader

I've always had problems reading Guides. Either the boot disk isn't set up properly, AmigaGuide.Library and Multi-View etc. or limited memory restricted me from loading large 300k+ guides. Even with the A1200's 2meg of chip ram I found it hard to load these guides in.

My first Guide was for my game 'Sneech'. The game was getting complicated and so was the Document file. Unless you went through the whole document you wouldn't know where to find the info you wanted. Also, if I updated it, it would be difficult to find all the updates without reading it all through.

So after re-writing the whole document again in AmigaGuide format I was going to delete the document file but then I realised! Many users will have problems reading the guide! So I'd have to keep a Doc file as well as a Guide. I would have to update the Doc File with the same things as the AmigaGuide file. I am sure a lot of other programmers go through the same thing!

So thats why I wrote 'SmoothGuide'

Although this is a very early version of SmoothGuide. It doesn't have half the features the full complete version will have. I'm not going to put much work into it unless I get asked by a few people first. If theres anything that you would like to see (check out

Future

) then let me

know and I'll see what I can do for you!!!

Another thing about Smooth guide....

Every time I write a Utility program I get told that there are other Programmes that do the same thing and have more options/feature etc. Well the reason I write Utilities is to get it to do something other programmes don't do rather than everything they do and more! If theres something another AmigaGuide Reader does that you need this one to do then please tell me! If theres something another AmigaGuide Reader doesn't do but you think I could add to this one then that's great!

The ability to load a Guide from an (lha/lzx) Archiver using either the command line:-

```
Smoothguide UtilGuides.lha DiskSalv.guide
```

would be useful?

or by selecting an archive with the file selector would bring up a special Archive list requester asking for the file within?

If you think this is a good idea then I'll get stuck in!!

1.3 SmoothGuide Instructions

I would recomend you copy SmoothGuide to your C: directory. Then you can alter your Guides Default Tool to C:SmoothGuide for a simple click and view setup.

Running SmoothGuide

From CLI

SmoothGuide <FileName>

If you include a filename the file will load straight into the Reader and be displayed straight away. If you don't include a FileName the file requester will pop up asking you to select a guide file.

From Workbench

You can use SmoothGuide as the default tool or you can simply double click on the icon which will pop a requester up asking you to select a guide file.

Another way to use SmoothGuide is to select the SmoothGuide Icon with one mouse click and holdind down the Shift key, double click on a Guide icon. This will load the Guide straight into the Reader and be displayed straight away.

When you are in SmoothGuide and you have a Guide loaded you will first see the Contents Page. This is the first page of the document. It is usually made up of some titles and a string of buttons with the different Subjects.

You can move the Page up and down using the cursor keys or by holding the Right mouse button down in the upper or lower half of the page.

At the bottom you will see some buttons :-

Contents Page

This brings you back to the First page.

Retrace

This will bring you back through the pages you have viewed in reverse order. This is used to return to a page after you have selected a Button. You can also Retrace by pressing the Return key.

The <- & -> Keys

The Browse Keys are used to move forward and backwards in a Guide from one page to another.

{It doesn't use the AmigaGuide NEXT or PREV yet but it will soon}

Lastly there is a file requester button used to load in a new Guide.

1.4 SmoothGuide Limitations

One limit with this version is that it won't cope with more than 400 pages ↔

and doesnt display more than approx 120 lines on a page. Most Guides use less than 100 lines on every page anyway. The whole point in having a Guide is that the information is split into easy to read chunks. I could improve this

now but I don't have the time ;(I'll improve it soon...

While testing this version of SmoothGuide I used some Big Guides to test for memory problems. I had no problem loading a Guide over 750k on a standard A1200. I would imagine a 1meg A500 would be able to do the same.

The reason SmoothGuide is called SmoothGuide is because of the Smooth scrolling for each page. This is done using a very tall screen that gets scrolled up and down using the Amiga's Hardware to control it. It's a BIG cheat in programming terms but you will find that almost all guides keep the pages short.

Read

Future Upates
For upgrade info.

1.5 What files do you need

Some versions of SmoothGuide need the AMOS.library in the Libs Drawer whilst some have the Library built in. If the library is not built in then you should find it included in the Archive.

You will need the powerpacker.library in your Libs drawer if you want to load Power Packed Guides.

You will also need the XPK libraries if you want to load in XPK guides.

You also need the easylife.library which should be included here.

1.6 Future SmoothGuide Plans

Here are some of the things SmoothGuide will do soon...

- I'll try to get the loading speeded up!!
- Add @NEXT @PREV support.
- Any number of pages!
- View Pictures (Possibly Let you Use a viewer like PPSHOW...)
- Page splitting for large pages.
- Load a Guide from within an Archive!
- Indexing.
- Search options.
- Print Page or Document.
- Save Guide without Nodes ie. as a Document File.

I'm also going to try to trim the whole program down a bit before I end up making it huge. A tidier source code means easier updating but also means new bugs ;(- I'll be carefull ;)

Much more!

