

PP Slide Formats for Paper Reports and Computer Screens Are Ridiculous and Lazy

IN addition accompanying a talk, PP slides are printed out on paper, attached to emails, posted on the internet. Unfortunately, PP slides on paper and computer screen *replicate and intensify* all the problems of the PP cognitive style. Such slides extend the reach of PP's proprietary closed-document format since PP capabilities are necessary to see the slides. This short-run convenience to presenters and long-run benefit to Microsoft come at an enormous cost to the content and the audience.

As those who have disconsolately flipped through pages and pages of printed-out PP slide decks already know, such reports are physically thick and intellectually thin. Recall that the NASA Return to Flight Task Group observed a massive thinness in the PP closure reports. The resolution of printed-out slide decks is remarkably low, approaching dementia. This data table compares the information in one image-equivalent for books (one page), for the internet (one screen), and for PP (one slide). A single page in the *Physicians' Desk Reference* shows 54 typical PP slide-equivalents of information, and the whole very thick book equals a deck of 181,000 slides. A single page of an Elmore Leonard novel equals 13 typical PP slides. Nonfiction best-sellers show information at densities 10 to 50 times those of printed-out PP decks.

People see, read, and think all the time at intensities vastly greater than those presented in printed PP slides. Instead of showing a long sequence of tiny information-fragments on slides, and instead of dumping those slides onto paper, report makers should have the courtesy to write a real report (which might also be handed out at a meeting) and address their readers as serious people. PP templates are a lazy and ridiculous way to format printed reports.

PP slides also format information on computer screens. Presenters post their slides; then readers, if any, march through one slide after another on the computer screen. Popular news sites on the internet show 10 to 15 times more information on a computer screen than a typical PP slide on a computer screen. The shuttle Columbia reports prepared by Boeing, sent by email in PP format to be viewed on computer screens, were running at information densities of 20% of major news sites on the internet, as the table shows.

The PP slide format has the worst signal/noise ratio of any known method of communication on paper or computer screen. Extending PowerPoint to embrace paper and internet screens pollutes those display methods.

CHARACTER COUNTS AND DENSITY PER PAGE-IMAGE

	CHARACTERS PER PAGE	DENSITY: CHARACTERS/IN ²
BEST SELLING BOOKS		
<i>Physicians' Desk Reference</i>	13,600	168
<i>Your Income Tax</i>	10,400	118
<i>World Almanac</i>	9,800	232
<i>Joy of Cooking</i>	5,700	108
<i>The Merck Manual</i>	4,700	117
<i>Guinness Book of World Records</i>	4,600	162
<i>Consumer Reports Buying Guide</i>	3,900	112
<i>How to Cook Everything</i>	3,900	53
<i>Maximum Bob</i> (Elmore Leonard)	3,100	115
<i>Baby and Child Care</i>	2,500	95
NEWS SITES ON THE INTERNET		
Google News	4,100	44
New York Times	4,100	43
People's Daily (China)	4,100	43
Pravda	4,100	43
Los Angeles Times	4,000	42
BBC News	3,400	36
CNN	3,300	35
Yahoo	3,200	34
Time	2,700	28
MSNBC	2,400	26
POWERPOINT SLIDE FORMAT USED ON PAPER OR COMPUTER SCREEN		
Columbia reports by Boeing	630	7
1,460 text slides in 189 PP reports	250	3
654 text slides in 28 PP textbooks	98	1
Content-free slides	0	0