• June 2022 Edition •

The President's Corner
By Michael Current

Hello Atarians! I am happy to report that in a surge of productivity, I have completed the new round of work on our library of historic SPACE Newsletters. First off, EVERY newsletter issue is now offered on our club website, space.atari.org, in PDF format. This involved a significant amount of scanning, from the early 90's up to 2003.

I thought I had to go up to mid-2008, but in a head-smacking moment, I suddenly thought to look back at my stash of emails from our former newsletter editor Mike Schmidt, and was reminded that he was emailing me digital copies of the newsletters for a few years before I finally decided to abandon the HTML format and just go with PDFs of his original Word versions. Luckily, I looked into this at about the right time, when my scanning had just started overlapping with issues I already had Word versions of, in 2003. Opening Word versions and saving them as PDFs was way more efficient that scanning issues by hand. So, in one morning I was much more quickly able to produce PDFs of the remaining issues from 2003 up to 2008. Secondly, EVERY issue is not only PDF format, but is also text searchable now. This involved using the full version of Adobe Acrobat to recognize text in all issues from the beginning up to 2003 (All issues since 2003 were already text searchable). This took my work computer a good 45 minutes or something to do as one big batch job, but it did not complain. And the OCR is quite good! I was surprised. I think there are a small number of issues where it didn't do very well with low-quality dot-matrix printing at a small font size, but in most situations I was quite impressed with the quality of the OCR. One reason I held out going with the HTML format so long was because it seemed futile to get good OCR on all the older scans; clearly the technology got better over the last 15 years or so. Awesome!

Finally, I realized a problem I didn't know we had, but now I've hopefully addressed it. Google has not been indexing our newsletter library lately, most likely since I re-took over the website and came up with the system of pull-down menus for navigating to individual issues. I'm pretty sure that approach made the Google crawler unable to find the actual files. So to try to address this, I'm trying something very simple -- I added one additional hyperlink from the home page to the folder where all the PDF files are. Once the Google crawler finds that link, it should immediately find all the PDF files... and it should make their contents very findable because they are also now fully OCRed as well. It should take days to several weeks for the Google crawler to show up and do its thing. If I was really impatient I believe I could register with Google for the purpose of requesting a crawl, but for now I'm content to see if it will find it on its own. It's a simple test, just Google site space.atari.org to see what Google sees. Right now there are only 9 results; once it finds all the PDF files there will be many more!

Thanks, keep using that Atari, and come to your next SPACE meeting: Friday, June 10, 2022.

## Treasurer's Report
By Gregory Leiner

One of the best SPACE meetings in memory happened at our May meeting. Not only did Rich return from his winter getaway in Arizona, but Michael also made the trip from Wisconsin to attend the May SPACE meeting. And what a meeting, Glen had a super DOM with about ten games, and although we had trouble figuring out a couple of them my two grandsons (7 and 10) figured them out right away. This is a DOM every member should get!

Lots of hardware was shown and discussed, and even though I became more of an observer it was truly amazing to see and hear what these pieces of Atari hardware could do. My head was spinning by night's end, which did not happen until about 9:30. It was a really cool experience to hear our member's expertise on the innards of our 8-bit Ataris.

On the SPACE finance side which is what this article is about looks too good to be true. We started the month of May with a bank balance of $1,103.74, and we added another $48.00 in the month due to sixteen DOMs sold. It helped that Rich and Michael caught up their DOMs to date. Thanks to those sales, we now have a SPACE balance of $1,151.74. Not too shabby.

Well, now that COVID restrictions have been relaxed, we should discuss having another SPACE birthday party. Please try to make the June meeting to help decide what to do.
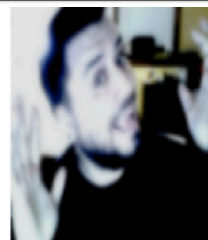
See you all on June 10th. Hope the weather will be as nice as our May meeting was!
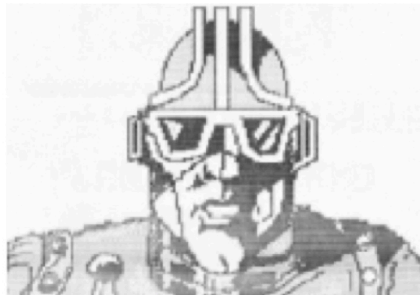
Message from Captain Irata:

"Experience new life! Score 5,000 points at Arcade Asteroids and get a free ship!"

