CS130/230 Lecture 15
PowerPoint

Tuesday, March 30, 2004

For today's lecture, we will discuss how to use PowerPoint for presentations. This document contains instructions on the different features of PowerPoint. I am not going to go over each point in class, but I would like you to read through them all and use them, as you see fit, in your presentations.

For today, I would like you to work on a presentation for the sports data that you collected for your last assignment. You should include an image and some statistical charts in your presentation. You should have:
1. A title slide
2. Two data slides
3. One summary slide

PowerPoint Versions

Most of you have used PowerPoint before so you should be fairly familiar with it. Unfortunately, PowerPoint is a Microsoft application that has changed rather significantly from version to version. What you see today may or may not be available on your own version on your computer at home or in another lab. I'll try to point out features that are common to most versions. The good news is that most of the additional features aren't necessary for a good presentation.

Starting PowerPoint

When you create a new presentation, you should be able to see the outline or slide view of the slides in the left window, with one current slide displayed in the center. At the bottom of the window there is a place for you to enter slide comments. These will not appear on the presentation itself.

The view menu gives you the option of viewing your presentation in different ways. The slide sorter view allows you to view all the slides in your presentation and reorder them.

Presentation Design

Before we start adding anything to our presentation, let's modify our slide design and formatting schemes. In this version of PowerPoint, there is a handy window on the right that you can use to change most

of the different features of your presentation. If your version of PowerPoint doesn't have this right window, you'll have to rely on the menus to add features to your slides.

Templates

We can choose slide design-design template on the right side to change our slides to look like the built-in formats. We can look at the different design templates displayed in the window to choose one that we like. Feel free to investigate the different templates today; I'd recommend staying away from the templates for an important presentation. I find them to be too busy and too trite.

Colors

Instead, I'd recommend choosing a color scheme with the slide design-color schemes. I think it's much nicer to have a plain background without any extra distractions. When you're giving a talk, particularly a scientific or technical talk, the focus should be on your content, not on your graphic extras. Also, the best color schemes are those that have a very light background with very dark text or a very dark background with very light text. Whites, creams, yellows paired with blues or blacks give the best contrast. If you're printing your slides, you might want to consider a light background since you'd give your printer too much of a workout with a dark background (I have done it, however). If you're projecting your presentation, dark backgrounds look great!

Fonts and Slide Master

Once you've chosen your colors, you should focus on your fonts. If you've chosen a design template, you'll have some fonts pre-chosen for you. If you don't like them or are starting from scratch, you'll want to edit your Master Slide. Changing the font on your Master Slide results in changing the font on ALL of your slides. This actually holds true for anything you change on your Master, not just your fonts.

To change the Master Slide, choose view/Master/Slide Master from the menus. Then, highlight the different areas of text and choose a new font. It is ALWAYS best to use a sans serif font for your presentation. The text is much more crisp and easy to read than a serif font. Arial and Helvetica are examples of sans serif fonts. NEVER use any of the fancy, scrolling fonts.

While we're looking at the Master Slide, we can see the different things that we can change. We can change the background color, add some borders/lines, change the text color, add footers, etc. Also, we could add an image that would appear on every slide.

Note—if you don't have a recent version of Powerpoint, the only way that you can cause changes to appear on all your slides is through the Master Slide.

View

Let's now look at the different views we can have of our presentation. If you don't have a recent version of PowerPoint, you would be able to view your outline only through the view menu (it wouldn't appear on the left). You can edit your presentation by typing in the outline view instead of on the slide view. The slide sorter view is very handy for looking at all the different slides at once. This is useful for when you want to rearrange the order of your slides or choose some slides to copy to another presentation.

Another useful view is the notes view. This allows you to see your slide and to type in notes, too. In XP, we see a notes section in our normal view; older versions don't have this, so you have to choose the notes view yourself. The notes are very handy for when you're planning on what to say during your presentation. Don't forget to print them out, though; you won't be able to see the notes during your presentation otherwise! Also, notes are a fantastic way to archive your talk so you won't forget what to say if you know you'll have to revisit this talk at a much later time. And, it's a good way to give a copy of your complete talk to someone who didn't get to see or hear it in person.

Printing

When you print your presentation, you have the option of what format you want for printing—you can print just your slides, your slides with notes or handouts. This is all available in the print form.

If you want to change any formatting for your notes or handouts, use the notes or handouts master.

Layout

Once you've chosen what you want your slides to look like, it's time to enter your content. When you're ready to add a new slide, insert it and choose the layout. If you have the XP version, you can look at the different formats on the right through the slide layout option. If you don't have this, you'll still be able to choose your layout when you add your slide. You can always change the layout through the format menu. Choose a layout that makes the most sense for your needs.

