

Org-mode export to Reveal.js and PDF

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If you're me, you think better in a text editor than in Powerpoint.

A few years ago I ran across org-reveal. It was revelatory.

It was also pretty manual.

Automating Emacs

Emacs has had a batch mode forever (as far as I know, anyway).

Emacs 30 lets you use a shebang to treat eshell just like any other shell script. I thought this was going to be useful, but it turned out not to be. But if you wondered why this was built on Debian testing (in September 2025), "Emacs 30" is the answer.

Automating artifact generation

In essence all you need to do for Reveal.js is to ensure that org-reveal-mode is available. For PDF output you need \LaTeX and an org-mode new enough to support \LaTeX output.

Then you just call the appropriate export function once you've loaded your org document into the buffer.

Ensuring you have that support

The problem is, no one's CI runner is going to have Emacs with a new org-mode and org-reveal preloaded.

The obvious thing to do is to build a container with Emacs and a \LaTeX setup and run it via Docker (or podman).

And the great news is, this has already been (mostly) done by Olivier Berger.

Differences from Berger's work

Berger uses Emacs with X enabled, because he prefers those fonts, and goes to some trouble to avoid running Emacs in batch mode. I don't care: I just get Verdana into the container and set up my PDF export to use it.

I don't care about "plain" HTML export—if I am exporting to HTML, what I want is Reveal.js.

I go a little farther and create a GitHub Actions workflow to allow publication straight to GitHub Pages.