

# BEGINNER'S INTRODUCTION TO TOPPY EPG TAPS

## (Draft 3, 23/1/2006)

### 1 INTRODUCTION

The Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) can be considered to be an electronic version of the "Radio Times" or similar magazine, with the additional advantage that the data may be searched for particular programmes or programme types. The EPG on the Topsy has not been one of its better features, and therefore has been the subject of a number of TAPs and utilities to run on computers connected to the Topsy.

The object of this note is to provide an overview of the various options available, with particular emphasis on new Topsy owners. It should be noted that many of the TAPs and associated PC/Mac programmes discussed are evolving rapidly and so the information here may not be completely up to date, and of necessity is somewhat simplified. The use and loading of TAPs is described in a separate guide.

Before using TAPs, it is strongly recommended that the relevant user documentation and the discussions in the forum are consulted to get information on the latest versions.

Note that the TAPs mentioned here are those believed to be most actively used on the TF5800 in the UK, but there are many other TAPs which more adventurous users might like to try.

### 2 EPG DATA SOURCES

#### 2.1 General

Three fundamentally different sources of EPG data have been identified as follows:

- Data interleaved with the Freeview transmissions.
- Data transmitted on a dedicated Freeview channel for part of the day.
- Data downloaded from the internet via a PC, Mac etc.

as discussed in more detail below.

#### 2.2 Freeview Data

This is the data used by the native Topsy (i.e. when no TAPs are loaded), and has two limitations:

- While nominally covering 7 days, in practice the data from some channels is gappy and may only cover 3 or 4 days (notably for channel 5).
- The Extended Programme Description field is not used.

but it does have the advantage of being updated in the event of late programme changes.

### 2.3 Dedicated Freeview Channel

This is the approach used by many other PVRs. Data is transmitted in the early hours of the morning on channel "4tv".

As the PVR manufacturers have to pay a licence fee for the use of this facility, it is not clear whether its use on a Topy would be legal, and it has not been established whether this data could be successfully decoded by a TAP.

### 2.4 Web-Sourced Data

At least two sources of programme data are available on the internet, namely:

- "Digiguide", which requires an annual subscription.
- "Radio Times", which is currently free.

These provide 14 day's data, together with much more information on the programmes including genre.

## 3 THE TOPPY'S FREEVIEW EPG DATA COLLECTION

The native Topy EPG data collection (in firmware 5.12.25 and before) suffers from three problems:

- Data is only collected from the channel currently being viewed, so it is necessary to tune to each channel in turn to get a complete EPG.
- All data is lost when the Topy is switched to standby.
- Additional information such as the programme genre are discarded.
- Only the first 128 characters of the programme description are made available to TAPs (but they are shown on the native EPG).

in addition to the Freeview limitations discussed above.

The first two of these problems are addressed by "Epg Navigator" and "JAG's EPG" TAPs by a scheduled scan when the Topy is not in use – normally in the early hours of the morning, and recording the data on the hard disc. The next issue of firmware is expected to address at least point 1.

Another TAP, "Description Extender" addresses the 128 character limit by putting the complete data string in the "Long Description Field" which is available to all TAPs (but not all yet use it).

A new TAP, "epg extender" aims to address the data loss in Standby, the discarded information, and the 128 character limit, but has yet to be extensively tried by forum members.

## 4 EPG DATA DISPLAY ETC FEATURES

The choice of display presentation is very much a matter of personal preference, though the "grid" presentation is a popular choice. The native Topy presentation has the advantage of showing the current programme in a smaller window, but is limited to one channel at a time.

The following TAPs are primarily aimed at displaying EPG data:

- Epg Navigator
- JAG's EPG
- MyStuff

and there is, of course the native Toppo EPG.

Other TAP's using the EPG include:

- Improbox, for Now & Next data
- MeiSearch for locating programmes by genre.
- UK/Oz Surfer for Now & Next information.
- UK Scheduler, a facility for setting timers from programme searches

Many of the above also provide facilities for searching and/or setting recording timers. A summary of the features of each are given in the table below. Where a facility is shown in brackets, it indicates that the facility is expected in an imminent update

| Facility                               | Native Toppo | EPG Navigator | JAG's EPG        | MyStuff   | TAP MeiSearch         | ImproBox        | UK/Oz Surfer | UK Scheduler |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| List view                              |              |               | Y                |           |                       |                 |              |              |
| Grid View                              | 4 Ch         | 10 Ch         |                  | 6/8/12 Ch |                       |                 |              |              |
| Search                                 | Y            |               | Y                | (Y)       | By Genre (or Keyword) |                 |              | Y            |
| Now & next for current channel         | Y            |               |                  | Y         |                       | Y               |              |              |
| Now & next for PIP channel             |              |               |                  |           |                       |                 | Y            |              |
| Now & next for all channels            |              |               | Y                |           |                       |                 |              |              |
| Set timers                             | Y            | Y             | Y                | Y         | Y                     | Current channel | Y            |              |
| Compatible with "Description Extender" | N/A          | Y             | Version 3.x only | Y         | N/A                   | Y               | Y            | Y            |

Note that some of the TAPs listed above, notably Improbox, have other functions that you may find useful.

