

**Ax**

Paul A. Schifferer

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**COLLABORATORS**

	<i>TITLE :</i> Ax		
<i>ACTION</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>DATE</i>	<i>SIGNATURE</i>
WRITTEN BY	Paul A. Schifferer	July 1, 2022	

**REVISION HISTORY**

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# Chapter 1

## Ax

### 1.1 Ax: Table of Contents

Ax

Version 0.3

Written by Paul A. Schifferer

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Registration  
Undocumented features  
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### 1.2 Ax: Terms

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## Terms

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You may not copy and/or distribute these programs without the accompanying documentation and other additional files that came with the original. You may not copy and/or distribute modified versions of these programs.

You may not disassemble, decompile, re-source or otherwise reverse engineer the programs.

You may charge a fee to recover distribution costs. The fee for diskette distribution may not be more than the cost to obtain a public domain diskette from Fred Fish.

## 1.3 Ax: Disclaimer of Warranty

### Disclaimer of Warranty

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SO THERE.

## 1.4 Ax: Introduction

### Introduction

This program came about as a result of my search for a decent database/-search tool for the Aminet. Since the Aminet INDEX is a rather large, unwieldy document, it can quickly become a pain in the back areas browsing

through it. And searching through the Aminet archives online isn't very efficient.

The purpose of Ax is to cut down trees. Or maybe its purpose is to turn the INDEX file, as well as RECENT files, into a reasonable database that allows you to find the software that you're looking for.

Ax's features include:

- Operates in any display environment (supports any screen display available in the display database).
- Amiga User Interface Style Guide-compliant.
- On-line help (requires AmigaGuide).
- Reasonably fast search mechanism.
- The ability to keep your own personal Aminet database current by merging new RECENT files into the current database without having to constantly download new INDEX files.

## 1.5 Ax: System requirements

### System requirements

Ax requires version 2.04 or higher of the Amiga OS. It is designed to take advantage of some features available in higher versions, if they are available. As yet, Ax does not have Locale support.

Ax requires the use of Olaf Barthel's gtlayout.library V24 or higher, which is included with the program archive.

Ax also requires a  
stack size  
of at least 16,000 bytes.

Given the current size of the Aminet INDEX, about 4-5MB of disk space is needed to store the database.

## 1.6 Ax: Setting the stack size

From the Workbench

You can check that the icon's stack size is set properly by clicking once on the icon, then selecting Information from the Workbench's Icon menu. In the upper left corner of the Information window is an integer gadget marked "Stack:". If the value in this gadget is less than 16,000, click in it, change it to 16000, press Return, and click the button marked Save. Now you may run Ax.

From the Shell

---

You can check this by entering

```
stack
```

at the prompt. This will tell you the size of your Shell's stack. If it's less than 16,000, then enter

```
stack 16000.
```

This will change the stack size so it's large enough for Ax to run.

## 1.7 Ax: Registration

### Registration

Ax is technically giftware. (I hate all the different -ware terms.) I don't believe or subscribe to the current shareware philosophy. If I wanted (read: demanded) money for my work, I would release it as a commercial product. I've written and released this program in this form because I believe the Amiga is an awesome computer, and I want to lend my support to its (hopefully) long and glorious life. I want to make your use of the Amiga productive, efficient, and most of all enjoyable. All I want is a 'thank you' or 'great job'. (Of course, I don't object to receiving money :) (see below), but I'm not going to get nasty about it, like some other authors.)

But enough blithering; here's the bottom line: This program is NOT crippled in any way, shape or form, thus no fee is required to make it fully functional. You have it in all its splendor and glory. Use it, enjoy it. If you like it, send me a postcard, or a program you've written, or something to say 'thanks'.

If you want to, you can send  
me

\$5US, which will get you the next release sent right to you. The money's only to cover disk and mailer costs (and a teeny profit :). Another \$5US will get you a nicely typeset, printed manual.

