

# Add Power to Literacy Instruction with PowerPoint

by Glenna Gustafson

**F**or a student with significant disabilities, it is not always easy learning how to read and write in school. Not only is such a student limited by his or her disability, but he or she also faces misconceptions of others and curriculum materials that are not accessible. Educators often “equate differences in the children’s physical capabilities or means of communication with differences in intelligence, interest, or academic capabilities.” (Erickson and Koppenhaver, 1995). For many students, physical access to the materials is the greatest barrier.

The need for educators to be willing to provide unique supports for children’s literacy development and universally designed educational methods is not only essential but also mandated by law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 1997) requires that students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible. But shouldn’t the curriculum provide universal access for all students – those identified with disabilities and those without disabilities?

Researchers at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) have found that all students benefit from a universally designed curriculum that uses digital text. Educators need to move away from the fixed media of traditional text and utilize digital text to create educational materials that are accessible to all students regardless of their abilities (CAST, 2001). One way in which educators can provide literacy opportunities and access to the general education curriculum for all students is through the creation of talking books. In this instance, a talking book is defined as a story in electronic format that includes text, pictures, and auditory output. Hyperlinks can be included in the book to expand, explain, or enrich specific topics.

## Tools for Talking Books

There are numerous multimedia programs that could be utilized for creating talking books such as KidPix, Hyperstudio, and Buildability. However, with current budget issues, teachers need to utilize software tools that can be found in their classrooms. PowerPoint, found in Microsoft’s Office Suite, is a software application tool that is commonly found in most schools, and it can provide educators with a tool for creating talking books.

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## PowerPoint Power, continued

Using PowerPoint to create talking books promotes literacy and universal design for learning principles in the following ways:

- They are age and interest appropriate.
- They provide content information on appropriate skills level.
- They develop listening and speaking skills through sharing and responding to reading.
- They develop social closeness through reading and listening activities.
- They utilize digital text that can be quickly reformatted to meet the needs of the learner.
- They can be accessed by students with limited physical abilities.

The kinds and types of talking books that can be created are limitless. Books can be created that:

- Introduce, reinforce, or review materials covered in units of study, i.e., Ancient Rome, the Solar System, the parts of a cell.
- Supplement and enrich topics or units of study.
- Share students' individual work, i.e., original writing assignments – poems, stories, reports.
- Provide physical access to text that some students with disabilities may not have when using traditional text; i.e., students with visual disabilities

## Copyright Concerns

Copyright issues are, of course, an important concern when creating a talking book. If a book utilizes a teacher's or a student's original artwork and text, then copyright is of course not an issue. Whenever possible, encourage students to create original artwork and text to utilize in the talking book. If this not possible, then it is recommended that pictures be downloaded or scanned that are not copyrighted. Materials that are considered public domain are free from copyright restrictions. There is a collection of sites included at the end of this article where public domain pictures, graphics, sounds, and text can be found. Remember that it is always a good idea to reference the source from which the image, sound, or text was found.

The passage of the Chaffee Amendment in 1996 allows educators some latitude in the reproduction and distribution of materials in accessible formats for individuals with visual disabilities and certain other disabilities. Books and other text materials can be created reproduced in some "specialized format including Braille, audio, or digital text. Materials created under this amendment are to only be utilized by students with identified disabilities (McNeill, 2001). More information about the specifics of the Chaffee Amendment can be found in the links provided at the end of this article.

If there are doubts or concerns about copyright issues, one of the wisest things to do is contact the publisher of the material. Ask if there are guidelines concerning the use of their materials. Document within the content of the talking book if the publisher granted permission.

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## Creating Your Template

While the process of creating a talking book can be time consuming, it is simple enough for novice computer users who have some basic knowledge about PowerPoint. The following directions are for creating a talking book in PowerPoint 2000 found in the Microsoft Office Suite 2000 and were adapted from *How to Create Talking Books*, by Richard Walter (2001). You should begin with the creation of a template (graphics to help demonstrate this process are included in a PDF file linked from the end of this article).

1. Create a blank page by choosing File; New; and Blank Presentation.
2. Choose the blank page layout.
3. Add the page turning arrows
  - a. Select Slide Show; then Action Buttons
  - b. Choose the forward arrow; position the arrow in the bottom right hand corner of the page.
  - c. When the Action Settings Box appears, check to see if: Hyperlink to Next Slide is selected and click OK. If needed, you can now readjust the size and location of the arrow button.
4. Add a back arrow button in the same way, but position the arrow in the bottom left hand corner of the page. Make sure that Hyperlink to: Previous slide is selected. Click on OK.
5. Add a page turning effect by choosing: Slide Show; then Slide transition. Next choose the transition effect: Cover Left.
6. Save your slide as a template.
  - a. Click on File; then Save As; then Design Template. Name the template "Talking Book".

