

PowerPoint to Flash Conversion Techniques

Turning Original PowerPoint Lectures into Web-accessible Flash Presentations

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Abstract:

This report proposes a methodology accessible to instructors at Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) for converting Microsoft PowerPoint lectures into Web-accessible Macromedia Flash presentations. Converting PowerPoint lectures into Web-accessible Flash presentations offers a wealth of opportunities to the instructor: their students will only need to download one file from the Web which is up to 95% smaller than the original PowerPoint file (great for slow connections), and the Flash presentation is much more secure (it is difficult to steal graphics and original material from Flash files) and easier to view on the Web (more than 99% of all browsers come with Flash software built in.) Both PowerPoint and Flash are cross-platform, making this technology applicable to both Windows and Macintosh users.

This project proposes a methodology to create Web-accessible Flash presentations from PowerPoint lectures. Detailed cross-platform instructions will be provided for converting PowerPoint files into Flash presentations. Also, a discussion of the various commercial solutions for PowerPoint-to-Flash conversions will be provided (along with their strengths and weaknesses, especially in regard to the methodology outlined in this proposal.)

Examples of the conversion process (PowerPoint lectures into Flash presentations) using my pre-existing PowerPoint lectures will be provided. This methodology is applicable towards all faculty and staff interested in providing Web-accessible lecture content to audiences located anywhere in the domain of the Web.

Note that this document may be viewed on the World Wide Web: <http://gst-d2L.com/TLC>

Contents:

I. Project Goals	Page 2
II. TLC Goals	Page 3
III. Innovation	Page 3
IV. Evaluation	Page 4
V. Post-project Responsibilities	Page 4
VI. Progress and Timeline	Page 4
VII. Use of Funds	Page 4
VIII. Personal Comment	Page 5

Thank you for considering my request. If I can answer any additional questions you might have, please contact me. Thank you for your time,

Michael Russell, Ph.D.

I. Project Goals:

When contemplating online classes, a difficulty arises in transferring traditional "in class" lectures into a medium suitable for Web-based learning. One solution to this problem consists of turning traditional Microsoft PowerPoint lectures (where the media and notes are already digitized) into a form suitable for Web-based viewing. Traditional methodologies have included the conversion of PowerPoint files into a series of HTML web files (which involve hundreds of files and are aesthetically displeasing) or into a large "movie" (usually QuickTime or Windows Media, but these are huge files which require software missing for playback on some viewers' computers.)

A newer option is to convert PowerPoint lectures into Web-accessible Macromedia Flash presentations. The advantages are numerous: Flash uses a smaller graphics format (vector) that reduces the file sizes of PowerPoint graphics (raster) by as much as 95%. A Flash presentation can be contained in one small file that is easily downloaded (even on 56K modems), a vast improvement over the hundreds of files necessary to view HTML web presentations. Flash presentations protect original content from piracy (it's relatively easy to steal graphics from HTML web files and movies, but it is much more difficult in Flash files.) Flash and PowerPoint are cross-platform, making this technique accessible to both Windows and Macintosh users. Flash lectures can be augmented with instructor dialogue, letting the students know what is important while viewing the presentation slides. And best of all, the Flash codec to view the presentation is included in more than 99% of browsers, so virtually all of the target audience will have no problem viewing the presentation.

The methodology used to convert PowerPoint lectures into Web-accessible Flash presentations has not been explored on this campus to the best of my knowledge. A few commercial programs can convert your PowerPoint lectures into Flash presentations, but a more "organic" (and less expensive!) approach is needed to address all platforms and all users on the MHCC campus.

The "*PowerPoint to Flash Conversion Techniques*" project proposes to explore the methodology needed to convert previously created Microsoft PowerPoint lectures into Web-accessible Macromedia Flash presentations. The proposal can be divided into three goals:

- Goal #1 of the project will explain how to convert PowerPoint files into Flash presentations without additional software. Technical details of the creation process will be provided for both Windows and Macintosh platforms.
- Goal #2 of the "*PowerPoint to Flash Conversion Techniques*" project will compare and contrast the commercial PowerPoint to Flash conversion programs available. Most of these programs are designed for the Windows platform. Comparisons will be made to the approach outlined in Goal #1 which will not use any additional software (outside of PowerPoint and Flash.)
- Goal #3 will be to actively encourage other faculty and staff members to create their Web-accessible Flash presentations from their existing PowerPoint lectures. The goal will be accomplished through a variety of mediums: a **written paper** outlining the research performed and results obtained for this project (which will be released to the TLC when completed); an **oral presentation** (to be arranged with the TLC, possibly for Fall Term 2005); a **web site** with accompanying materials (<http://gst-d2L.com/TLC>); and a **commitment to assist other faculty and staff** members to implement the conversion of their own PowerPoint files into Flash presentations.

It is not enough to simply present the material; providing a forum by which interested faculty members can ask questions and receive answers is essential to the goals of this project. The primary goal is to explore the

conversion of PowerPoint lectures into Web-accessible Flash presentations. I will do everything in my power to help others accomplish this goal.

