

AutoAppMenu

COLLABORATORS

	<i>TITLE :</i> AutoAppMenu		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>SIGNATURE</i>
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REVISION HISTORY

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Chapter 1

AutoAppMenu

1.1 AutoAppMenu Version 3.0 documentation

Welcome to AutoAppMenu Version 3.0

Contents

-what's inside

What's new ?

-changes since version 2.0

What IS AutoAppMenu ?

-if you come from Mars (or Intel R&D, both are isolated from the world's technology) ↔

Installation

-setting it all up

Using AutoAppMenu

-working with it

Distribution

-spreading it about (lecture time)

We're back!

-a few special messages to people who won't be reading it anyway

Version History

-for refugees from the PC, armed with their notepad full of Intercity 125 chassis numbers ↔

Thanks

-who says that kindness isn't acknowledged ?

The Future

-Mystic Meg eat your heart out! (a future without PCs would be rather nice) ↔

Note: If you would like to print this entire document out, I can recommend a program called AG2Txt by Jason R. Hulance which does a great job of

converting AmigaGuide documents to text files. It is found in the text/hyper (!?) directory of Aminet.

Written by Andrew Elia (July 1995)

1.2 Contents

This archive should contain the following files:

AutoAppMenu - The main program
AutoAppMenu.info - The icon for the program
AutoAppMenu_Background - WBStartUp script file
AutoAppMenu_Background.info - come on, must I tell you everything ?
AutoAppMenu.Guide - hang on... aren't you reading it ?
AutoAppMenu.Guide.info - with an icon

...and a directory called "CreateAlias" (thanks, Axel!) which contains the following files:

CreateAlias - the program file
CreateAlias.info - plus icon
CreateAlias.doc - the plain text documentation
CreateAlias.doc.info - with icon
CreateAlias.c - the source code (in my favourite language)

If for any reason it doesn't, this program can be downloaded from the Aminet (or obtained from an Aminet CD) in the util/app directory as AutoAppMenu3.Lha.

1.3 What's to see in version three ? (crap rhyme no. 2)

Hurrah for standardisation! I've finally got my hands on the both the "Amiga ROM Kernal Reference Manual: Includes and AutoDocs", and "The AmigaDOS Manual". After having a good read through some of the bits, I've found a few things that I may have been doing wrong in previous versions. I've made sure that everything is playing by the rules.

Here are the new features since version 2.0:

* There was a slightly annoying problem that I found when using the program myself (this was also spotted by Ulf Jordung). Whenever I disabled my StartUp-Sequence, and then executed a startup script, I was told that AutoAppMenu couldn't open the commodities library. I originally assumed that this was due to the fact that I had crunched it, and that as AutoAppMenu was the first program to use it, the system wasn't very keen to decrunch it first time. This was the impression I got from the debugger. What I found out after both I and Ulf decrunched the commodities library was that it was still happening. I found out that the way I was testing whether ANY library had been successfully opened wasn't the way it should be (as specified in the RKMs). Fixed!

* I somehow managed to display the wrong requester messages at certain times (a little memory lapse of mine when using the cut and paste!). Sorted!

* The commodities library problem fortunately caused AutoAppMenu to quit which would have otherwise had some nasty results. Ulf had added AutoAppMenu to his User-StartUp, and was running the program before Workbench had appeared. This generated that commodities requester thingy again. Without that bug, the program would not have worked correctly because of THIS bug. This bug meant that AutoAppMenu wasn't checking whether Workbench was actually around to add menu items with (I forgot to check it!). Now, the program will generate a requester telling you that AutoAppMenu is unable to add the menu items. Squashed!

* A limitation has been lifted in that you can now stick programs with spaces in their filenames into the drawer and there will be no problems.

* I have now added an extra Tool Type to the program, so should you have AutoAppMenu in the WBStartUp drawer, you can use a tooltype to specify the name of the drawer which AutoAppMenu will search for menu items.

* Requesters have been cleaned up a bit so that they give you a more informative reason why something went wrong. The requester will now give you a two line requester with the first line being the error that AutoAppMenu gave, and the second being the reason for the fault (this is filled in by AmigaDOS). If AmigaDOS doesn't have an answer, it will give you an error code (which you can look up in a manual), but this should never happen. If AmigaDOS has nothing to do with the problem, you will only get the error from AutoAppMenu.

