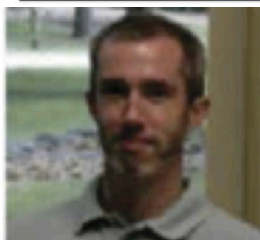




•Serving the Twin Cities Atari Community for Four Decades•

• August 2023 Edition •



The President's Corner *By Michael Current*

What a nice time we had at last month's SPACE party! So great to see everyone and enjoy the amazing food!

From the press announcement I've sent along for this issue, if I follow correctly Atari's new strategy for a future for the modern VCS platform, which is out of production now, is to partner with Playmaji to make the Polymega and Atari VCS mutually compatible with each other. Or something like that. Have you followed these goings on? Do they make sense to you?

This summer is flying by exceptionally fast it seems. So busy. I am finally a proud new owner of a FujiNet cartridge, but I have yet to actually try it out. I'm really looking forward to seeing what I can do with it. I will report here!

Thanks, keep using that Atari, and come to your next SPACE meeting: Friday, August 11, 2023.



Treasurer's Report *By Gregory Leitner*

Well, it looks like we will have to change the way we hold our SPACE parties. Since we expected at least twice as many members and guests to attend we ended up with a lot of leftovers.

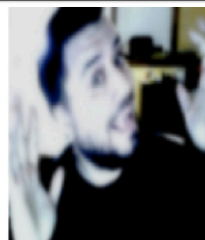
We would have spent less money if only we had known the actual count. I know it's hard to know how the meeting day is going to work out for everyone.

Maybe we need to start an RSVP for future parties, but sometimes the best prices on the food can show up anytime during the month. Like the ribs that were on sale the weekend right after the June meeting. Just something to think about!

The meeting never got off the ground as the time really got away from us. We reviewed the whole July DOM, and Roger brought in a souped-up 800XL with a Fujinet. That was really cool!

Our Treasury started the month of July with a balance of \$1,266.45. I spent \$100.00 on the food for the party and we had receipts of \$51.00 (\$30.00 for two membership renewals and \$21.00 for seven DOMs sold). Our treasury now stands at \$1,217.45.

Thanks to Glen, Tom, Roger and Michael for joining Jackie and me for a delicious Birthday Party meal! Please try to make the August 11th SPACE meeting and I will see you all there.



Secretary's Report *By Steven Peck*

HELLO WORLD!

Well, I tried to get a ride to the SPACE Birthday Party. Sorry for not being there for it. I will try harder for the August meeting to get there.

I still need DOMs for Lance and me, as well as Membership renewals for Lance and the two out-of-state members. Again, my apologies. I will try to get to the next SPACE Meeting.

I will eventually be coming back to Saint Paul. People there will need my help, so it is an eventuality that I will attend SPACE Meetings in the future. After all, in October I need to renew my Membership anyway. So, by hook or by crook, I will come again.

Anyway, there has been talk about the Fujinet in the Treasurer's Report. I was contemplating getting one someday. It would be cool for my 130XE to be outfitted with one of those things.

There is talk on Discord about playing five-card stud online using Fujinet on Atari and Commodore machines. It seems like a really cool unit.

I am on the Discord Fujinet server all the time. I hear the commotion all of the time concerning development of the machine, and it is largely positive. So, it's all good there.

Well, I had better plan for the next trip to SPACE Meeting. I will close for now. I will be back for the next Secretary's Report in September. In the words of the late, great Stan Lee.

EXCELSIOR!

TRIVIA TIME!

The Atari 7800 CPU has a 6502C processor, which runs at 1.79 MHz, while the 7800's graphics clock speed runs at 7.16 MHz, double that of the 2600. The Atari 2600 a 1.19 MHz 6507 CPU and 128 bytes of RAM, while the 7800 has 4K of RAM.



Message from Captain Irata:

"I'll beat your brains out, SPACE Cadets - in Realsports Boxing on my Atari 2600!"

HOO-RAH!

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How to Get Data Onto Your Atari 8 Bit Computer

By SPACE Member Roger M.

It used to be simple to run a new game on your Atari. Simply acquire the game on disk, cart, or cassette, stick it in and turn on the power.

These days however, the lack of stores selling Atari software have made it much harder to get physical software. In the current era, the most common way to receive an Atari 8-bit program is off of the Internet in the form of an ATR disk image file.

ATR files are raw, sector-by-sector dumps of a physical disk, that are used to archive files (or entire disks), in a standard format. They will even preserve most forms of copy protection in the image.

However, ATR files are not directly usable on the Atari. They either need to be written back to the original medium, or need something to mount the image and present it as if it were a physically-connected floppy drive.

