MICRODEAL SOFTWARE
DOUBLE UTILITY PACK
M-DISK & SOFT SPOOL
ATARI ST

COMPUTER SOFTWARE

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DOUBLE UTILITY PACK

SOFT SPOOL PRINT SPOOLER

M-DISK RAM DISK EMULATOR

MichTron

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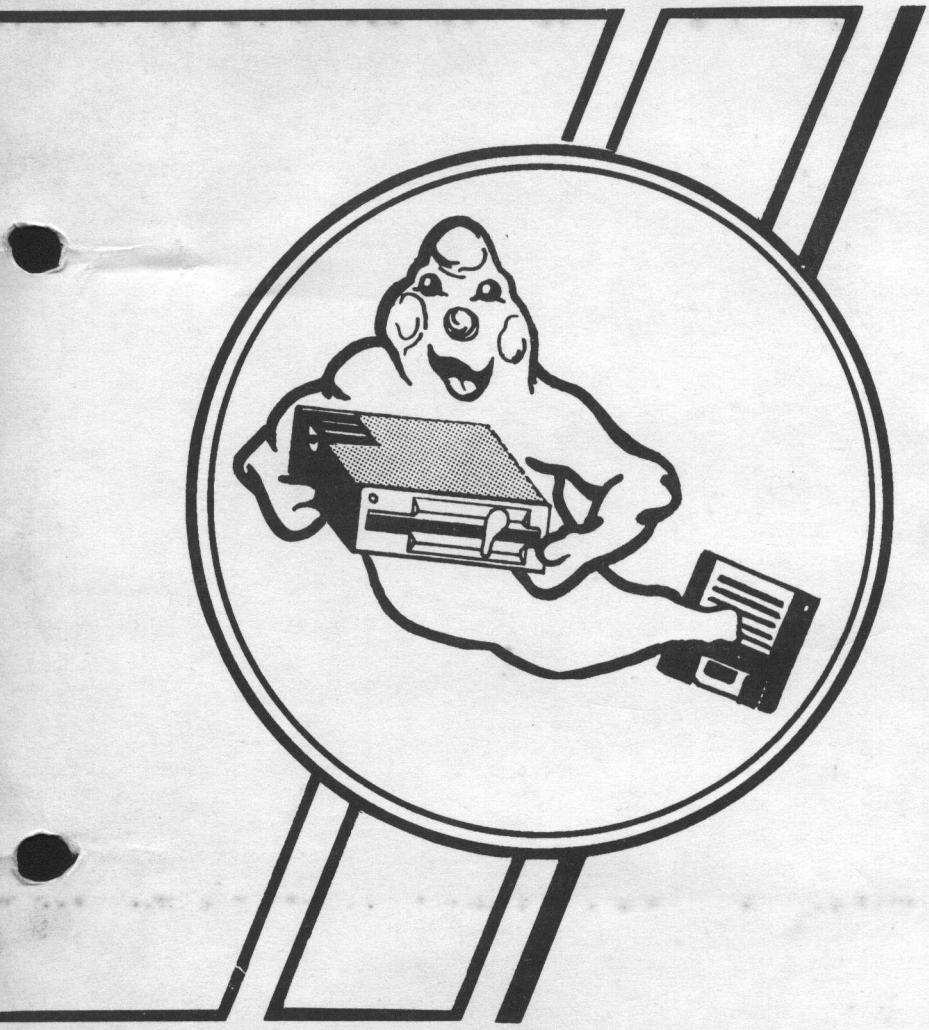
M–Disk



by Timothy Purves

The Atari 520-ST Ram Disk Emulator

MICRODEAL

M-Disk

by Tim Purves

M-Disk uses a portion of your computer's memory to load, store and save data as if it were a normal disk drive. The "phantom" or ram disk is faster and more reliable than a hardware drive because it has no mechanical parts.

How M-Disk works

M-Disk works by reserving a portion of memory as a software image of a disk drive. Except for instructions that address the physical characteristics of a drive, the ram disk operates just like a normal hardware disk drive and diskette. No formatting is needed. (In fact, attempting to format the ram disk may destroy other diskettes! Read the first warning on page 4.)