* A problem I never thought to check out (but only discovered when I added support for different drawers) was the effect that sub-directories would have. As AutoAppMenu would scan each entry in the directory, it would encounter a problem with any sub-directories added (and display the wrong error message, by the way). It will now recognise them, and skip over them.

1.4 What's this AutoAppMenu thingy ?

In case you haven't heard of the original AutoAppMenu, it's a program designed to give people an easy way to add options to their Workbench "Tools" menu. If you've used the WBStartUp drawer on your Workbench disc, you're halfway to understanding how to use AutoAppMenu. It works virtually identically (except for the fact that you can't place script files in the AutoAppMenu drawer like you can on WBStartUp). All you have to do is to drag your favourite, most frequently-used applications into the drawer (or an alias version of it, if you use Axel Behr's "CreateAlias" program), and next time you boot your Workbench disc, you're Tools menu will contain those options.

Although it's a yucky thought, I got the idea for the program from the Apple Macintosh's "Apple" menu. Naturally, as the Amiga urinates all over the Mac, and the PC (which goes without saying, particularly as the "Launchpad" feature of OS/2 Warped (because that's what you have to be to use it) is so phenomenally crap), I thought that I'd prove it by making the

Amiga equivalent. The advantage over the Apple system (aside from obvious things such as proper pre-emptive multitasking, multiple screens, etc.) is that you can now actually change the name of the drawer that AutoAppMenu searches through for menu items.

1.5 Installation

Before we proceed... you have got Workbench Release 2.0 (or higher) haven't you? Good! Nothing against Workbench 1.3 and below (superb OS though it is, and still light years ahead of anything else on any other platform) but it just hasn't got the features required for AutoAppMenu. I urge you to upgrade, if not for the sake of letting technology move on, but for your own interests.

To install AutoAppMenu, all you have to do is to drag the "AutoAppMenu" icon into the WBStartup drawer of your boot disc (hard drive recommended). Now create a drawer using the "New Drawer" option from the Workbench "Window" menu, and give it an appropriate name. Now click on the AutoAppMenu program icon, and select "Information" from the Workbench "Icons" menu. Click on the tool type called "Drawer", and edit the name of the drawer from "SYS:AutoAppMenu" to whatever else you wish it to be. It's best to leave the CX_PRIORITY tool type alone, unless you are sure of what you're doing. Finally click on the "Save" button, and starting from the next time you boot AutoAppMenu will do its stuff.

The disadvantage with the above installation procedure is that you will no longer be able to quit from your Workbench. If this bothers you, I have provided a little script to help you out. The installation process is a little more limited, but here goes: Instead of the AutoAppMenu icon, drag the AutoAppMenu_Background icon into the WBStartup drawer. Go to the "All Files" option from the "Show" menu within the Workbench "Window" menu. Now hunt around for the drawer called "C". Drag the AutoAppMenu program icon into this drawer. You can now select "Only Icons" instead of "All Files" from the "Show" menu. Create a drawer called "AutoAppMenu" inside your boot disc (ie. in the same place as WBStartup is kept). All done! You will notice that you cannot use the tool types with this system, so the drawer you use must be called "AutoAppMenu" and be placed in the boot disc. That is the limitation of this technique, but it's the one that I use.

Please note that I DO NOT recommend adding AutoAppMenu to your User-Startup file, basically because it is executed before Workbench has appeared. AutoAppMenu will now detect your attempts to run it before Workbench is started, and will give you an appropriate requester. If you really are desperate to play with scripts, I suggest that you do the naughty thing and add the command to your Startup-Sequence (even though Lew Eggebrecht recommends against this, so take note!) just after the "LoadWB" instruction. It's much easier to stick it in your WBStartup drawer (that's where I keep mine).

I'm sorry that the installation process is so complicated for beginners. I suppose it defeats the object of providing an easy way of going about the whole Tools menu thing. Hold on tight!

1.6 Using AutoAppMenu

After the somewhat daunting installation process, the rest should be pretty easy (I hope!). If you find some difficulty in comprehending this lot, then E-Mail me, and I'll do my best to explain things a little better.