It should be mentioned that some of the hardware solutions in this article can be used in the opposite direction as well. Allowing you to create ATR image files of Atari disks onto your PC.

While this is hardly an exhaustive list of solutions to the problem of getting files from our modern PCs onto our vintage Ataris, I will attempt to cover some of the most common, modern solutions as of this writing (2023).

This article will assume you have files, or ATR disk images on your PC and you would like to get them onto media that your Atari 8-bit can use, such as a Floppy or Hard Disk drive.

Necessary Hardware:

Option 1: SIO2PC-USB (Around \$20 from Lotharek)

Software:

- RespeQT
- AspeQT
- APE

Option 2: FAT16 Disk Partition on SD or CompactFlash card

Software:

- SpartaDOS X

Hardware:

- SIDE2/3/Incognito
- MyIDE-II
- FujiNet SD Card

Option 3: Fujinet and TNFS servers

SIO2PC-USB

The SIO2PC hardware comes in USB, and Serial flavors. Some have the ability to daisy-chain with other hardware, and some do not.

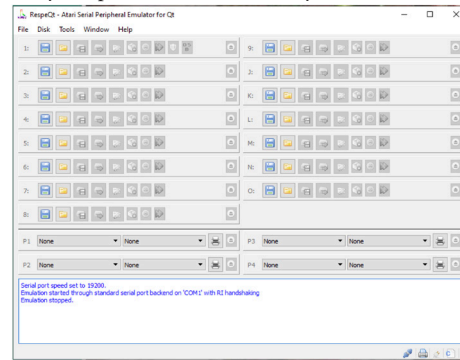
The one I will be using in this example has a simple SIO connector on one end, and a USB type B connector on the other. (Lotharek also sells a newer version with a Micro USB connector instead of the type B.)

The purpose of the SIO2PC-USB device is to allow the Atari to use a PC as a set of virtual disks. To do this requires both the SIO2PC-USB adapter (or any other SIO2PC adapter), a suitable USB cable, and the RespeQT, or AspeQT software.

RespeQT and AspeQT are free and Open Source software and are available for Windows, Mac or Linux. In this article I'm going to be using Re-

speQT, but AspeQT is very similar in look and feel to RespeQT.

Once loaded, RespeQT will present you with a fairly simple interface with many buttons.



As shown above, you can have up to 15 drives, but I rarely need to use more than 2 for moving data between my PC and my Ataris.

Clicking on the Floppy Disk icon will open a file browser which you can use to select an ATR file, which will be mounted in RespeQT, and presented to the Atari through the SIO2PC-USB interface. After that, simply turn on the Atari, and your PC will act as if it's a Floppy Drive and allow you to run programs, or copy files onto a physical disk with your DOS of choice.

RespeQT has support for the Happy and Super Archiver chips, and can even send and receive data at POKEY divisor 0, which is 124k bits per second! Considerably faster than the usual 19.2k bps of normal SIO.

It can also act as a number of different Atari printers, allowing one to "print" to the SIO2PC device, which can then save the output to one of a couple formats, including text, and the SVG vector graphics format.

FAT16 Disk Partition on SD Card or CompactFlash Drive

This solution requires some specialized hardware as well as a PC with an SD or CompactFlash card reader (presumably everyone reading this has a PC of some sort, and card readers are pretty cheap if you don't already have one built into your PC).

Next, you'll need a modern removable Hard Disk solution, such as a SIDE 2 or 3 cart, MyIDE II, or an Atari 800 with an Incognito modification installed. Additionally, all that fancy hardware is not enough without an Operating System capable of mounting FAT12/16 (in other words, MS-DOS) filesystems, and the only OS I currently know of with this capability is SpartaDOS X.

However, If you have a modern hard drive solution such as one of the above, you're likely already running SpartaDOS X. In the case of a SIDE cartridge or Incognito, SpartaDOS X is built into the firmware, and I believe MyIDE II has the ability to run SpartaDOS X as well, but regrettably I have no direct experience with it.

The Ultimate 1 Megabyte memory expansion also has built-in SpartaDOS X, should you have that installed. If none of those are available to you, you will need to get a modern version of SDX on cartridge. The driver to recognize FAT16 partitions was first included in SDX version 4.46. So that version of SDX or greater is required.

Once you have the necessary toys, the rest is fairly simple. The SD or CF card needs to be formatted in either the FAT12 or FAT16 filesystem. (FAT16 was the only thing I could select in Windows 10, YMMV depending on your OS, but FAT16 is probably what you want to use anyway). After that you can copy whatever files or disk images you like to that partition, which will be able to be mounted as a drive in SDX.