This version of ***M-Disk*** can reserve up to 800K of memory (if that much is available) for a ram disk. With the original version of TOS on disk for the Atari 520-ST, you can use a ram disk of up to 99K if no GEM Desk accessories are loaded, 62K if the VT-52 Terminal program and the Control Panel are loaded. If TOS is resident in ROM, the amount of available memory is increased.

Make a working copy FIRST

Copy ***M-Disk*** to the disks you plan to use it on, then store the original in a safe place. Use the original only to make working copies: if a working copy is damaged, you'll still have the original to make a replacement.

You can also copy ***M-Disk*** directly to the disks that can use it the most, like your word processor working disk.

How to install M-DISK

You must install ***M-Disk*** and choose the size of the ram disk before executing any program that uses it. That can be done automatically at boot time or manually any time before a program uses it. **To remove an existing ram disk, you must reboot the computer.**

M-Disk always reserves for the computer at least the minimum 128 kilobytes of memory TOS demands. The available memory ***M-Disk*** announces already takes account of this requirement and its own overhead, so you may specify any disk size up to the announced available memory. Deleting the files DESK1.ACC and DESK2.ACC will let you create ram disks 27K larger.

If you specify less than 2 kilobytes for ***M-Disk***, installation is cancelled.

For manual installation, begin at the TOS main menu. Open the disk drive containing ***M-Disk*** by double-clicking on the proper disk icon. The directory will be displayed.

Double-click on the icon labeled MDISK.PRG. The program title screen will appear. ***M-Disk*** shows how much memory is available, then asks for the size of the ram disk.

Type the number of kilobytes of memory you want ***M-Disk*** to use and press RETURN. This number must be larger than one and less than or equal to the number of kilobytes ***M-Disk*** declared available. If you press only RETURN, ***M-Disk*** will use all the available memory.

To create the ram disk icon you will need for access, go to the TOS main menu, select a drive icon, then choose Install Disk Drive from the Options menu. Type the drive name chosen by ***M-Disk*** (Be sure to use a capital letter) and RAMDISK as the drive identifier. Click on Install.

For automatic installation, you must add an AUTO folder to your boot disk. Boot up as usual, then select your boot drive and drag down the File menu. Click on Open, then on New Folder. Type the folder name AUTO and click on OK. Pick up the MDISK.PRG icon from its disk directory and drag it to the AUTO folder to copy. Click on OK on the Copy window if your preference is set to confirm copies.

Check the AUTO folder to see if MDISK.PRG is present.

Reboot with the modified boot disk. The ***M-Disk*** opening screen will appear. After ***M-Disk*** asks for the size ram disk to reserve and announces the installation on a particular drive, the program will copy the files DESKTOP.INF, DESK1.ACC and DESK2.ACC to the ram disk, then ask you to press RETURN to exit to the GEM Desktop.

At the TOS main menu, select a drive icon, then choose Install Disk Drive from the Options menu. Type the drive name announced by ***M-Disk*** (Be sure to use a capital letter) and RAMDISK as the drive identifier. Click on Install.

Select Save Desktop. This will copy the new Desktop, including your ram disk, to the ram disk DESKTOP.INF file. If you want to change your preference settings, now is the time. Finally, copy everything to your boot disk by clicking open the ram disk, then dragging the DESKTOP.INF file to the disk A icon. Click on OK to approve overwriting the current DESKTOP.INF file.

Your boot disk will automatically install ***M-Disk*** whenever it boots the computer.

N.B The "boot" RAM DISK will be on drive C:. This is useful, because the Atari treats C: as a hard disk, so if C: is installed it looks to C:, not A:, for desktop info. etc

Warnings

Do not attempt to format the ram disk! It is formatted automatically when installed. (Remember that the ram disk acts as a disk drive with diskette already in place.) If you attempt to format the ram disk, the operating system may format all mounted disks! This arises from an oversight in the TOS from Atari.

Be sure to use a capital letter as the drive name for each ram disk. The computer expects other devices to be assigned as lower-case letters.

Error messages

Can't allocate memory for M-DISK: There's not enough memory to create a ram disk and leave 128K for TOS.

There are no more available drive slots: All the block devices from drive C: to I: are in use.

You have requested more memory than is available: The size you specified was larger than ***M-Disk*** has available.

Size is too small for M-DISK. I am assuming you wish to abort installation: Specifying a size of less than 2K will abort installation of ***M-Disk***.

