

Guidemaster

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NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

Contents

1	Guidemaster	1
1.1	Guidemaster.guide	1
1.2	Guidemaster.guide/Copyright	1
1.3	Guidemaster.guide/Author	2
1.4	Guidemaster.guide/About	3
1.5	Guidemaster.guide/Installation	5
1.6	Guidemaster.guide/Usage	5
1.7	Guidemaster.guide/Wish list	6

Chapter 1

Guidemaster

1.1 Guidemaster.guide

Guidemaster

The ultimate Amigaguide viewer.

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ALPHA VERSION

Copyright

Author

About

Installation

Usage

Wish list

1.2 Guidemaster.guide/Copyright

Copyright

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The "Guidemaster" main program may be included in any disk collection, or with any product that is freely distributable, for use as the viewer of Amigaguide files. You must include somewhere in your documentation the following copyright notice:

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If you are a disk distributor, or are distributing a commercial package, please contact the author and arrange to receive a license and the latest version.

The shareware registration fee is \$10. You will receive the latest version on disk, and possibly a printed manual if there is any demand for it.

About

This software is developed on an Amiga 500, with an 85MB hd and 4.5MB ram. The documentation is created with a combination of Makeinfo and TeX / Metafont. Printed manuals, if requested, will be printed on a Canon BJ-200 printer.

1.3 Guidemaster.guide/Author

Author

This software is Shareware. The suggested registration is \$10. You will receive major updates on disk via mail, if requested.

Please report any bugs or suggestions to me, Aric Caley.

Internet: dances@qedbbs.com NOTE: I can only receive mail, I CANNOT respond to any messages! I can't afford to pay for a full account since the system went commercial; hopefully if I get some registrations for Guidemaster I will be able to. Nevertheless, please report bugs or suggestions.

Snail mail (US Postal service):

5829 Los Feliz,
Buena Park, CA. 90620.

Voice phone: (714) 229-9957

1.4 Guidemaster.guide/About

About

This is an "alpha" version. That means it 'aint done yet! There's a lot of features that don't work yet, and there are certainly bugs. I've had a royal bitch of a time trying to get this all to work properly, and the Amigaguide system has fought me tooth and nail every inch of the way. But it is working. Some of the major problems that still exist:

- * If individual nodes in an Amigaguide document use commands like "FONT", "TOC", etc - IE, any global command, they simply do not work. This is a problem with Amigaguide.
- * For some reason, on my freind's A4000 running 3.0, Amigaguide just behaves erratically - scrolling doesn't work, sometimes nodes don't show up, etc. Other datatypes work just fine though! It works on my 3.1 system.
- * Can't link to another Guidemaster compressed document (XPKGuide can't link to compressed files either :). This is my fault, I just haven't fixed it yet, been too busy with another anoying problems.

Basicly, I'm releasing this now just to get it out there. It is usable. Maybe some people will be able to give me some helpfull suggestions in programing with Datatypes/Amigaguide.

Guidemaster solves several problems with the current Amigaguide (1.3-2.04) and Multiview (3.0-3.1) viewers. First and foremost, you could not view compressed files. Since Amigaguide files compress very compactly, and since they are often quite large, it is of great advantage to store them in compressed form. Another anoying thing, for me, was the apparent loss of some keyboard shortcuts under AmigaOS 3.0/3.1! Then there are the speed problems - on my poor little A500, it sometimes took many long frustrating seconds for Amigaguide to pop up when reading a large help file.

Guidemaster lets you easily view compressed Amigaguide files (under 3.0/3.1, it even displays any file which you have a Datatypes driver for). Using XPK, you have the choice of many types of compression, whatever suits your needs. But unlike other solutions, Guidemaster does not need to load the whole file and uncompress it in ram all at once. The other programs must do this, and it wastes a lot of memory (not to mention being slower) - a 100K file might uncompress to 300K, and then Amigaguide itself then loads a good portion of that into memory as it displays the file (that 100K file might explode to consume 500K or more of ram!).

To conserve on your ram, and to make things faster, Guidemaster uses a custom format for compressed Amigaguide files. This format allows Guidemaster to load small chunks and uncompress them only when needed. Upon initially viewing the file, Guidemaster reads just a few small chunks and then immediately displays the first node - thus, it opens up its window faster than Amigaguide normally does! Amigaguide scans through the file first, Guidemaster doesn't need to do this because the custom format file includes an index. Included is a program to convert and compress Amigaguide files into the custom compressed format.