Your template will now be available whenever you open PowerPoint under New Presentation. Note that you have not added a sound button yet; you will do this after adding graphics and text.

## Adding the Good Stuff

You are now ready to create your talking book utilizing your template.

1. Open PowerPoint, click on File; then New and open your template "Talking Book".
2. To create the correct number of pages for your book, open the Slide Sorter View and highlight the blank slide.
  - a. Press CTRL and D (together) to add the number of slides that you need. The slides will already be linked because of the arrows that were created on the template.
3. You can add graphics by inserting or pasting. Images can be scanned, captured from graphics programs or the Internet, or be original drawings created in a Paint program.
  - a. Click on the Insert menu; then Picture; then From File. Choose the location where your picture is stored and click Insert.
  - b. Place the picture of the page, where you can resize and position it.
4. You can now record speech for your talking book. If possible have a student record the sound. PowerPoint records sounds in two different

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ways. Since your recordings may produce larger sound files, it is necessary to alter some settings within PowerPoint.

- a. Click on Tools; then Options.
  - b. In the dialogue box, click on General; then Link sounds box with files greater than and type in 50000. (This is the largest number that PowerPoint will accept.) Now all of your sound files will be included with your pages and will play correctly when played on another computer.
  - c. Click on Insert; the Movies and Sound; then Record Sound.
  - d. A recording window will appear. When you are ready to record, click on the round red record button; click on the rectangular stop button to stop recording. It is important to remember to name each of your sound files. I usually name mine to go with the page of the book, i.e., Title, Page 1, etc. Then click OK.
5. To combine your page turning with speech so that a single mouse click or switch will turn the page and speak the text, go to Slide Show; then Slide Transition; then Sound. All of the sounds from your page will be listed here. Choose the sound for the page and click on Apply.
  6. Complete the following steps for each of your slides.

### Wrapping It Up

You are just about finished with your talking book.

1. Choose Slide Show; then Set Up Show; then Browsed at a Kiosk; and OK.
2. You may want to consider adding a time delay between page turnings. This would be helpful to those students utilizing a single switch for access. Choose Slide Show; then Custom Animation; then Action button: then Forward; then Start Animation; then Automatically; and 00:02 seconds; then OK.
3. The easiest way for single switch users to utilize the talking book is to have the keyboard switch interface set to mouse click, then have a peer or adult position the cursor over the forward arrow. Whenever the switch is clicked, the talking book will turn the page and read the text. (Walter, 2001)

### Article Resource URLs

Instructions for creating a talking book using PowerPoint 2000

<http://filebox.vt.edu/users/gsgustaf/vste/ppt-instructions.pdf> (140 kb file)

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## Photos and Graphics

FreeFoto  
<http://www.freefoto.com/>

Free Images  
<http://www.freeimages.co.uk/>

The Amazing Picture Machine  
<http://www.ncrtec.org/picture.htm>

Microsoft Clip Art Gallery  
<http://dgl.microsoft.com/>

## Audio

The Free Site  
[http://www.thefreesite.com/Free\\_Sounds/Free\\_WAVs/index.html](http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Sounds/Free_WAVs/index.html)

The Wav Place  
<http://thewavplace.com/>

Cartoon Sounds  
<http://www.cartoonsounds.com/>

Free Audio Clips  
<http://www.freeaudioclips.com/>

## Copyright issues

Educators and Copyright  
<http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/curriculum/copyright/educ.pdf>

Securing Permissions and Releases  
<http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/permsrel.htm>

Fair Use of Copyrighted Materials  
<http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/intellectualproperty/copypol2.htm>

Chaffee Amendment  
<http://www.bitlaw.com/source/17usc/121.html>



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## Text

Alex: A Catalog of Electronic Texts on the Internet  
<http://www.infomotions.com/alex/>

American Library Association Great Sites  
<http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/lit.html>

Internet Public Library  
<http://www.ipl.org/>

On-Line Books Page  
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/>

Project Gutenberg  
<http://www.promo.net/pg/>

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## About the Author

*Glenna Gustafson is a technology coordinator in the Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She also serves as one of the editors for the VSTE Journal. She can be contacted at [gsgustaf@vt.edu](mailto:gsgustaf@vt.edu).*