## 5 EPG DATA FLOW

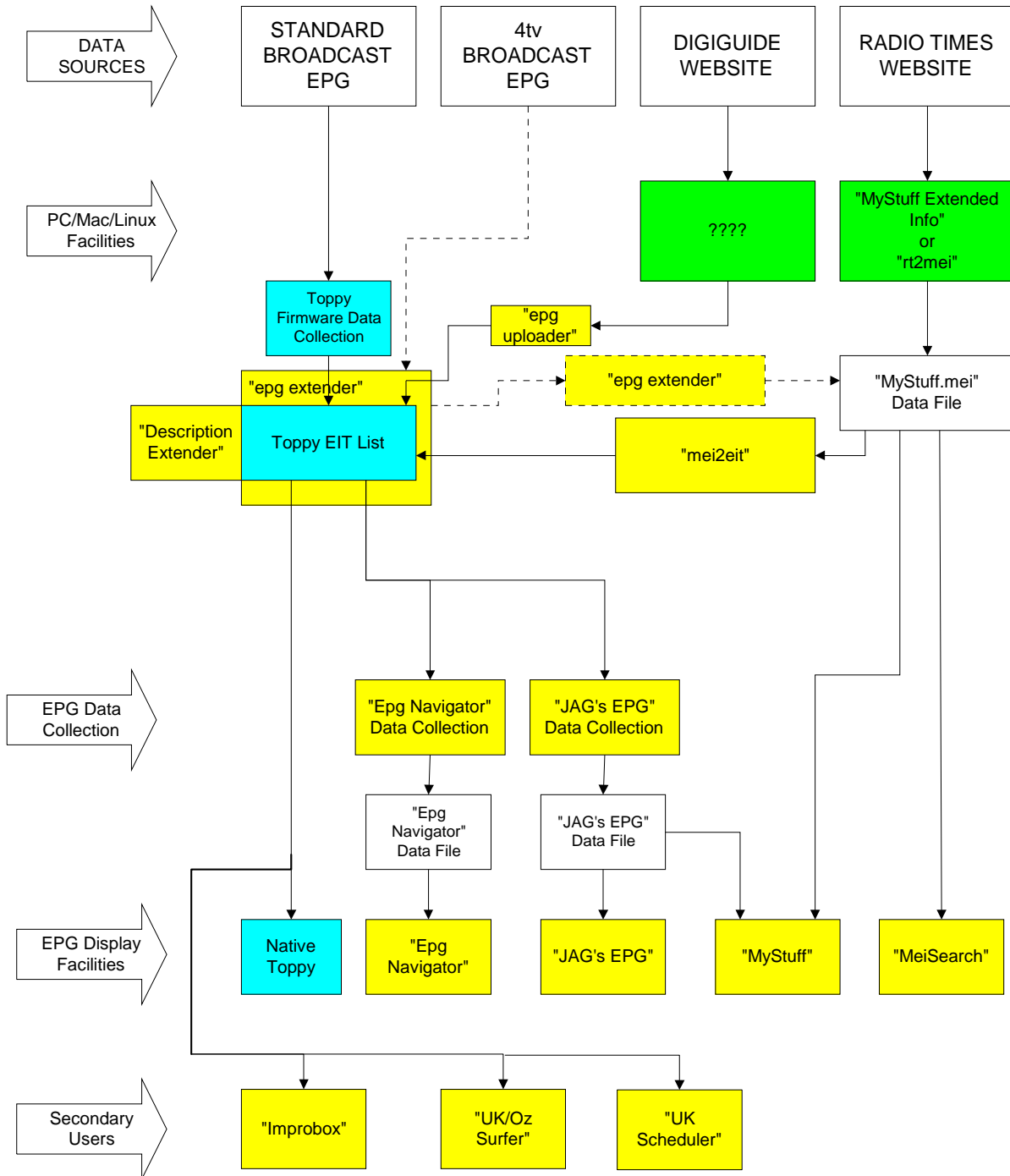
The (somewhat simplified) diagram below shows the data flow from the data sources discussed in section 2 above and the display etc facilities described in section 4 above. Having chosen the source(s) and destinations you would like to use, one can see which TAPs and computer programmes you will need to use.

The following colour coding is used:

Green: PC/Mac/Linux programmes

Blue: Native Toppo facilities  
 Yellow: TAPs

Where a TAP appears more than once, this is only for clarity of data flow, and does not imply multiple copies are required.



The "Description Extender" & "epg extender" TAPs effectively modify the behaviour of the native EPG so that the improved data is available to all users. Thus the improved data can be used in conjunction with EPG Navigator, JAG's EPG, Improbox etc to allow access to the enhanced data.

Dotted lines refer to proposed extensions to existing TAPs.

## 6 TOPPY.ORG.UK TAP ETC LIBRARY

This provides a list of TAPs and related PC/Mac programs that may be of interest to UK Topy owners. It has the following features that are not available in many other such libraries:

- Categorisation into types such as EPG, Audio, files, etc.
- Indications of suitability for use on TF5800
- E-mail notifications of changes to TAPs etc of interest.
- Links for downloads and to discussions in the forum.

To register for e-mail updates, go to Home, TAPs, select "more info" for the one of interest, and click on the red tick.