## 1.8 Ax: My address(es)

The address to which you can send me money, postcards, a spare Amiga, or anything else is:

Paul A. Schifferer  
515 11th Street  
Edwards AFB, CA 93523  
USA

I can also be contacted via Internet at:

gandalf@hughes.net <-- preferably

---



or

pschiff@pablo.elan.af.mil

## 1.9 Ax: Undocumented features

### Undocumented Features

Some people call these things 'bugs'. If you happen to notice one of these little critters, let me know, please! I've done my best to make sure all the bugs were discovered and removed, but I can't find them all. If finances are favorable, I may send you the next release at my cost. (See Beta-Testers' Note.)

Please, if you send me bug reports, make sure to let me know the type of system you're running it on (CPU, RAM, etc.), which executable you were using, what other programs were running with it (especially commodities and system enhancers, since they tend to gum up the works sometimes), and what you were doing at the time of the bug occurrence/system crash.

## 1.10 Ax: Beta-testers' note

### Beta-Testers' Note

This release is in general distribution as a beta version. If you wish to be a beta-tester for future versions of this program, or for any other program I may release, drop

me

a postcard or e-mail. I will put you on the list of beta-testers, for which you will receive test-releases via Snail mail, FidoNet or the most cost-effective means for me to get the program to you.

## 1.11 Ax: Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank the following people:

## 1.12 Ax: Using Ax from the Workbench

### Using Ax from the Workbench

Ax requires a

stack size

of at least 16,000 bytes to run.

---

To start Ax from the Workbench environment, simply double-click on its icon. Ax' behavior can be modified by using ToolTypes. The following ToolTypes are supported:

PUBSCREEN=name      Use this ToolType when you want to open Ax on another program's existing public screen. The name you supply is the name of the screen on which to open. This ToolType may be specified in a project icon, and will be effective only for that document.

QUIET                Using this option tells Ax not to present its initial copyright banner.

### 1.13 Ax: Using Ax from the Shell

#### The Shell

Before you start Ax, you must make sure your Shell's stack size is at least 16,000 bytes or greater.

To start Ax from the Shell, simply enter its name at the command line, and the program will begin execution. The following options are available from the Shell:

PUBSCREEN name      Use this option when you want to open Ax on another program's existing public screen. The name you supply is the name of the screen on which to open.

QUIET                Using this option tells Ax not to present its initial copyright banner.

### 1.14 Ax: The Main Window

#### The Main Window

This is the main window, where you wield Ax. There are several buttons in this main window that allow you to manipulate the database. They are as follows:

Browse

Search

Parse INDEX

Merge RECENT

Maintenance

---

Configure

Help

About

Quit

## 1.15 Ax: The Main Window/Browse

Browse

This button allows you to poke through the database at your leisure. You will be asked which database to use.

Then another window will pop up with three scrolling lists. The first list, marked 'Category' should contain the main breakdown of areas in the database. Clicking on one of these causes Ax to update the 'Directory' list with available directories in that category.

The next list, 'Directory' is the directory for the chosen category you wish to look through. Selecting a directory from here will cause the third list to be updated with all the available files in that area.

The final list, 'Files' lists all the files in the chosen category and directory. Clicking on any one of these files brings up a the  
File Details  
window, which shows you more information about the file.

Click to close gadget in the window's title bar to return to the main window.

## 1.16 Ax: The Main Window/Search

Search

Clicking this button allows you to kick off a search through the database for something you're looking for. You will be first asked for a database to search.

The next window that pops up allows you to specify the parameters of the search. The gadgets available are as follows:

Get marked entries?

Checking this item tells Ax to collect only the previously marked entries from the database. The 'Keyword' and 'Case sensitive' will be ghosted in that case. If it's not checked, Ax will search according the Keyword (as discussed below).

Keyword

This is a word or phrase to search for in the database. It will be applied against the filename and short description. Currently, it's an all-or-

---

nothing  
key. Ax doesn't yet support AND and OR type searching.

#### Case sensitive?

Ax doesn't regard letter case normally during the search. Checking this box will cause it to match exactly according to letter case.

#### Category

This is an AmigaDOS-style pattern of what categories to search through. For instance, '#?' searches all categories. All AmigaDOS-style patterns are supported.

#### Directory

This is directory within the selected category to search. AmigaDOS-style patterns are supported here as well.

#### Sort entries

Setting this checkbox tells Ax to sort alphabetically the results of the search. Otherwise, they will be presented in the order found.

