Big Desk V2.00

What On Earth Is BIG DESK?
One of the best things about Windows is that you can run several programs at once. The only real problem with this (apart, perhaps, from excruciating slowness when there are 30 or so copies of some game running at the same time) is that the screen gets awfully cluttered. Bigdesk is the answer to this problem, and we think you're going to like it once you get the idea.

Installation instructions are after the next section; first, we'll tell existing users what's changed.

What's New?
Lots.

Well, to put that another way:

*   Grid snap. When you click on the map or icon, Bigdesk tries its best to keep the screen within grid boundaries. The grid does not constrain you when you are dragging things around, however. This gives the effect of having lots of seperate screens.
*   Windows can be dragged around the map to other areas of the virtual desktop.
*   The desktop size is configurable up to 8x8 times the size of the screen - you can have up to 64 screens.
*   The map window is scaleable and can also be maximised if you must.
*   Bigdesk 'tracks' task switches (like when you press Alt+Esc to jump between programs) and makes sure all the edges of the new window are on the screen, unless you've got grid snap enabled (see below).
*   There is an option to allow the Bigdesk map or icon to always stay on top of the stack of windows.
*   Bigdesk remembers its settings and position between sessions as long as you exit Windows normally after changing them.
*   Bigdesk is now Shareware. We don't like to be bugged for money by the programs we use, so we won't bug you for money in our stuff, but registering will make Ian very happy. Go on, open ORDERNOW.WRI and do it!

Installation

To install Bigdesk, extract the files **BIGDESK.EXE,** and **BIGDLIB.DLL** into any directory named in your DOS path. We use C:\WINDOWS, but you may want to do something else.

Now from the Run... dialog of Program or File Manager, type BIGDESK. An icon will appear with a grid showing on it. Double click on the icon, and a window with a grid on it will appear. OK, time to explain....

Imagine that you had nine monitors attached to your computer, all hidden behind a wall. Imagine a one-screen-sized hole in the wall. Now imagine that you can move the hole to look at any of the screens or even at parts of several of them. That's the thing BigDesk is going to give you. In order to use Bigdesk to the full you will probably also need a copy of Backmenu, to provide you with a pop-up program menu on each of these 'virtual' screens.

That's all you need to know, but we'll go on to explain some of the gadgets you can use within Bigdesk if you wish.

Mouse Operations

There are several different operations which can be performed with the mouse.

Choosing a new virtual screen
These operations work on both the map and the icon.

To move to a new grid cell
click in the cell with the right button
To move anywhere on the Bigdesk desktop
drag the mouse pointer with the right button

You need to turn on the 'Snap Desktop to Grid?' option for the first operation to work; otherwise, the virtual screen selected will be centred on the point on the map where you click.

Choosing an application window
These operations only work on the map

To activate a particular application window
double click the left mouse button on the box representing the window
To activate an application which is iconised
double click the left mouse button on the box representing the icon

Moving an window around the Bigdesk desktop
This is only possible on the map, not on the icon.

To move an application window or icon to another place on the Big desktop
drag the box representing the window using the left mouse button.

Menu Operations and Options

The menu operations are all to be found on the System menu. To access this, click once on the icon or, with the map window open, click on the bar in the top left corner or press Alt+Spacebar.

First, there are the menu options which appear on most system menus; we'll assume you can handle those.

The Bigdesk options follow these; they are:

Keep Bigdesk At Front
This option is either on (default) or off. To swap between on and off, select the menu item. When this option is On, Bigdesk will keep its icon or map display on top of any window you may open. It may get in the way of something like word-processing, but is a very useful option if you are switching between virtual screens often.
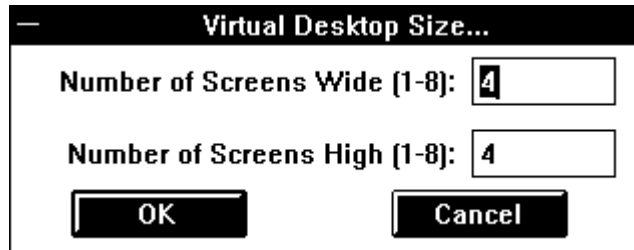
Snap Desktop To Grid
This option is either on (default) or off and works as above. When this option is on, clicking the right mouse button in a cell on the map or icon will move the 'hole in the wall' to line up with the dotted lines, thus providing a repeatable view of a group of windows.

Track Active Window
This option is either on (the default) or off and works as before. When this option is on, changing the window focus with Alt+Esc and Alt+Tab results in the newly selected window being moved to give the best view (all on screen if grid snap is off, in the cell with the largest proportion of the window if grid snap is on).

Virtual desktop size...
This option brings up a dialog box like this:

From here, you can decide how big to make your array of available virtual screens. Don't forget they all have to show on the icon!

About...
We'll leave you to explore this on your own.

All of the option settings are saved in WIN.INI in the [Bigdesk] section along with the window position and whether Bigdesk was iconised or showing the map when you exit Windows normally. If you crash out or switch off, changes are not saved.

It's safe to add Bigdesk to your Backmenu, as subsequent invocations just activate the existing Bigdesk display.

Hope you like Bigdesk. It's become indispensible for us. We welcome suggestions and comments by electronic mail to **ih@ecs.soton.ac.uk** or to **sphipps@cix.compulink.co.uk**; as ever, these addresses will need reversing, munging and otherwise manipulating to make them work on the network. We will always send a reply to your note; if you don't get one, send it again trying an alternative (reverse the bit after the @; drop the cix bit; add a gateway name to the end; ask your local mail guru; etc). No promises of support or implementation but we're all fairly nice people (or so our mothers say).

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Sorry, we don't take phone calls (apart from registrations on +44 703 550037!)