HOO-RAH!

Secretary's Report
By Steven Peck

HELLO WORLD!

It sounds like it was an interesting meeting that I tried to attend. Unfortunately, I couldn't because the network in Falcon Heights City Hall would not accept Discord. I think it's the high security in their Wi-Fi settings, and that makes sense.

So, again, sorry for not making it to the Meeting. Kudos to Roger for trying to get the meeting to be a hybrid one (a combination between online and physical attendance). I will give him an A for effort. We will try another avenue to make SPACE Meetings in the future hybrid to make them more inclusive for everybody. Let's hope it works out that way!

I miss the meetings. I wish I could be there. I understand the fear of catching COVID and also the rising gas prices. I still would love to get to a physical meeting, and maybe I will in July for the Party. I will see what I can do. After all, being the Secretary of the Club, I feel I have an obligation to be there and I feel I am not meeting that. Now, I am not saying I want to resign as Secretary. I am far from that, actually. But, I want to be there for everybody as an Officer of the Club. So, I really hope we can get the meeting online and physically as well. I am sure something can be worked out.

Also, I am running out of DOMs to review. I need the newer DOMs from this year to continue. That is an ulterior motive of mine to get to the future Meetings somehow. I hope to get them soon, and I may need to mail for them. So, I will keep in touch about that. In the meantime, I will try to find a way to attend the next Meetings. I guess you can give me an A for effort on that!

Anyway, that is all I really wanted to say at this moment. So, I close the Secretary's Report at this time. We will see each other again. No doubts!

In the words of the late, great comic book artist, Stan Lee...

EXCELSIOR!

TRIVIA TIME!

The Fairchild Channel F was the first video game system to use interchangeable game cartridges. However, the Atari 2600 (then just called the VCS) gained more popularity when Atari released it.

The rest is history, and the Atari 2600 became one of the most popular game systems of all time. It is still venerated to this very day.
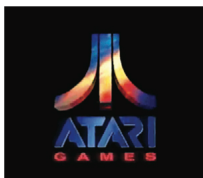
Atari 8-bit DOM Review

By Steven Peck

Hello again! I am back with another Atari 8-bit DOM Review. This time, we're going to review the April 2021 DOM, and it will be a good one, I am sure. So, let's have at it, shall we?

April 2021 DOM: Side A:

The first file on this DOM is called "H2O," by Cora, a 256-byte file. It shows two sprays of animated water trickling down to the bottom of the screen, like a shower. Granted, it could have been more, but I understand it's tight code.

So, I know it is a way to get the best results using the smallest amount of code. Actually, the animation is quite fluid. It's pretty cool. It resembles water going from two shower heads. I like the result. Very clever, actually.

Take a look at it. I have a picture.
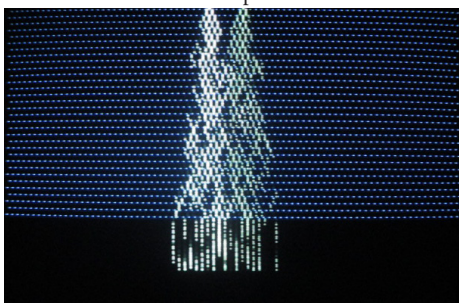
It looks better on here because the picture kind of blended together because I don't have a stop-shutter. But, you can see the attempt at a great demo. It works for me. Impressive. Here's my score:
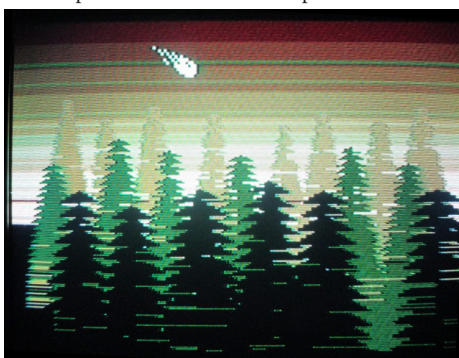
SCORE:

Graphics: 7
Animation: 10

TOTAL SCORE: 17/20

The next file is another 256-byte file called "Tunguska," by Ragecki. It shows an asteroid about to hit a forested area. It looks nice, and it is based on a true story. Let me tell you about it, because I actually read about it once.