In my case I partitioned a 2GB CompactFlash card, allotting everything but 256MB at the beginning of the disk to the FAT16 partition.

Since SpartaDOS X partitions can be a maximum size of 32MB, 256MB gives me the ability to have up to 8x32MB partitions for SDX, and the rest as transfer space for moving files between my PC and Atari, or holding large numbers of ATR disk images.

Did I say that SpartaDOS X has the ability to mount FAT12/16 filesystems, and access the files therein? Well it does — and it doesn't. Out of the box SDX only has a driver to mount Atari DOS, and its own SDFS filesystems.

The extra filesystem support (and a great many other fun toys) are in the SDX Toolkit, but getting it is outside the scope of this article.

But fear not! The SDX Toolkit is readily available on the internet. If you're already running SDX, there's a good chance you've already got the files somewhere on your HDD.

From the SDX Toolkit we just need to load the appropriate Driver in SpartaDOS, by adding an entry for the FATFS.SYS driver to the CONFIG.SYS file. After adding the entry for the driver, and rebooting the Atari into SpartaDOS X, the J: drive is where I find it has been mounted.

I've looked around, and there may be a way to change the drive letter it's assigned, but I have not found it yet. The first DIR command after switching the the J: drive can take a while, so just be patient and the files will be available to be copied onto your SDFS partitions.

I believe at the moment the FAT filesystem support is read-only. Therefore, you can copy files from the FAT partition, but you can't write to it from the Atari.

FujiNet

You might have noticed that in my list of options above I listed FujiNet, and indeed FujiNet has an SD card slot, and is amongst the easiest ways to mount and play ATR images of games, or load XEX files with no additional software required.

However, since this article is specifically about getting files from PC onto an Atari floppy disk or hard drive, and doing that with the FujiNet is a bit more complicated than the ways above, I'm going to have to discuss that (along with using TNFS servers to load software), in a future article about FujiNet and the cool things you can do with one.

Hardware Purveyors:

If you're wondering where you might be able to pick up some of these gadgets I've been discussing, here's a small list of online shops that sell Atari hardware and mods.

Online Stores with Atari 8-Bit Products:

<https://lotharek.pl/>
<https://retrohax.net>

(Poland)

<https://thebrewingacademy.com/>

(California, US)

<https://amigaonthelake.com/atari-8-bit/>

(New York, US)

<https://www.8bitclassics.com>

(US?)

Recent Atari News

Atari Announces Strategic Collaboration With Playmaji
New York, NY (July 5, 2023) - Atari® — one of the world's most iconic consumer brands and interactive entertainment producers — today announced a strategic collaboration with Playmaji, Inc., the Los Angeles-based company behind the modular multi-system game console Polymega®. The Polymega game console lets players enjoy original game cartridges and CDs for classic game consoles on HDTVs.

The partnership includes strategic initiatives that will provide support for Atari games on Polymega hardware and software and integration between Polymega and the Atari VCS.

The Atari VCS will add support for the Polymega App and the Polymega Remix add-on. This will effectively provide all of the functionality of a Polymega console to Atari VCS owners.

In addition, a new cartridge module will be developed that will add Atari 2600 and Atari 7800 compatibility to the Polymega console. The addition of this cartridge module will make Atari's 2600 and 7800 games more accessible to retro enthusiasts and expand the market for Atari's line of collectible game cartridges.

Atari-owned games will also be sold in the Polymega storefront, giving Atari enthusiasts an additional way to access timeless Atari content and an additional platform on which the company can commercialize its extensive back catalog of video games.

"Polymega's innovative approach to retro hardware is perfectly aligned with Atari's goals in retro gaming," said Wade Rosen, Chairman and CEO of Atari. "This partnership greatly expands the capabilities of the Atari VCS while also making the Polymega platform itself more compelling. I know fans will be excited to see Atari games added to Polymega's growing ecosystem."

"This partnership is a vote of confidence in Polymega; it expands our audience and adds compatibility support for one of the most important brands in retro gaming," said Bryan Bernal, Chief Executive Officer of Playmaji. "This is an important step in the growth of our platform, and we look forward to working with Atari in the important space of retro innovation."

In concert with the partnership, Atari has also completed a minority investment into Playmaji.

"I look forward to working with the team at Polymega as they evolve their modular gaming console. Polymega's approach fills an important need in the market, providing a hardware solution that allows players to legally access classic retro content while respecting game companies' intellectual property," added Rosen.



