

Presentations Using Linux

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1 Intro

- “*PowerPoint* presentation” almost a generic term
 - Edward Tufte’s case against this style of presentation <http://xrl.us/powerpointcritique>
- on Linux:
 - *PowerPoint* itself not available
 - possible political reasons for avoiding it even when possible
- a look at the Linux-friendly alternatives
 - in terms of end-user experience

Tufte’s book *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint* is worth a read; what he says applies to all *PowerPoint*-esque presentations.

This talk — dealing with the mere form of presentations — may seem quite trivial, but it matters. It matters because it’s hard for people to take Linux/software libre/your point seriously if it offers worse user experience than the package that (currently) nearly everybody else uses; it needs to be at least as good.

2 *OpenOffice*

- obvious *PowerPoint* alternative is *OpenOffice*
- problems:
 - actually *worse* than *PowerPoint* in some critical ways when thinking about it
 - turns out *PowerPoint* is far from optimal anyway

3 Thinking About It

- two different scenarios in which slides are viewed
- during the presentation
 - audience sat collectively staring at a big screen
- individual reading afterwards
 - web or paper
 - talk attendees reviewing content and noting specifics
 - others reading it as their only source
- different requirements in each case

4 Requirements

- during presentation:
 - one slide at a time
 - full screen
 - big text
- individual reading:
 - skim through it quickly
 - searchable
 - linkable
 - viewable without downloading special software

5 Full Screen

- *OpenOffice*:
 - fine
- *Acrobat Reader*:
 - has full-screen mode
 - many different ways to generate PDFs
- web browsers:
 - many now have full-screen modes
 - text needs to be bigger than on a typical webpage
 - navigation to consider

Examples of HTML-based talks include Mark Jason Dominus's Conference Presentation Judo.

6 Individual Reading

- contradictory requirements
- often neglected
- important
 - most people there can't remember everything
 - most people not there

7 *OpenOffice* Individual Reading

- big download if not already installed
- especially annoying for Windows users who already have *PowerPoint*
 - might not know what *OpenOffice* is
 - so *PowerPoint* a better format to use than *OpenOffice*!
- very user-unfriendly web format:
 - 1 page per slide tedious to navigate
 - jpeg format does terrible things with text
 - can't search

An example *OpenOffice* HTML presentation is Julian Smart's *WxWindows Introduction*

8 Web Individual Reading

- web should be good format for browsing (in theory)
- often not good (in practice)
- slide navigation usually awkward

Mark Jason Dominus's Conference Presentation *Judo* is very recommended. It comes with excellent notes — but it takes far too long to read off-line, especially having to switch back and forth between the notes and the slides.

9 PDF Individual Reading

- generally more readable than *PowerPoint* or *OpenOffice* formats
- can search for text
- easier to flick through than separate webpages
- prints nicely
- can't link to individual slides
- downloading a PDF requires more commitment than browsing a webpage

10 Multiple Versions

- different full-screen and individual editions required
- several ways of achieving this
- multiple output one of XML's supposed strengths
- full-screen version in *OpenOffice* or *Latex* or whatever
- separate version for individual reading
 - single scrolling webpage or PDF
 - notes inbetween slides
- one webpage with two style-sheets fulfills both rôles
 - Bash tips: http://www.ukuug.org/events/linux2003/papers/bash_tips/
 - *OperaShow*: <http://ln.hixie.ch/?start=1076441294&count=1>

Opera Show looks particularly nice, because everything is in a single file: the style information is at the top of the HTML, and the images are embedded with absurdly long `data:` URLs

Autrijus Tang's PAR presentation first irritated me when it took so long to read on screen; I later discovered that Autrijus had prepared a separate edition for reading, so it was my fault for picking the wrong one.

11 Conclusion

- usability matters
- easy to pick *OpenOffice* by default
- audience of individual readers tend to be forgotten
- multiple formats does work in practice

Considering the audience of individual readers is the most important point I want to make here. It's potentially bigger than the more-obvious audience, and it's the way your talk will be remembered for posterity.

This does work in practice. I was amazed to discover that just using the materials from my Bash talk, somebody else in Nottingham was able to present a re-run!