To add a new program to the drawer, simply drag it (or an aliased version -see the documentation for "MakeAlias" for further details) into the drawer you plan to use for menu items. Provided the drawer wasn't empty when AutoAppMenu was first run, the program will automatically update the Tools menu every time you drag something into the drawer. If you're wondering why AutoAppMenu doesn't seem to work with an empty drawer, then bear in mind that it ISN'T a bug! This is something that has been with AutoAppMenu since the first version. Basically, if upon starting the program AutoAppMenu finds that the drawer is empty, it will automatically shut itself down so as not to waste both memory and processor time. If you find that this feature is not to your liking, simply drag the programs into the drawer, and load AutoAppMenu again and all will be well.

Another feature of AutoAppMenu is support for multi-selection. This enables you to click on a variety of icons around the Workbench screen, and then select a menu item. Once selected, all the icons you clicked will be passed on to the program in the menu. To click more than one icon, simply hold down a SHIFT key, and click away! For example, if you were to drag the "Say" program from your Workbench disc (Workbench 3.0+ owners don't have this utility to my knowledge, so try using "More" instead) into the drawer for AutoAppMenu, you could click on a few icons around the Workbench, and select "Say" from the Workbench "Tools" menu. Once you have done this, you should notice that all the icons you have clicked will be spoken (or displayed, if using "More"). It's that easy. You should note that clicking on AppIcons will not work. AppIcons are special icons on the Workbench screen, like those created by Wordworth, and SnoopDOS. If you try to execute a menu with one of these clicked, you will get an "Unable to read arguments for command" error. Be warned! The "arguments" facility can be extremely useful for launching programs such as text editors (I use it with my assembler, Devpac 3.02). If you don't click on an icon, the editor will start up with a new document. If you do select something first, the editor will automatically load in the file you clicked upon. Note that for increased flexibility, AutoAppMenu will allow you to click on discs, and drawers as well as files. If you mistakenly click one of these when you try to launch a program such as a text editor, then you will probably get a "File not found" error (from the text editor).

The program will set itself up as a commodity, so you are able to close it down, or disable it from the Commodities Exchange program from your Workbench disc. Clicking on "Disable" simply prevents AutoAppMenu from acting upon any menu selections you make. You can bring it back to life with "Enable". If you want more low-level access over AutoAppMenu, there is a tooltype in the main program (please note: this does not apply to the AutoAppMenu_Background script) called CX_PRIORITY. It is advised that you only use this if you are certain what you are doing (although no damage can be done from incorrect settings). This setting allows you to control the relative priority of AutoAppMenu in relation to other commodities currently running in your system.

I just thought I'd let you know that I use AutoAppMenu myself, and it has proved reliable (so far...) and I have yet to find any bugs in it. If you know otherwise... let me know! Unfortunately, as I appear to be a minority in the UK (in terms of being an Amiga owner), I have only been able to test AutoAppMenu 3.0 on my A500+ (4 megs autoconfig Fast RAM, 1.5 megs chip RAM, MC68000, Workbench 2.04). If you have a different machine, please let me know if you have any difficulties. I do try to be as careful as I can in order to ensure compatibility, but as I have nothing else to prove it with, you'll just have to trust me.

1.7 Distribution

If you've used AutoAppMenu in the past, you may have noticed that I never included any guidelines as to how it should be distributed. Well, the simple truth is as I was writing the documentation -I forgot! Just to set the record straight, previous versions were, and still are FREEWARE ie. no fee to pay, no (deliberate) limitations, and no guilt. This has NOT changed for version 3.0. So why am I bugging you with this most useless piece of trivia? In my true style, I've got a point to make. Believe it or not, this is an AMIGA. Amiga owners have been united throughout our most difficult and daunting time, and we have survived. We are enthusiasts, not accountants. Therefore, why must we keep torturing each other with attempts to make a couple of quid? I understand that some people are students (I'm a student!) and are pretty hard up, but taking advantage of other Amiga people is just not on. Leave the screwing people for money techniques to the PC lamers, for we are better than that.