TECH TALK By Steve Peck

You know, people are fascinated with making things last forever, or at least a very long time. As technology advances, some people have a dilemma with retro gaming. They can be faced with using games for classic systems, but don't have the original hardware.

You nowadays have options like Polymega, system-on-chip game consoles, and software-based emulation to get it done cheaply if you don't have the original hardware to work with.

Believe me, there are plenty of emulators everywhere, software and hardware-based. Don't get me wrong. Emulation is a cool thing. But, I wonder if we are getting too dependent on the wonders of emulation.

I think it's cool to use software to emulate the systems and play the retro games. It must take a lot of time to code an emulator to get it right. However, you can have issues. Software may not 100% emulate every function of the system you are emulating. This can be an issue, for one thing.

There are emulators that are very accurate, but not even emulation is perfect. Sometimes, you have to take into account compatibility, RAM, CPU speed, and some other things as well. Emulation is great if you cannot reproduce the hardware with current technology.

But, like I said, I like emulation. I use it sometimes. But, like I thought before, I wonder if it is getting to be too much emulation. I think there should be a balance. I think that emulation and hardware should be used equally.

What I mean is this. If you can create a computer with modern hardware that portrays the architecture of a retro machine accurately, even exactly, this is cool. If it cannot be done that way, then think about software emulation.

Emulation is cheap, and I get that. But, I think there should be more research and development into reproducing the retro hardware with newer and better technology by reverse-engineering it.

Money needs to be spent in preserving the hardware with newer and better hardware, as well as using emulation if necessary. That is if it cannot be reproduced by new hardware. There should be a balance, if you will.

I think we use emulation to much in some instances. I just say this to broaden people's ideas and minds. In essence, I wish there was a renaissance in hardware design for the retro machines. I think it could be done.

I would love to see more investment in hardware development as well as software emulation. We should use this stuff in cohesion. That way, there is balance. It would be equilibrium, if you will. I guess learning about past machines to create newer and better machinery might be the way to go.

Cohesion. Balance. I am looking for a way to use these technologies together to really benefit retro users and the world as a whole. This also goes beyond games, but in other everyday electronic applications as well.

We have a chance to either advance or dumb ourselves down. I say it is a good opportunity to advance, if the money will be spent on that. If we advance, well, then we will learn more and better ways to utilize the technology.

So, with that, I am done ranting. I will close now and I will be back next month with other articles.

Keep the faith, folks, and thanks!

FINAL THOUGHTS By Steve Peck

Welcome back! I decided to take a break this month from the Atari 8-bit DOM Review to ponder on something. All over the Internet, people have talked about the idea of relabelling video games with damaged labels.

There are people that have done this very thing with great success. Well, that's cool and all. But, what about restoring the existing labels without replacing them? Could this be done with accuracy that is close to the original artwork?

I ask because this can be a fine line, especially if you are a professional collector. I wish there was an art preservation business determined to repair damaged labels, as opposed to replacing them.

Actually, this might be a nice thing to do. The software and the artificial intelligence in the software should approximate the artwork quite well. But, I still wonder. Is it the same?

No. Probably not. But, I can see someone trying it. I bring this up because video game art is classic artwork. The labels are artwork. The artwork should somehow be preserved. If necessary, I think it should be restored.

But, there's that fine line again. Will it up the value of the game with the damaged label that has been restored? Or, will the game depreciate in value? These are questions I ask to myself. I have games with damaged labels.

Can it be done? Certainly. But, there is the morality question asking if it is ethical. If I did it, I would put a disclaimer stating that the label is restored and the buyer should understand this. I wouldn't want to cheat someone by making it too pristine. This goes into dishonesty then.

I guess the best thing to do is to protect your games from becoming damaged in the first place. Then, you don't have to worry about any moral dilemmas about game preservation later on.

Anyway, that is one thing I wanted to bring up about game preservation. I was also researching upgrades for the ST computer line. I came across the MonSTERbo accelerator. It is a descendant of the TwiSTER accelerator, made by the same person.

This upgrade would have a 68020 processor and IDE for hard drives. I can only hope this fine individual makes it for the MegaSTE, which seems to be difficult to upgrade in the first place. I can see people are trying to upgrade it, but it seems there is a problem with the design of the MSTe.

At least, that is what I am gathering from others I have talked to. I understand the maker of the MonSTERbo will attempt a MegaSTE version. Eventually, anyway. I wish him well. I hope that we get more upgrades for our cool ST machines.

Then again, there are also supply and chip shortages. Hopefully, we will be supplied with more components for potential upgrades in the near future. This chip shortage was supposed to be projected until about 2024 anyway.

