



It is becoming difficult to find an equally simple yet functional desktop. Searching for an environment without all those bells and whistles, one that doesn't distract you from your work with animated menus, is often fruitless. This is what happened to Jeffrey Bedard. Tired of searching, he decided to develop the *Antiright Desktop Environment* (<http://www.nongnu.org/antiright/>).

In contrast to KDE and GNOME, Antiright Desktop does not provide its own window manager, so there is no need to do without your own personal favorite. Antiright can use any window manager as the foundation for the desktop, and it offers a collection of common applications into the bargain.

Exotic Desires

As the programmer's goal was to release a new version every week, and he is working on a new major version, which will be a 2-something, it almost always

Desktopia

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Antiright Desktop Environment

Desktop Light

We don't want a window manager. No, it should be a desktop environment that is easy on resources and compatible to any window manager. Three wishes. Let's see if the Antiright Desktop Environment can fulfill them!

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pays to visit the project homepage first. Unfortunately, when we tried, the server had just been hit by a break-in and only had versions prior to 1.103. Newer versions should be available by the time you read this.

To compile Antiright yourself, you will first need to install the *lesstif* library and development packages (*lesstif-devel*) from your distribution CDs. Suse users should install *openmotif-devel* instead. These packages contain the free versions of the *Motif* graphics library, which was used by Netscape version 4, for example. The word "antiquated" should give you a fair idea of Antiright's look.

However, if that does not put you off, just fire up your compiler, expand the archive and then type `./configure` and `make` to compile Antiright. Then assume *root* privileges and call `make install` to copy the files to directories below `/usr/local/`.

Easy to Manage

If you just want to take a first look at Antiright, you might like to run the desktop on top of your own current desktop:

```
antiright &
```

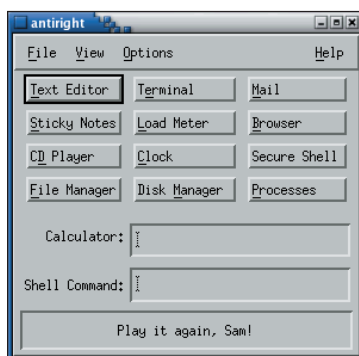


Figure 1: Antiright's default configuration.

will launch the program in the top left corner of your screen (see Figure 1).

The most frequently used function is the embedded command line (*Shell command*), which allows you to launch arbitrary programs. To launch a program that needs a terminal window, enter `xterm -e commandlineprogram`, which will use `xterm` as a container.

The (*Calculator*), which occupies a position just above the command line tool, is extremely practical. It not only provides basic mathematics, but can also handle brackets. When I entered $(5+3)*2$, the calculator came up with the right answer, 16.

Essentials

There are 12 buttons that provide access to functions which no desktop environment should be without. Antiright uses both its own applications, and tried-and-trusted external tools. The latter are launched when you click the *Mail*, *Terminal*, *Processes* or *Secure Shell* buttons.

Antiright's default mailer is *mutt*, *xterm* is used as the terminal program, and the process list merely displays the output from `ps xa` in the Antiright editor (see Figure 2).

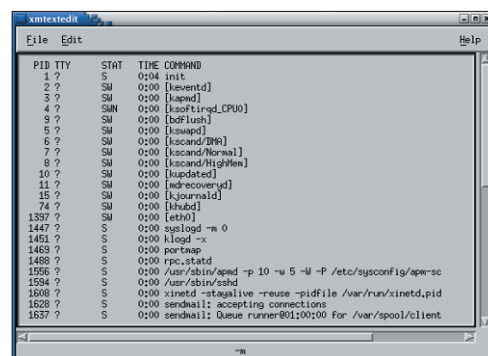


Figure 2: Simple but effective – Antiright's process list.

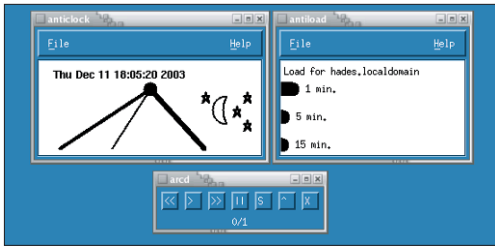


Figure 3: Antiright provides a system monitor, a clock, and a CD player.

When you attempt to open a SSH connection to another host, Antiright pops up a dialog box where you can enter the IP address or network name of the target machine. Following this, the desktop environment calls the `ssh` command and prompts you for your password. If you have a different account on the remote machine, you need to enter the appropriate `username@hostname` in the dialog box.