The Amiga is a computer which has both educated and enchanted many people, and the whole idea of Public Domain software is to encourage people to create, or to make the process of creating easier.

Back to AutoAppMenu. I've decided on a distribution thingy for this version of the program which should suit many people. I haven't found a better name, so I'll call it "ESCOMWare". Basically, if you have used the program, and you share my views on the superiority of Amiga technology then you don't need to tell me about it -tell ESCOM! Although the parent company is doing some fantastic work so far, the UK arm of the business is very sloppy. How do I know? I work for them! For those of you who are not aware, an electrical appliances retailer called Rumbelows (which has been in business for as long as I can remember) recently bit the dust. Escom (as you are no doubt aware) bought all the stores that once belonged to them, and converted them into their own stores. I work for one of them (and hey, if you live in England, and are passing through Enfield (the branch is in 23 Church Street) I'd like to meet you!). Unfortunately, I was all ready to believe that there would be tonnes of publicity for the Amiga, but alas no. Intel (may they remain OUTSIDE) have pumped a great deal of money into the UK operation, so much so that even the TV advertising is polluted by their logo. Essentially Escom UK is Intel's puppet. I've had to intervene when people have asked some of my colleagues about when the Amiga will be back, and got a reply saying that they won't be sold in Escom stores. Excuse me, but this stinks. I've had to put up with sharing air with anorak-clad PC nerds, and worse still content with OS/2 Warped and Windows which for some inexplicable reason run so ridiculously slow that I have NEVER found a machine that can run comfortably with them (even on a Pentium 100!). I'm

hanging on in the hope that Amigas will arrive, before my sanity departs! I'm damned if I'm going to live in a world with amorphous machines from 20 years ago with the knowledge that the world's most versatile computer technology is being dismissed. So please, send your views to ESCOM UK LTD, 3 Riverside Way, Riverside Business Park, Irvine, Scotland, KA11 5DJ. I don't have any E-Mail addresses, so unfortunately, you will have to resort to snail mail. Failing that, if you are living near an Escom store, do make a point of regularly harassing the sales people. From what I gather, they have been instructed to say that Amigas will not be sold in the stores (I have NOT adhered to this, and I will not do so either). Also from what I've heard, I'm the only employee from any London branch who is an Amiga representative. This isn't good enough. If you are able to get either a full or part time job, please send a CV to Ann Egan (Personnel Administrator) at the above address. Please note that the UK operation knows little or nothing about the Amiga or Commodore, only that Escom now owns them (in fact, the press conference held on the 30th May (more than a month ago) has STILL not got to Escom UK. It appears that the press know more about it than they do). If you are offered an interview, you will have to take a test on low-level PC details such as IRQ values, memory access times, etc. My aim is to increase the presence of Amiga people within the company (and with any luck reduce the PC side a little bit, but it's perhaps a little ambitious) in order to give our views a little more clout. Thanks for your support!

Note that this is not essential if you are to continue to use AutoAppMenu, but I would appreciate it.

1.8 We're back!

Now that Escom has proved its commitment to the Amiga (well the non-British parts of it, anyway), isn't it about time that developers start making their way back to the Amiga? Now, many users of previous versions of AutoAppMenu have no doubt taken note of my reservations towards the C (and C++) languages. In my opinion, they are the evil invention of PC owners who were unable to negotiate their way through the multitudinous Intel kludges of segmented registers, Base-Limits, and pages to name but a few. Obviously this is the language of choice for many developers, but the main stumbling block now is that the main development system, the SAS C/C++ (currently V6.55) environment has had support discontinued. It's pretty obvious that a large company such as the SAS Institute aren't going to take any notice of a few million Amiga owners/developers, so with any luck Escom will make a plea to the company to bring it all back on line. After all, if there are no tools, there are no developers. With any luck people such as Sensible Software (who suicidally dropped the Amiga in favour of that not oft mentioned piece of 70s crap, despite the fact that Seni Soccer outsold every other platform), ASDG (who now develop for the Mac and the Particularly Cumbrous clones), DMA Design and Bullfrog (who port their code from the Piece of Crap, commonly known as the "lowest common denominator" form of development), Europress (who now enjoy the sweet smell of failure with their wonderful (sarcasm) AMOS derivative "Klik and Play" (although judging by the frequency of crashes, it ought to be called "Klik and Pray") for the Pretty Crude machines, and what a stable work horse it is too (I have to load it AT LEAST four times to get something working out of it before it crashes again). If the Amiga is dead, it's because they killed it, and blamed someone else! The fact is that the Amiga isn't dead

because there are people out there supporting it. We just need to make sure that people are aware that the Amiga never died, it was just gathering its strength.