In 1908, apparently an asteroid hit a secluded area in the Tunguska region of Siberia. It caused a lot of destruction in the forest, but large cities were left intact because the impact was so remote. It was ruled an asteroid that hit Earth at that time.

So, this rendering is based on fact. Lucky for us, it was not near any cities, or it would have been catastrophic. Take a look at this photo.

An accurate representation of what was going on before the impact. Here's my score:

TOTAL SCORE: 8/10

The next file is the Atari In-Store Demo, an old demo put on disk for retail outlets by Atari themselves. It shows the original demo, which I think was dumped from the original In-Store Demonstration Cartridge, a highly sought-after cart now.

It basically shows the capabilities of the Atari 8-bit computer. A selling point, to be exact. It's interactive, as the computer asks for your name, you type it, and it converses with you. It shows the many things the Atari computer can do.

I remember the little tune on the demo, and it's catchy and peppy. It sticks in peoples' minds. It is still used today for certain things. It's pretty famous to this day. I took pictures of the demo in action for you to see. Take a look.

You know, for the 1980s, this demo rocks. They took a lot of time making it, for sure. I will score the demo:

SCORE:

Graphics: 7
Interactivity: 7
Animation: 9
Music/SFX: 9

TOTAL SCORE: 32/40

The next file is a game from 1983 by Vince Valenti, called "Space Mines!" In the game, you fight aliens by laying mines all over the place. You cannot touch the top or bottom of the screen, and you cannot touch your mines or enemy ships.

This is a VERY hard game. Everything comes at you very fast, messing with your reaction time. I definitely need practice at it myself, because I did poorly. Let me tell you.

I took pictures to review this game. Have a look-see at this.

It is not as easy as it looks. The graphics need work, but the game play will blow you away. Literally!

Let me score this game:

SCORE:

Graphics: 7
Animation: 8
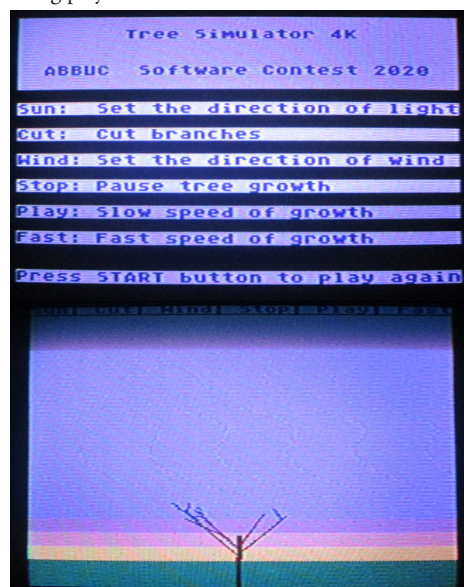Interactivity: 10
Music/SFX: 7

TOTAL SCORE: 32/40

The next file is a game by Kamil Trzaska, called "Tree Simulator 4K." It was an entry for the AB-BUC Software Contest in 2020. You can set certain parameters in the game, like changing the light from the sun, wind, cut branches, & speed.

Since it is a simulation of a tree growing, there isn't much action in it. I know this is a contest entry, and an experiment to see how it would look on the computer, but I was not totally impressed myself. Please don't think I am downing it.

It could be good for children to learn, like how to make a plant grow effectively. That, I think would be a great market for this type of game: education.

But, here are pictures of the game I took as it was being played.

I just see the educational value in this game, and that's not bad. So, there you go. I will score now.

SCORE:

Graphics:	7
Interactivity:	8
Animation:	8
Music/SFX:	7

TOTAL SCORE: 30/40

The next file is a game called "Biscuits in Hell," by Paul Lay. You play a little guy who has to collect biscuits by teleporting up and down floors in every level. However, there are mean-spirited sprites out to get you. Not to mention, there are bombs and lasers that can kill you.

The game is very tough. It can be learned, but the difficulty factor can be high. So, you need practice to play this game. The graphics are nice, and it is a fun game. Take a look!

So, the game definitely has challenge. Plus, it has great graphics. Here's my score:

SCORE:

Graphics:	10
Interactivity:	10
Animation:	10
Music/SFX:	10
SCORE:	40/40 (perfect score)

The next file is a Tetris clone called "Detonationix," by Martin Simecek. There is a twist to this Tetris game. You have to match lines with a red dot in them. That is the ONLY way they will disappear so you can advance.