Read.Me file

Updates, if any, are stored in a file on the **MICRODEAL** disk called READ.ME. If the file exists, read it by double-clicking on the READ.ME icon, then choosing Show (on the screen), Print or Cancel. Make a note of the updates in this booklet.

Note: you cannot do disk ⇔ disk copies involving floppy ⇔ Ram, so file copying will change dates history of files, also protection need resetting if necessary!

* Disk ⇔ Disk copies best without RAM disk

MICRODEAL ***brings you more helpful utilities for your Atari ST...***

SOFT SPOOL

by Timothy Purves

While printing files (from word proccessors, TOS, etc.), your computer is just dead weight; waiting and waiting for the printer to finish. With *Soft Spool*, the wait is over! Now your computer can think and print at the same time! This software spooler sends printed data to the printer between tasks, freeing the computer for more important jobs, and saving you hours of computer time!

CALENDAR

By J. Weaver Jr.

This program helps keep you up to date! Record and store any notes or appointments from the year 1980 to 2099: any day, any time. You can access *Calendar* anywhere in GEM as a desktop accessory. Events like weekly meetings can be recorded easily, and without repetition. You can even set special "alarms" to inform you, anytime in GEM, of noted events as they occur!

MI-TERM

By J. Weaver Jr.

This smart-terminal modem program lets you use ASCII, DFT, and X-modem protocols to send and receive data. With *Mi-Term* you can set communication options to connect to virtually any other computer or terminal system. Transfer programs, send messages, and even "talk" between computers. There's a big world out there. Greet it with open arms; greet it with *Mi-Term!*

Please return your registration card. Microdeal will keep you updated with new products and updates to this program.

Microdeal, 41 Truro Road, St. Austell, Cornwall PL25 5JE. Tel: 0726 68020.

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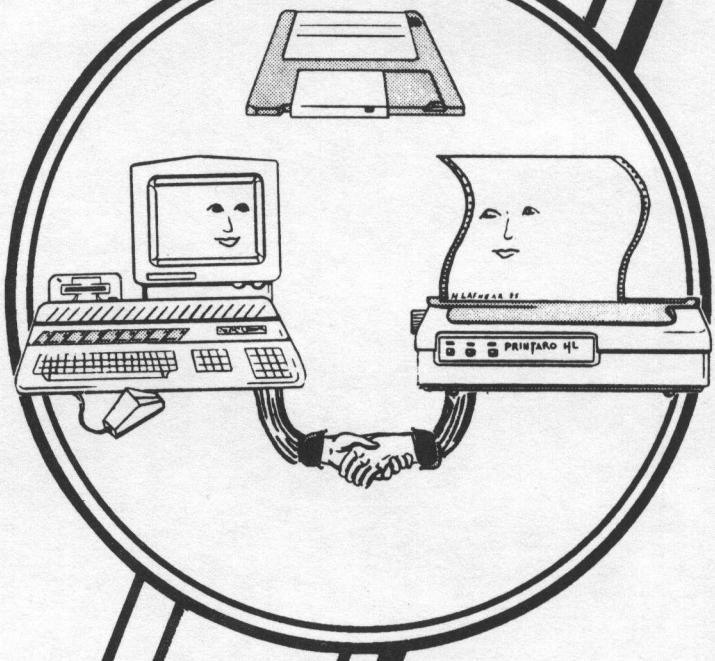
Soft Spool



by Timothy Purves

Get your computer and printer to work as a team!

MICRODEAL

How to install SOFT SPOOL

To install ***SOFT SPOOL***, double-click on the icon labeled SSPOOL.TOS. The screen will clear to be replaced by the ***SOFT SPOOL*** program logo. ***SOFT SPOOL*** will show how much memory is available, then ask you how much memory you would like to use in the print buffer.

Type the number of kilobytes you want, or press RETURN to use all available memory. The minimum size you may specify is 1; ***SOFT SPOOL*** shows the maximum.

SOFT SPOOL always reserves for the computer at least the minimum 128 kilobytes of memory TOS demands. The available memory ***SOFT SPOOL*** announces already takes account of this requirement, so you may specify any buffer size up to the announced available memory. Deleting the files DESK1.ACC and DESK2.ACC will allow larger ***SOFT SPOOL*** buffers to be created.

If you specify a buffer size of 0 (zero), installation of ***SOFT SPOOL*** aborts.