Antiright provides its own essential tools, such as a clock, a graphical system monitor, and a CD player (see Figure 3). The CD player accesses `/dev/cdrom`, which should point at the correct device – typically `/dev/hdc` on modern systems. If your distributor has not created a link, you can do so yourself. Ensure that you are `root`, and then type `ln -s /dev/hdc /dev/cdrom`.

The *Sticky Notes* button allows you to post little yellow notices on your desktop, rather than sticking the real thing on your display. In contrast to their paper counterparts, you can close Antiright’s digital sticky notes or reduce them to icons as needed.

The *Disk Manager* (see Figure 4) mounts and unmounts filesystems. If needed, you can first select *See Filesystems* to check your `/etc/fstab` file, or select *See Free Space* to see how much room you have left on your partitions.

Fly in the Soup

As Antiright is a fairly new project, some applications are not stable enough for daily use. The file manager is recommended only for quickly browsing directories; its integrated *Copy* function typically crashes, and it is very unusual that you need to press [Enter], rather than double-click, to open a directory.

Unfortunately, the Web browser, *arbrowse*, is even worse. It only recently replaced *lynx*, which had been used pre-

viously. The version we tested was incapable of displaying either local files or Web pages. In fact, the only response we saw was the message from the *noframes* tag when we tried to open a page with frames. Launching *arbrowse* in a terminal window revealed that the download tool uses *wget*, and does in fact download pages correctly. It is to be hoped that *arbrowse* will be capable of displaying Web pages in its next incarnation.

The *Text Editor* is only useful for simple tasks. Calling the search function crashed the editor, and we could not find a “Save as” function. This means you have to specify a non-existent filename, if you want to use that name to save the file later.

On the upside, there is a workaround: *View / Popular Applications*. This is where to look for venerable tools like *Emacs*, *vi*, and *nedit*. The Mozilla entry provides untroubled Web browsing. The applications below *bsd Games* require the *bsd-games* package, which contains a number of games for character-based consoles.

Administration

The *View* menu provides quick access to system management tools. You can open a `root` shell via the *Administration* entry, or delete any backup files with a tilde (`~`) at the end from your user directory.

You can ignore the *Remove Temporary Files* entry. The delete command does not check whether the files are in use – this could lead to crashed programs and

possible data loss. Also, the function overlooks the subdirectories below `/tmp/`. So some manual attention is required even if you attempt to use the function.

The *System Monitor* item pops up a *top* window, providing a quick overview of the current processes.

Eye Candy

Wanting a simple desktop does not automatically mean that you will be happy with rainy-day gray. So cheer up, and open *Options / X Theme Selector* to select a more pleasing background color for your applications. Figure 3 shows *Steel Blue*. The setting applies only to the current session, and only for applications that parse the `~/Xdefaults` or `~/Xresources` files.

You can use the *Backdrop Editor* to select a different color for the desktop background. If you run Antiright on KDE, this will not work, however, as KDE places another window on top of the **root window**.

Wired

If you decide to adopt Antiright as your default desktop, you will need to modify the launch parameters for the GUI.

Antiright provides a start script in `/usr/local/bin/AR`; the script also launches a window manager.

By default, the desktop environment launches the *Motif Windows Manager* (*mwm*), although most distributions do not actually have it. You will thus need to open the start script (ensuring that you are `root`), and in the line below *#Window Manager* replace the *mwm* entry with the window manager of your choice, such as *wmaker* for Window-Maker.

If you normally log on in text mode, and then type *startx* to launch the GUI, you simply need to add `exec /usr/local/bin/AR` to your `~/xinitrc` file. If you prefer a GUI-based login with *xdm*, put the command in your `~/xsession` file instead. If you use the KDE logon manager, *kdm*, use *System management / Login manager / Sessions / New Type* to add *AR*. After doing so, you can select *File / Close* in the Antiright menu to close a session. ■

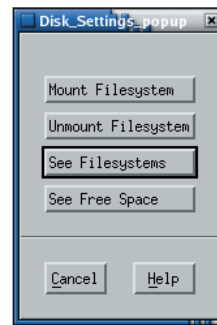


Figure 4: The “Disk Manager” is responsible for hard disk operations.

GLOSSARY

.Xresources and .Xdefaults: These files define general X settings such as background colors and default fonts. Wildcards are permissible: thus, `*background: PaleGreen3` will set all backgrounds to pale green. Different distributions use different files. Red Hat and the current Suse Linux will parse `~/Xdefaults`; older Suse versions will use `~/Xresources`.

Root window: The mother of all windows: the first window to be launched is the desktop background. In contrast to its “child” windows, the root window does not have a frame.