



INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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From Now to WOW: The Presentation Software Bridge

This is an article about knowledge, transparencies, lectures, bridges, presentations, creek banks, your socks, technology, and smuggling parakeets from Uruguay.

Scenario: On one creek bank is a heap of dull, unstructured, jumbled, stagnant lectures. On the other side of the creek are WOW, knock-your-socks-off lectures. These lecture and class presentations contain a wealth of great, wonderful, and knowledgeable nuggets of wisdom. The problem, then, is how to get from one bank of the creek to the other. The solution is using the bridge of presentation software.

As with all building projects, there are phases that one must complete before a product is finished: the plan; the tools; construction; finished product.

The Plan. This is the easy part because the plan is already in place. This is what you have NOW: typed lecture notes, 3x5 cards, handwritten pages, and outlines that contain your lecture notes. This phase of the building process is essentially a no-brainer.

The Tools. The tools for this phase include the presentation software and a computer. A variety of presentation methods are available: printed speaker's notes, handouts, outlines, transparencies, 35mm slides, and slide shows. The slide show requires a computer and projection system. You can create black-and-white or color transparencies. As you design the content of your presentation, you will want to enhance the way your material is displayed.

- Apply a background template. The templates are pre-designed backgrounds that come in color or black-and-white. You can create your own backgrounds, too. A background is the area on which you place text, pictures, or graphs.
- Add clip art. Clip art images are available on CD ROM and diskette media. You choose one and place anywhere on the background.
- Create graphs. Graphs include: pie, bar, line, column, and area. All can be made into 3-D images as well. Graphs are created from your numerical data or the data from a spreadsheet that is imported into the presentation software.
- Create diagrams and freehand drawings. A variety of shapes—squares, rectangles, circles,

lines and diagonal lines—can be combined to create an image.

- Format text. Select the fonts, sizes, type style, and color you need. You can shadow text.
 - Use sounds and video. Some presentation software packages can enhance your presentation with sound and full-motion video.
- Construction.** During this phase you build a "slide" that can be printed, converted to a 35mm slide or to a transparency, or become part of an on-screen slide show. Use the tools just described. Construction can be as simple as typing your lecture in outline form and then instructing the software to apply one of the templates. In seconds, you have a colorful and organized presentation. These few tips can help you build slides:
- Seven lines of text on a slide (maximum).
 - Light-colored text on dark background.
 - Minimum text size is 18 points.
 - No more than three colors of text on a slide.

The Product. Presentation software is the bridge to the other side of the creek, or to the WOW part. This heap of lectures can traverse the bridge and become presentations that students look forward to hearing and seeing. Presentation software is easy to learn. If you have word processing skills, you can work with this software. It creates images and colors. You paste, insert, and create items—e.g., pictures, graphs, sound, video, or blocks of text.

Okay, so we are at the end—the parakeets? Knowledge is like a parakeet; it flies around, it can be colorful, and it can be foreign (Uruguay) to students. Presentation software can help smuggle knowledge to the student and give it a new home.

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Using Videos to Teach Writing

In teaching a report writing class in our Administration of Justice program, I require a law enforcement report writing workbook for students who need to improve basic writing skills. I administer grammar and spelling tests so that students can determine where they need to put extra effort.

I review training videos in our library and have the media specialist tape episodes of *Cops*, *LAPD*, and *Real Stories of the Highway Patrol*. I select single segments, play them to the class, and require students to write their reports as though they were the officers on the scene. In the first assignment, a mother has locked her keys in her car with her baby still strapped in the baby seat—a simple report; no crime is involved, and no one has been injured. Another depicts a citizen's complaint about an officer. Students are to write as though they are the sergeant who took the citizen's report.

Sometimes I show a video without requiring a written report to prevent students from getting anxious

every time I walk into class holding a videotape. Some of the material is entertaining and valuable as a learning experience but not worthy of a report. One variation on the process is an especially interesting assignment: You are the character; explain why you did or did not do something. What will you do next?

Videos allow students to use their individual imaginations within a common context. It is fascinating to read the diverse twists and explanations they can bring to a single scenario.

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Worlds Collide in CAC's New Learning Community

Talk of assassination, double crosses, and manipulation fills the Community Room at Central Arizona College. Three groups of students wear tags representing various countries. They shuffle their feet on the gray carpet as they stand discussing their strategies for a global takeover. The voices of the three professors in charge mingle with the voices of the students as the game begins.

Welcome to "As Worlds Collide," a learning community composed of classes that are team-taught by professors who integrate their individual areas of expertise. The class is held in one room, and all students work together over an entire semester. The students are playing Diplomacy, a world-conquest game that will continue for the entire semester. In this game, the students utilize what they have learned from group discussions and individual readings.

"As Worlds Collide" is taught by three professors, representing communications, history and contemporary issues, and social psychology. It is designed to get more student participation and constructive input. Instructors check homework and keep the student conversation focused.

The community meets for four hours twice a week. Students spend mornings as a group—listening to

lectures, watching films, or listening to special guest speakers. After a one-hour lunch break, the students take over. The large group breaks into small discussion groups to discuss topics from the assigned reading.

CAC created the learning community to instill a sense of community among students and to create a supportive network of peers who will help each other with academic or personal problems. Retention studies indicate that college freshmen and sophomores who have a learning community experience are more likely to stay in school and go on to complete four-year degrees.

The game continues as a small part of this learning community. Throughout the semester, students address the problems associated with stereotypical behavior, international affairs, and the power of situations through their game plan, with the goal of understanding themselves and their worlds better.

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