How to use SOFT SPOOL

Once installed, ***SOFT SPOOL*** invisibly intercepts BIOS print calls. You need do nothing special to use it: just make print requests as normal. Because of limitations in the original version of TOS, ***SOFT SPOOL*** can be deleted only by re-booting.

Since the original version of TOS does not use the BIOS routines to print the screen, screen prints cannot be spooled. (***SOFT SPOOL*** intercepts TRAP 13 functions 3 and 8.) When non-BIOS print calls are made, ***SOFT SPOOL*** is ineffective but will not interfere with the print operation.

This version of ***SOFT SPOOL*** sends data to the printer at about 80 characters per second.

SOFT SPOOL

by Timothy Purves.

SOFT SPOOL lets you use your computer while you print. Without ***SOFT SPOOL***, a computer that's printing is a computer that's not available. With ***SOFT SPOOL***, you and your printer can work at the same time.

How SOFT SPOOL works

SOFT SPOOL works by reserving a section of your computer's memory as a print buffer. Any data to be printed is stored in the ***SOFT SPOOL*** buffer, then transferred to the printer as needed **without** interrupting other operations of the computer. In effect, ***SOFT SPOOL*** tells the computer the printing is finished but continues to work behind the computer's back to control the printing operation. The computer will operate normally while ***SOFT SPOOL*** supervises the printing, except that the usable memory size will be reduced.

This version of ***SOFT SPOOL*** can set aside up to 16 megabytes of memory if it is available. With the original version of TOS loaded from disk, you can set aside a 111-kilobyte ***SOFT SPOOL*** buffer on the ST-512 if no desk accessories are loaded, 84 kilobytes if the VT-52 Terminal program and the Control Panel are loaded. If TOS is resident in ROM (read-only memory), the limits increase.

Make a working copy FIRST

Copy ***SOFT SPOOL*** to the disks you plan to use it on, then store the original in a safe place. Use the original only to make working copies: if a working copy is damaged, you'll still have the original to make a replacement. If you add SSPOOL.TOS to your TOS working copy, it will always be available.

Error messages

Can't Allocate memory for SPOOLER - There wasn't enough memory to create a ***SOFT SPOOL*** buffer yet still leave 128 kilobytes for TOS.

You have requested more memory than is available - The buffer size you specified was larger than the limit set by ***SOFT SPOOL***.

Size is too small for a SPOOLER, I am assuming you wish to abort installation - Specifying 0 (zero) for the ***SOFT SPOOL*** buffer size aborts installation.

Warning SPOOLER Already has a xxk Buffer Active, Clear Backlog (Y/N) ? - ***SOFT SPOOL*** is already installed with a buffer of xx kilobytes. You may clear all data waiting in the printer queue by responding Y. Doing so lets you print new material without waiting for old material to finish printing, but it also means you will have to make a new request to print the old material - it is lost if dropped from the queue.

An Error Occurred De-Allocating Memory - This error should never occur! If this message appears, the machine memory has been damaged. Possible causes are hardware problems or an application program run wild.

Backlog Cleared! - This normal (non-error) response appears when all queued data has been cleared.

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Please return your registration card. Microdeal will keep you updated with new products and updates to this program.

Microdeal, 41 Truro Road, St. Austell, Cornwall PL25 5JE. Tel: 0726 68020.

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MICRODEAL ***helpful utilities for your ATARI ST*** ...

M-DISK

By Timothy Purves

Get the power of an extra disk drive without the extra cost! *M-Disk* is a new disk drive with some amazing properties: it's super-fast, incredibly tough, and costs only as much as a single piece of software! The key is that *M-Disk* is not actually a hardware device; it's a software utility! *M-Disk* lets you reserve some portion of your computer's memory, which is formated to resemble the information on a standard disk drive. *M-Disk* then makes the operating system recognize it as a hardware device, giving you all the advantages of an extra disk drive: extra speed, extra power--everything except the extra cost!

CALENDAR

By J. Weaver Jr.

This program helps keep you up to date! Record and store any notes or appointments from the year 1980 to 2099: any day, any time. You can access *Calendar* anywhere in GEM as a desktop accessory. Events like weekly meetings can be recorded easily, and without repetition. You can even set special "alarms" to inform you, anytime in GEM, of noted events as they occur!

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