I understand this, and I accept it. I just hope we get more chips soon. That's really one thing that has stymied the market. One can dream.

Anyway, I hope you are rocking out on your Atari computers and systems, and I hope they are bringing you lots of fun and joy. They would be for me, and they are at that!

With this, I will close. I will have another A8 DOM Review next month in September. I am still looking for ways to get to future SPACE Meetings, and I have to go Meetings to renew my membership anyway, and soon.

Carpe Diem, fellow Atarians, and thanks!

SPACE COMICS SECTION!
The Misadventures of A-Man and C.D.

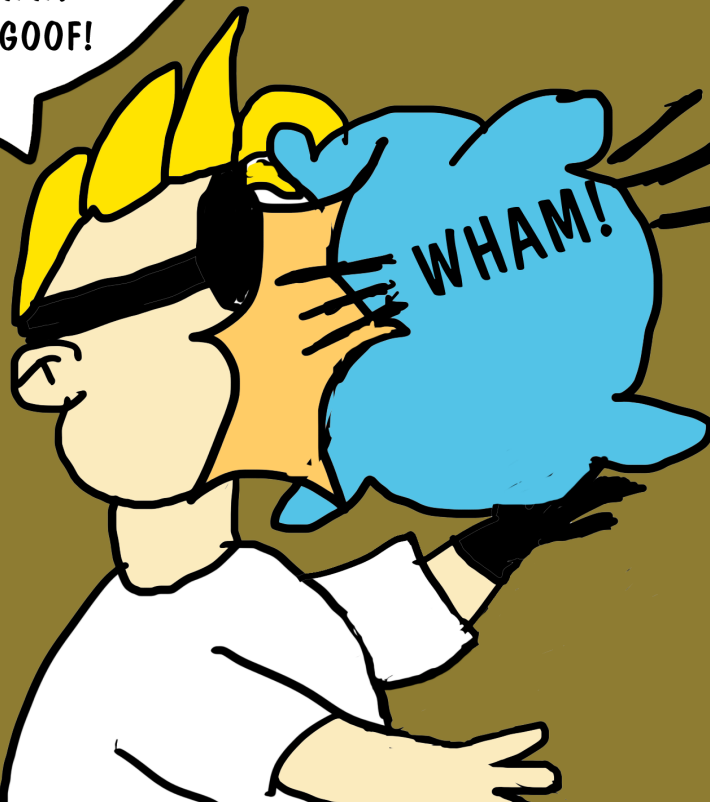
WOW! Virtual reality looks
so real!
Very stimulating!

Oh really, A-Man!
Is that so?!



OWWW!
YOU GOOF!

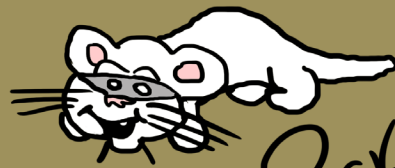
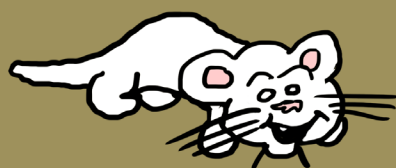
GOTCHA!
How's that for
stimulating!



Ferret Fracas!

You're such a romantic, Bandit!

Behold, Mademoiselle!
I have a nice-looking rose for you!



Peck!

08/07/2023

WANTED!

Ideas for Comics!

Please feel free to email

The Newsletter Editor!

Email Address is on the Last Page of the Newsletter!

Thanks!

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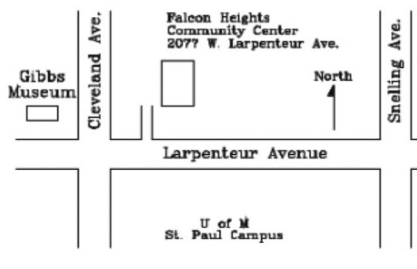
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The Saint Paul Atari Computer Enthusiasts (SPACE) special interest group meets on the second Friday of every month at 7:30 PM in the Falcon Heights Community Center at 2077 West Larpenteur Avenue. Doors open at 7:00 PM.



S.P.A.C.E.

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Please feel free to visit our website at this URL:

<http://space.atari.org>

NOTICE FOR AUTHORS OF SPACE NEWSLETTER ARTICLES:

Articles meant for newsletter publication must be received 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, August 11, 2023,
at 7:30 PM, local time!*

*We hope to see you there!
Thanks for coming!*



Another Message from Captain Irata:

"That's all she wrote, SPACE Cadets!"

HOO-RAH!