1.7 Is it Multi-Tasking?

Many people have told me that the program is NO good because it doesn't multi-task. Well I don't know what Multi-Tasking means to you but it could mean.

1. It uses a real OS screen or Public Screen.
2. It Doesn't slow down other Programmes (MUCH)
3. You can load many copies in at once.

Well it doesn't go by any of these but I'm working on No.2

What it will do is:-

1. Enable you to flip to workbech through Iconify or 'Ctrl-A' (not 'Ctrl-M')
2. It might take over a fair amount of Proccesor time but I'm working on that.

I'd recomend Using Iconify when you want to go back to Workbench. One reason is the 'Ctrl-A' doesn't disable SmoothGuide Key strokes which is a pain in the bottom at times.

Lastly:-

If you want true Multi-Tasking dont use this!!! I know it's not the most fully features Guide Reader at the moment but since I've fixed a few nasty bugs that wasted a lot of time for me I'm going to work on some nice extra features that other Guide Readers don't do.....

I'd like to hear your comments on new features please ;)

1.8 Bug Reports

Although I have been testing this version for a while, I could almost promise you that it wont work with every guide. ←

I didn't have any details on how AmigaGuides work. This program was written using Trial & Error (Mostly Error!) So sometimes I load a Guide in and it works until I select a particular page and then !&\$#@£! ooops! I then checked the file using MultiView and a Text Editor then fixed SmoothGuide and then Back to testing again. It's now working quite well but, not knowing what the limits are with AmigaGuide I don't know whether it's 100% yet!

Some people have written to me saying they love SmoothGuide and they think it's the BEST (although simple) AmigaGuide Reading program. Some people have said that it crashes all the time and it's a pile of crap! so why not tell me what you think so I can improve it.

Known Bugs

The Iconize gadget and the Exit Gadget are the only gadgets that work on the top bar...

Smoothguide won't display pictures or anything like that at the moment but if you really want it to then ask. I'll see if I can get it to display pictures using an external Viewer eg. PPSHOW.

If Smooth Guide can't find a page or you are asking it to display a picture or anything it can't do then it will flash the screen red! if it does this then try the same guide with MultiView and see what it does. If it's just a normal page then send me a copy of the guide and I'll check it out.... You are welcome to send guides that don't work via email but if it's rather long ie. over 100k then email me with a letter first.

I've not put much error testing in the program ;(If an error occurs it will just exit back to WorkBench. Common Errors might be:-

Running out of memory.
PowerPacker.library not installed.
EasyLife.library not installed.
XPK libraries not installed.
Unknown or incompatible guide format.

Report It

If you do find an error or it won't load a guide then first check that the guide loads okay using MultiView! if it doesn't load into MultiView then there's not much I can do? Try loading it into PPGuide or any other Guide Readers if you still insist on reporting an error then you can do! don't forget to send a S.A.E. But email is preferred ;)

If you are reporting an error then please tell me...

Amiga model A1200, A500, A3000, A4000 etc....
OS version ie, WB1.3, WB2.x WB3.x or even WB1.2 :(
Memory Chip & Fast.
Accelerator Card xxMhz? CPU, FPU
Special Circumstances?

Send me a copy of any Guides that won't load in! If they load into MultiView then I'll fix it to work with SmoothGuide! You tell me what page to check for if it loads in a bit!

Please

Contact Me
if you want to report errors.

Thanks to the following people for testing and encouragement.

Golly Top Beta Tester! For the XPK suggestions and much more.
Neil Huchison For his support with this and 'Sneech'
Ashley Atkins For his support with this and 'Sneech'

Lastly, If I update the program I'll probably upload it to Aminet so if you like it so far but think it's not up to scratch yet then keep a look out for the updates. If there's anything I have to add to this program before you consider using it instead of any other AmigaGuide Viewer then let me know....

1.9 Public Domain

Smooth Guide is Copyright 1995 Paul Burkey All Rights Reserved

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Contact Me

if you want the latest version!

This Software is:- MailWare, CardWare, EmailWare, PhoneStampsWare

You see, if everyone likes this program and just uses it without me knowing I might just give up updating it, or at least keep it to myself. Now if you like it and you want me to develop it a bit more then you will have to let me know by sending a Letter, Post Card, Email or Even a PhoneStamp available from the P/Office ;) If you do send a phonestamp and also a suggestion, I'll most certainly update it straight away and send you an updated copy...

1.10 Smooth Guide History

Smooth Guide Before V1.2b

Mostly messy and full of bugs.

Smooth Guide V1.2b (30.10.95)

Improved Text Styles compatability.

Smooth Guide V1.3b (3.11.95)

Improved the Iconify Gadget.

Should be more AmigaGuide compatable now.

PowerPacker Support feature ;)

Also XPK Support.

Added @TITLE support.

1.11 Contacting the Author

Paul Burkey can be contacted at the following address:-

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Try and catch me on IRC in #frostfree as 'shoecake'

Cheers for now,

Paul Burkey (20.12.95)