#### Preserve previous search results?

The results from previous searches (in the current Ax session only) are remembered. If you wish to add this search to those, keep this box checked. Otherwise, the previous list will be erased.

A progress window will appear during the search process. You may abort at any time and view the search results so far compiled.

When the search is complete, if anything was found, a window will appear that lists the results by filename, size and short description. Clicking on any one of these files brings up the

File Details  
window.

## 1.17 Ax: The Main Window/Maintenance

### Maintenance

This button lets you perform maintenance on your database. This basically entails pruning duplicated entries and/or deleting unwanted categories from the database.

A window will appear that lets you choose what sort of maintenance to perform on the database.

The first gadget, 'Delete categories', is a text gadget. Enter the category names, separated by spaces, that you wish to remove from the database. Note that these are ENTIRE categories. You cannot remove individual directories. If this gadget is blank, no categories will be removed.

The next gadget is a checkbox, marked 'Delete duplicates'. Checking it will tell Ax to search the database for duplicated entries with a particular category and directory, and remove them.

---

Entries marked "DeleteTag" (see the File Details window ) will also be removed.

Clicking 'Okay' will begin the maintenance operation. Clicking 'Cancel' will take you back to the main window.

When Ax is finished, it will tell you how many entries were removed from the database. If you wish to abort at any time, just press the "Abort" button in the progress window.

## 1.18 Ax: The Main Window/Parse INDEX

Parse INDEX

This is the first thing you will need to do to set up Ax (besides Configuring it). It will first ask you for the INDEX file to use. This should be the INDEX file you get from the Aminet.

Next, you will be asked in which directory you wish to place the created database. Directory creation is enabled in the ASL requester, so you can use that to create a new directory if you need to. Make sure you place a database in its own blank directory. That is how Ax differentiates one database from another.

Ax will then begin parsing the INDEX and creating entries. The current Aminet INDEX file is almost 2MB in size, and on my lowly 7MHz 68000 A2000, it takes about 2 hours to create the database. So be warned. Ax doesn't check for duplicates in order to keep parsing time to a minimum.

When all is done, Ax will let you know how many files were added.

## 1.19 Ax: The Main Window/Merge RECENT

Merge RECENT

Use this button to add new entries to an existing database. The first thing you need to do is specify the RECENT file to use.

Then you will be asked to which database to apply the RECENT file.

Finally, Ax will ask you what to do with duplicate entries. You can choose from the following things:

Update

This will update the existing entry in the database with the new information.

Discard

This tells Ax to ignore the duplicated entry and keep the old one.

---

Add anyway

This will tell Ax to add all entries, regardless of duplication, which effectively turns off duplicate checking. This can give a slight speed increase.

Duplicates are only checked in their own category and directory, not globally across the database.

## 1.20 Ax: The Main Window/Configure

Configure

This brings up a window in which you may configure certain things about Ax. The following items are in this window:

Public screen

Which public screen should Ax open on?

INDEX Location

Where do you normally keep your INDEX/RECENT files? The picker button brings up an ASL requester that lets you choose a directory.

Database directory

What is the default directory to keep the database? There's also a picker button for this.

Always use this database?

If this item is checked, Ax will not ask every time you wish to do something to a database, but simply use the database specified in Database directory (above).

Comment characters

These are any possible characters that can be used to comment out a line in the INDEX/RECENT file. Anything after one of these characters is ignored during parsing.

Skip categories

In this gadget, you can specify particular categories that you wish to be skipped during parsing operations, i.e., parsing the initial INDEX or adding RECENTs to the database. This can speed things up considerably. You can specify as many categories as can fit in this gadget. They must be separated by spaces.

Sort entries

This setting will let you have Ax sort Search and Browse results alphabetically.

Priority

This allows you to set the priority of Ax. This can be helpful if you want to set it running in the background, since it can take a while to do things; or set its priority high to hog all the CPU time and get the job done quicker. :) The current allowed range is -20 to 20.

Beep on error?

Should Ax sound the bell and/or flash the display when an error occurs?

---

Once you have set Ax up the way you like it, click on either Save or Use. 'Save' saves your settings in a file called 'Ax.prefs' in both the ENV: and ENVARC: directories, so they will be remembered the next time you boot up your Amiga.

