
Something that worked for me...

Something that worked for me... is a completely new section containing short reviews and articles for you to quickly read *and contribute to*. The editors invite people who just have not the time for a long review or article. If you would like to contribute any "tips of the trade" which worked for you in teaching and would like to share your experience with the wider Maths, Stats & OR academic community, email the editors or complete the online form at: <http://ltsn.mathstore.ac.uk/feedback/submit/articleidea.htm>

Title: **Projection of Latex slides**

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I currently teach a class of 240 biologists on an introductory Statistics course. Given the size of the lecture room, I have been giving lectures from slides generated in Latex with a large font, to ensure readability. This has worked well, but the installation of a computer projection system made me consider that form of projection as a possible alternative. The potential advantages would be further clarity and ease of display, and the possibility of integrating the slides with other computer-based demos.

The immediate problem was how to create slides in a form suitable for projection. Since the material already exists in Latex form I did not want to countenance moving to a system such as Powerpoint, as a huge amount of work would probably be required to reformulate the material. Fortunately, an alternative idea came from a visiting (biology) seminar speaker who gave a talk using pdf files displayed in Adobe Acrobat, with full screen viewing. I had recently been told that Latex could produce pdf files and it did indeed prove easy to do that. I am predominantly a Unix user and one route is through a 'pdflatex' Unix facility. The more convenient one for me proved to be to create postscript files and then use a 'ps2pdf' facility. This handled inserted postscript figures more easily.

One issue which quickly arose was how to mimic the successive revelation of parts of a page, rather than display whole pages at one time. This was fairly easily solved by writing short new Latex commands of the type shown below:

```
\newcommand{\buildslidefour}[4]{
```

```
\newpage #1 \newpage #1 #2 \newpage #1 #2 #3 \newpage #1 #2 #3 #4}
```

This generates four slides to mimic the sequential appearance of four separate text section. Similar short commands were written for two up to six section slides.

I have tried this out in lectures and I must say that I am hooked. It seems to work very well. I think that the presentation is improved by less distractions in moving acetate slides about. It is easy to add in different text colour and postscript figures can be displayed in full colour. It is also really easy to make corrections and reorganise material. Of course, it's not so easy to use a felt tip pen to do live annotations! I suppose a laser pen is the proper technological solution but I find myself using a large wooden pointer, which is quite fun.

I fully expect that the outcome of this short note is that people will write in to point out that all this has been well known for ages and that there are web sites full of material to extend all this into more sophisticated facilities. Please do!

Editor's note: A recent visitor to Glasgow commented, "Go to <http://www.ctan.org>, click on search, and in the *Search catalog for keyword* box, type seminar. You will get several packages for making seminars in pdf."