Finally, I'd just like to put in a special message for the people who were at Commodore UK. Although David Pleasance, and Colin Proudfoot didn't win the Management Buyout, I just want to say "thanks for trying". I, like many other Amiga owners have a great respect for all the work your team put in to bring the Amiga back. I'm sure that had you have won, you would have got the machines back a lot quicker than Escom. I just hope that Escom see sense and give you a chance to have your say. You never did mention who that mystery backer was, did you ? Most people had their money on Hewlett Packard. The evidence being that at a Spurs/Liverpool football match, a friend noticed an advert on one of those scoreboard thingies for the Amiga as "Europe's best selling home computer", shortly before the sponsorship deal with Spurs was announced. It just seems a little strange that although HP make some darn nice printers, they just don't care about us when it comes to providing printer drivers!

Most people didn't seem to have much faith in Alex Amor of CEI. Although I, along with many others was going for Commodore UK (I didn't want Escom to win), Alex Amor had also put in a great deal of effort to bring the Amiga back. From what I hear, CEI will be in charge of distribution for the Amiga in the US. Good luck!

1.9 Version History

Does anyone actually read this stuff ? No ? Neither do I, so I might as well not bother to write it...

1.10 Thanks

Some special words of thanks go to the people who have been kind enough to give me help, advice, and source code which made AutoAppMenu 3.0 a reality. Firstly, thanks to Axel Behr of Germany for providing me with source code for the "Notify" feature, and for allowing me to distribute CreateAlias with this version of AutoAppMenu. Thanks, Axel! Also, a warm thank you to Ulf Jordung from France for helping me to both discover and squash some rather naughty bugs. A big thank you to Malcolm Williams for unknowingly becoming a beta tester. Thanks also to anyone else who has sent me any E-Mail concerning bugs, and suggestions for improvements.

1.11 The Future

You tell me. I'm always open to suggestions for improvements to AutoAppMenu. So should you have a brilliant idea for something I can add to the next version, don't keep it to yourself -drop me a line! If you are a programmer yourself, you can send me source code in just about any major language (C/C++, 68000 Assembly language, (AMOS) Basic etc. If you're not using one of these, make sure your code is well-documented). Also, if you

find any bugs, please make a note of what happened, how it happened, and your machine set up. Finally, if you have any PC-related jokes or insults, they too would be warmly welcomed. By the way, if you'd like to see some PC-related humour, connect up to City University's "Monochrome" server. Just send an E-Mail to: monoadm@mono.city.ac.uk which includes your E-Mail address, and your choice of login name (no longer than 10 letters). Bear in mind that material submitted to the PC Bashing newsgroup contains some naughty language. Did you hear the one about the P60 and the microwave oven ?

Possible improvements would include:

- * Detaching from the Workbench/CLI, so that the AutoAppMenu_Background script is no longer needed. If anyone has any idea how to go about this, drop me a line.

- * Executing menu items as if they had been run from Workbench (like WBStartup does). This means that all Tool Types can be preserved. Again, any help or source code would be gratefully accepted.

- * Making AutoAppMenu aware of any files that are moved or deleted FROM the drawer with some enhanced "Notify" routines.

- * A more efficient way of identifying messages that arrive at a particular port. I'm not too happy about the way that I have approached certain aspects of the program, such as the way I identify messages (because AutoAppMenu uses only one message port for three different types of messages: menu selection, commodity access, and directory notification).

My E-Mail address is: odin@dcs.qmw.ac.uk, but if you have any difficulty sending any messages to that address, try: AC4040@qmw.ac.uk. For any non-netsurfers, I can be snail-mailed at 178 Carterhatch Road, Enfield, Middlesex, EN3 5LY, England.

See you in the next version of AutoAppMenu!