'Use' only keeps these settings for the current session of Ax.

'Cancel' disregards any changes you've made and keeps the old settings.

## 1.21 Ax: The Main Window/Help

Help

This button will attempt to start the AmigaGuide help file 'Ax.guide' (what you're reading right now actually). This file should be in the same directory as Ax or in the logical directory HELP: in order to work properly.

## 1.22 Ax: The Main Window/About

About

Pressing this button pops up a window or two giving you some information about the program and

```
me
. How nice.
```

## 1.23 Ax: The Main Window/Quit

Quit

I don't really think this button need explanation, but since you insist....

It quits the program.

Okay, are you happy now? :)

## 1.24 Ax: File Details Window

File Details Window

This window shows you information about the file entry in the database. Information displayed is like so:

```
Name (name of the file)
Size (size in Kilobytes, Megabytes, or Gigabytes (uh huh!))
Location (where to find the file)
```

Short description (the short description from the INDEX)

Age (how many weeks (and years?) the file's been there

-----

As of (when the entry was place into your database)

Flags (described below)

Currently, there are two flags in use by Ax. These are 'Marked' and 'DeleteTag'. 'Marked' means you have explicitly placed a mark in this file for later use. The only implementation for marking is for the search engine. (Other implementations may be used in the future.)

The 'DeleteTag' flag can also be explicitly placed by you, instructing Ax to later remove the file from the database. Be careful. As of yet, there's no way to recover delete files or to manually enter them into the database.

There are also some buttons at the bottom of the window:

Remove

Set or unset the 'DeleteTag' flag for this file. This action is immediate, meaning the database entry will be changed when the button is pressed.

Mark

Set or unset the 'Marked' flag for this file. This action is also immediate.

Close

Stop looking at this file.

## 1.25 Ax: Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous

This chapter basically covers, well, miscellaneous things that usually can't be place anywhere else, plus just some tidbits of information.

The Future

The following items are on my to-do list for future versions of Ax. If you think of an item that is not in this list, please feel free to drop me an e-mail or postcard.

- XPK support.
- Multiple keyword, AND and OR type searching.
- Manual entry/deletion of items into the database.
- ARexx support.
- File lists with automatic FTP retrieval of files from Aminet.
- INDEX comparison.

Authenticity

---



If you want to be sure that the files in this archive are authentic, I have enclosed below my PGP public key. All binaries and documentations are accompanied by a PGP signature file, which can be used to verify the authenticity of each file.

## 1.26 Ax: Program history

### History

0.3 29 Mar 1996 - Final beta release.

#### Bugs fixed:

- The 'Remove' button wasn't working in the file details window. Fixed.
- Ax wasn't displaying anything during a parse when it was skipping files. Fixed.
- The 'Abort' button would sometimes not abort a parse. Fixed.

#### Additions:

- Ax can now sort Search and Browse results. There is an option in Configure now to turn it on, which is the default.

#### Changes:

- The File Details window no longer displays the modification date of the entry. The creation date now reads 'As of', which is the date the entry was either created or modified. It also allows a more logical reference of the file's Age.

0.2 12 Mar 1996 - Second beta release.

#### Bugs fixed:

- The most notorious was a bug in the 'Merge RECENT' code that caused Ax to forget it was merging a RECENT file and just add entries with reckless abandon. The bug: an '=' (assign value) instead of an '==' (equality comparison). ARGH! It's fixed now.
- The Install script didn't install the library correctly. Fixed.  
( )
- Ax's icon was a Project, not a Tool. Easily fixed, but very annoying...  
( )
- Accidentally left some line-debugging information in the

executable, which made it 50% bigger than it should be and a mite slower. Removed.

Changes:

- Ax now asks if you want to delete the INDEX/RECENT file after it's done with it.

Additions:

- Priority setting in Configure. Lets you specify the priority (range -20 to 20) at which Ax will run.  
( )
- 'Skip categories': allows you to specify categories to ignore during parsing.  
( )
- A switch that keeps Ax from asking which database you want to use for everything you do. Handy if you only use one.

0.1 25 Feb 1996 - First beta release. Wheeee! :)

## 1.27 Ax: nothing

Nothing!

What'd you think a button marked 'nothing' was going to do???