II. TLC Goals:

The "*PowerPoint to Flash Conversion Techniques*" project discussed above fits well into the Teaching and Learning Cooperative's two primary directives.

Directive #1, "*Developing and sustaining effective teaching and learning with the emphasis on student learning*", is followed absolutely in each of the project goals listed above. The first goal, converting PowerPoint lectures into Flash presentations, is necessary to address the diversity of learning styles expressed by students; we should not discriminate or express a bias to a particular learning group while teaching. If students need additional lecture exposure to difficult concepts, or if they prefer the Web learning medium to the "face to face" classroom, we should be able to accommodate them. The second goal, comparing commercial conversion packages, will allow instructors additional opportunities by which to convert their lectures into a Web medium. The primary goal of this project is to enhance student learning and teaching effectiveness; the medium by which this will occur is through a novel application of converting PowerPoint lecture notes into a Web-accessible Flash presentation.

Directive #2, "*Ensuring broad applicability throughout the MHCC teaching and learning community*", will be followed closely as well. All of my protocols and instructions are available free of charge to any learning community that wishes them, be they from Mt. Hood Community College or elsewhere. I will be sharing my results with my colleagues through a written paper, a web site (<http://gst-d2L.com/TLC>) and a presentation on the MHCC campus during late 2005. I am always available for comments and questions, and I am committed to instructor success as much as I am committed to maximizing the power of student learning.

III. Innovation:

Although the Distance Learning Department offered two supposed "PowerPoint to Flash" classes with Jeff Rouyer, neither class actually delved into PowerPoint to Flash conversions, and I believe the methodology used to convert PowerPoint presentations to Flash lectures has not been explored on the MHCC campus. Jeff probably wished to help instructors with Flash projects in general more than discuss conversion methodologies (Flash is a complex program), but the omission fueled the creation of this TLC Innovation Grant in my mind.

The basic tools necessary for converting PowerPoint presentations into Web-accessible Flash lectures are available to the MHCC community. PowerPoint is a standard component of Microsoft Office which is available through Computer Services. Flash is a part of the Macromedia Studio MX 2004 suite (which also includes Dreamweaver, Fireworks and Freehand.) Some departments have ready access to Flash, others not so fortunate can download a 30-day trial of Flash for free from Macromedia's website (<http://www.macromedia.com>). Purchasing the academic version of Macromedia Studio costs about \$200, making this software relatively affordable. PowerPoint and Flash are cross-platform (Windows and Macintosh), making the technology accessible to everyone at MHCC. All that is needed is a vanguard to lead the way, mastering the technical obstacles and sharing the results with everyone interested in developing Web-accessible Flash lectures, and I would be honored to be MHCC's vanguard!

IV. Evaluation:

I hope to create several examples of Web-accessible Flash presentations created from my own PowerPoint lectures. I will also provide detailed instructions on how to create these presentations using a recent version of PowerPoint and Flash, and these instructions will be applicable to both Windows and Macintosh formats. I also hope to compare and contrast several commercial programs that convert PowerPoint files into Flash presentations.

Testing the Web-accessible Flash presentations on an audience is mandatory. I have a small contingent of students who have volunteered to "test drive" the Web presentations for me, telling me what they like, do not like, and possible improvements, especially when compared to the original PowerPoint lectures.

V. Post-project Responsibilities:

A presentation will be arranged in Fall Term 2005 for interested faculty and staff regarding the conversion of PowerPoint lectures into web-accessible Flash presentations. A formal paper outlining the specific details of this project shall be created and distributed to interested parties. A web site for my proposal (<http://gst-d2L.com/TLC>) will contain these documents as well as any other pertinent information. In addition, I can always be reached for personal consultation either through electronic mail (russellm@mhcc.edu) or telephone (503.491.7348), and multiple presentations can be arranged to meet the interests and expectations of the MHCC community - I am happy to share the knowledge gained!

VI. Progress and Timeline:

All of the plans outlined in the Project Goals section will be complete by September of 2005. The results of the project will be available for colleagues at this time. This project should be completely finished - including the paper, presentation, and all research - by December of 2005. All of the timelines are dependant on the TLC's wishes - I am *very* flexible.

VII. Use of Funds:

Personnel:	\$1000
Materials:	\$0
Total:	\$1000

Learning the software and techniques required to convert PowerPoint presentations into Flash movies appropriate to Web viewing will take considerable time. Although I have used PowerPoint extensively and Flash somewhat, I am unfamiliar with the process used to convert PowerPoint files into Flash documents. Also, I know of several Windows-only programs which automate this process, and I hope to overview their functionality for MHCC faculty; this is a daunting task for a primarily Macintosh user!

I believe that the ability to make small, Web-accessible versions of PowerPoint lectures would benefit the entire MHCC community. The more learning styles we accommodate, the greater our teaching potential. All I need are the resources to get started!

VIII. Personal Comment:

I appreciate your time in considering my request. If I can answer any questions that this paper does not address, please feel free to contact me using the information given below. Thank you for your time,

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