Of course, you can still view Amigaguide files compressed the normal way with XPK - but it will be slower and use more ram. It's your choice. Under 3.0 and above, you can also view any file that has been XPK compressed and you have a Datatypes driver for.

NI = Not Implemented.

Most of these features are not working yet. Consider this a list of possible future features.

Features:

- * AppIcon for viewing files. NI
 - * Help directory node (lists all documents in the directories listed in ENV:Amigaguide/path) from the nodehost. NI
 - * Commodities hotkey brings up the help directory. NI
 - * Index of all nodes in document. NI
 - * Keyboard shortcuts for all actions.
 - * Will display:
 - * Normal Amigaguide files compressed with xPack/xPk/etc (slower, memory hog). NI
 - * Custom IFF AGID format, uses XPK internally. Faster and more efficient than normal Amigaguide!
 - * Any datatype object that has been XPK'd. NI
 - * Working search (node, document, all documents). NI
 - * Working keyword index search, index dynamic node from host. NI
 - * Multiple bookmarks, ability to save/load default bookmarks and
-

collections of bookmarks. NI

* ARexx port. NI

* Amigaguide preferences: Default font, paths, Default colours. NI

Considering the trouble I experienced getting this to work, I would like to rewrite the Amigaguide datatype and Amigaguide library. In the process I would fix all the problems, plus add new features like the ability to embed any datatype object - and have text flow around it. I would like to do this first as a new text datatype, a hypertext subclass and a new Amigaguide subclass of that. I would also like to have an HTML subclass.

1.5 Guidemaster.guide/Installation

Installation

Just copy Guidemaster and Packguide to wherever you put your favorite utilities. There are two versions of Guidemaster:

Guidemaster2 - If you are running 2.x, you must use this version. It won't work in 3.x!

Guidemaster3 - If you are running 3.x, you must use this version. It won't work in 2.x!

Pick yer poison, and rename it to Guidemaster.

Why two versions? Because of problems with Amigaguide, of course.

1.6 Guidemaster.guide/Usage

Usage

Right now, pretty simple. To compress an Amigaguide file, use the Packguide program. This is the template:

INPUT/A/M,OUTDIR,M=METHOD/K,ALL/S

Input: The Amigaguide file to compress. Wildcards are accepted.

Outdir: Where to put the compressed file (the name will have ".agid" appended).

Method: The XPK compression method to use. NUKE is the default.

All: If input defines any directories, the ALL keyword tells Packguide to go into each directory and compress all the files therein.

To view a file, use Guidemaster:

NAME/A,PUBSCREEN/K

Name: Amigaguide or AGID file to view (or any Datatypes supported format under 3.1).

Pubscreen: Name of a public screen to open on.

1.7 Guidemaster.guide/Wish list

Wish list

There are many things about Amigaguide that annoy me to no end:

Why don't "ALINK", "CLOSE", and "QUIT" work anymore?

Why can't you put anything you want in a macro? Only attributes will work.

Why isn't "FONT" an attribute so I can change font mid-line?

For that matter, is there any particular reason why most commands have to start at the first column in a line?

Why does a double backslash make a single backslash only in V40, and a single backslash doesn't show at all? This makes it impossible to use backslashes in your text and have it show properly on all Amigas.

Node Hosts:

Why can't I bind a node host hook to a single document?

Why does Amigaguide scan the list of node hosts even when it is possible to send the packet directly to the right host?

Why, in a node host, the node returned cannot use many commands (they just don't work)? Things like TOC, PREV, NEXT, FONT, etc simply don't work. ARGH!!!

Why can't I return the name of a file and have Amigaguide display it? For some reason, this "feature" simply doesn't work (Amigaguide DOES open the file, you just don't SEE it!!).

Why doesn't the Amigaguide Datatype let you disable the gadget bar? Why isn't it a subclass of the text datatype? Why do all the datatypes drivers, well, suck in general?

Why doesn't it (specifically the Amigaguide DT) let you "get under the hood"?:

I want to be able to have a render hook.

I want an unknown command hook, so I can add new commands.

I want a layout hook so I can cause text to flow around graphics.

I want a node host hook that is local to one Amigaguide file.

Datatypes in general:

DTM_SELECT appears to not work, period. !#*%& This prevents me from doing proper cut and paste operations!

Picture datatypes:

Consume chip ram like there's no tommarow (or like there's a tommarow with 8 MB chip ram...)

Don't support 24 bit.

Are slow.

Make little or no attempt to scale the image so the aspect is correct, or do nice dithering, etc.