This Tetris game is more challenging, and definitely ups the WOW factor. It plays basically the same as other Tetris games, minus the red dots, which are supposed to represent bomb-like devices.

I like the red dot feature. It makes it harder and better than other Tetris clones out there.

If you are looking for a Tetris game with more challenge, this game definitely ups the ante. I will score it now.

SCORE:

Graphics:	8
Interactivity:	10
Animation:	9
Music/SFX:	9

TOTAL SCORE: 37/40

The next file is a picture called "Kreatura," by Jaroslaw Kaczor. It shows Jabba the Hutt's pet from "Return of the Jedi," a monkey-like Muppet called Salacious Crumb. It looks like a digitized image. It looks very good. I like the detail and effort.

Wanna see it? Take a look.

It is a very nicely rendered image. Here is my score for it.

TOTAL SCORE: 10/10 (perfect score)

The final file on Side A of this DOM is another pic called "Bucky O'Hare," by Petr Svoboda. It shows one of the characters from the show, a little robot. I don't know who the character is, but I remember the show being broadcast here in Minnesota. I just never saw it, that's all.

I like the cartoony look of the rendering, but I thought it could be better. It's still good, don't get me wrong. I think it took a while to draw it. I enjoy the pictures on the DOMs we make.

Take a look at this.
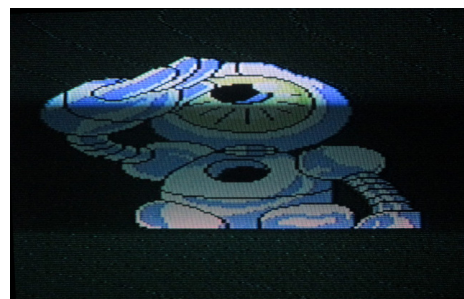
It needs some improvement, but it's a good rendering nonetheless. I will score this pic now.

TOTAL SCORE: 8/10

Now, onto Side B, where there is only one file on the whole other side of the disk.

Side B:

The final file on this DOM is a game called "Oxygene Be," another ABBUC Software Contest from 2020. It's a shmup where you pilot a spaceship, shooting at aliens from a space fortress. If you ask me, it isn't unlike "Thunderfox," for the XEGS.

The difficulty is pretty high. I couldn't get past Level 1. I think it is a challenging game and has interesting graphics. It could look better, but the difficulty is spot-on. So, there you go. Here! Take a look for yourselves.

It's a pretty good shmup, if I do say so myself. I will score now.

SCORE:

Graphics:	8
Interactivity:	10
Animation:	10
Music/SFX:	8

TOTAL SCORE: 36/40

So, I am done with this for June. I will see you next month with another A8 Review, and just in time for the SPACE Birthday Party. Carpe Diem, fellow Atarians, and have a happy!

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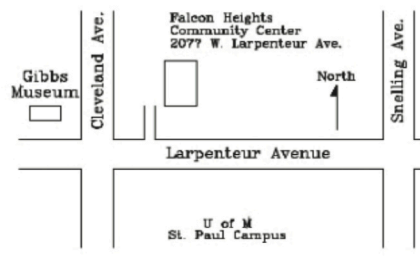E-mail: kirschg@netzero.net

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The Saint Paul Atari Computer Enthusiasts (SPACE) special interest group meets on the second Friday of every month at 7:30 PM in the Falcon Heights Community Center at 2077 West Larpenteur Avenue. Doors open at 7:00 PM.

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http://space.atari.org

We now have a Facebook page.
Please feel free to visit it at this URL:

https;//www.facebook.com/AtariMinnesota

SPACE BBS NOTICE:

The SPACE bulletin board service (BBS) is currently offline. We apologize for the inconvenience and hope to have it back online in the future.

NOTICE FOR AUTHORS OF SPACE NEWSLETTER ARTICLES:

Articles meant for newsletter publication must be receive by the SPACE Newsletter Editor by two weeks prior to the start of the next scheduled SPACE Meeting. Thank you for your understanding on this.

The next SPACE Meeting will commence on Friday, June 10, 2022, at 7:30 PM.

We hope to see you there!

Thanks for coming!