Content

When you add content to your slides, you should aim to have 3-5 major points per slide. Humans can't comprehend more than that amount of information at a time. Also, you need to strike a good balance of how much information to put on a slide. You want to put enough so that the audience understands what you're saying, but you don't want to overload your slide with words. (You should NEVER use complete sentences or paragraphs). Highlight each major point with a bullet. Feel free to add sub-bullets as needed. Also, be careful of the size of your font. PowerPoint will automatically size your text for you based on where your text is (title, which level of bullet, etc.). The newer versions of PowerPoint will also dynamically change your font size if you start running out of room on your slide. Remember—you never have to accept what PowerPoint autoformats for you—choose the font size based on what you need. Remember these guidelines, however: The title of your slide should stand out, so it should be bigger or at least in bold. No font size on your slide should be smaller than 24 point (this can vary from font to font). You should always be able to read your presentation from the back of the room, so you might want to try it out.

Images

If you want to include images or Excel charts in your slide, you may do that through the insert picture or chart option in your menu. Or you can copy and past from the clipboard (I find this to be the easiest way to do it). Remember, your image or chart must also be readable from the back of the room; this means you may need to increase your font size on your chart before you paste it into your presentation. Your chart/image count as multiple pieces of information, so you shouldn't have too much more information/ text on your slide besides it.

To see what images/movies are available through PowerPoint, choose the Insert Clip Art option from the window on the right.

Action Buttons

You can also add action buttons to your slides (this isn't available on older versions of PowerPoint). These buttons will activate some action that you define. This is a great way to link to some webpage or application without having to leave PowerPoint.

When you're done with your presentation, be sure to save it.

Animation

Finally, you can add animation to your slides. I hesitate to show you these features because they're often improperly used and are obnoxious. Animation is never necessary for a presentation, with the exception of videos or step-by-step diagrams that are integral to your presentation topic. Fancy slide transitions and moving text almost never enhance a talk. Also, if you're not going to be projecting your talk and printing it on transparencies instead, do NOT bother with animations!

Note—PowerPoint does allow you the capability to "record" a presentation for replaying without a speaker. Sometimes you can find examples of these online or you'll see them playing on unmanned computers at a conference exhibit. In this case, it is okay to include animations, sounds and fancy transitions since the presentations are now more of a multimedia exhibit.

That said; let's see what type of animations we can use. Like pre-made design templates, there are predefined animations that we can choose. Let's look at them in the slide design-animation in the right window. Let's look at the different options available. Which ones would you like to look at during a talk?

If you want to define your own, you'd want to use custom animation and transition. Custom animation allows you to define exactly how each slide will appear. You can have each element of your slide appear, one at a time. This can be useful during a talk, but it can also be annoying since you'll have to be clicking a mouse constantly during your talk (if you know you'll have a wireless mouse, it won't be a problem). Also, it's nice to let the audience see your entire slide at once while you're talking about it. If you have each element appear one at a time, you'll only see the complete slide briefly at the end. Also, I find it to be annoying that the speaker enforces a certain reading speed on me—I like to read ahead and think about the whole picture of what the speaker is saying.

Let's try out some custom animations. We can choose the element on our slide and then choose how it will appear on the screen. We have LOTS of options, so don't get overwhelmed!

Slide Transitions

Finally, we can define the transitions between slides. The subtle ones aren't bad, but some of them are too wild for most professional talks. Also, we can add sounds.

Practicing and Timing Your Talk

When you are done, you should practice your talk in the slide show mode. When you're projecting your talk, you should know how to advance slides. Mouse clicks work, so does the keyboard character n (p goes backwards). The slide show will end automatically when you advance past your last slide. Or, you can hit Esc at any point to end the show. Also, you can time your talk. Choose the rehearse timings from the Slide Show menu. Hit return after each slide as you're talking through your slides. At the end, PowerPoint will tell you how long your entire talk took.

Annotations

Another useful tool for presentations is the annotation tool. When you are in the slide show view, you may right click and choose Pen Options/Pen. This will change your mouse pointer into a pen and allow you to circle or underline important points. If you press the E key, it will erase your annotations. Pressing the Esc key once will drop the pen and pressing it twice will end the slide show.

Giving Presentations

There are some important guidelines to remember when developing and giving presentations:

1. Content is the most important. Work on this FIRST! Most of us are always working under pressure with a limited amount of time available for a project, so make sure that you get your content right first before anything else.
2. Once you have your content, choose a nice formatting scheme. If you know what you want, you can choose the formatting before you do your content, but you shouldn't take much time doing it until you know your content is set.
3. Then, and only then, do you consider adding animations to your talk.
4. Finally, practice it and add notes as necessary. Make sure everything looks good, even from the last row in the room.
5. Don't overload each slide with information. (Talks are NOT like lectures your profs give. They should be clearer with fewer amounts of information per slide).