

CIS 400/401: Final Interview Suggestions

Herein, I describe some of my suggestions for creating a successful 15-minute PowerPoint presentation like that required for the final interview. These suggestions **do not** form a specification. That is, this is **not** a grading rubric. Nothing I suggest is required. Ultimately, it is up to you (and your partner) to determine the style and organization of the presentation that best suits the needs of your project.

- *Example Presentation*: The vast majority of groups are doing 'systems' projects. To facilitate discussion, I am going to take an example system and show how my presentation would proceed. In fact, my example is borrowed from two of your colleagues (Evans + Knichel):
 - SYNOPSIS: Given a picture of a UPenn building, identify that building.
 - 1 Slide: Problem statement, motivation for work
 - 'Given an SMS-camera-phone, new students will never get lost on campus again!'
 - 2 Slides: Current work and its weaknesses (if applicable)
 - 'General image recognition is a well understood field'
 - 'Our work isn't terribly new, we just want to package it in a slick, efficient way'
 - 1 Slide: High-level overview of system architecture (flowchart?)
 - 'Receive image -> Compare image to those in DB -> Return label of best match'
 - 1 Slide: Introduce running example, to be carried throughout
 - 'Here is this picture we just took of Levine Hall'
 - ? Slides: Step through individual system components (bulk of presentation)
 - Extract picture from SMS for processing (show in running example)
 - Use MatLab to find image edges (show in example)
 - Compare image against those in DB using algorithm [foo] (show some comparisons)
 - Provide a *quick, high-level, intuitive* bit about how [foo] works
 - Pick image with best correlation metric, return associated label
 - 2 Slides: Remarks on system effectiveness
 - 'Under normal conditions, we name the right building 85% of the time'
 - 1 Slide: Shortcoming and future work
 - 'Our image identification is most inaccurate at night – we could improve this...'
 - 1 Slide: Summary of contribution and concluding remarks

- General Suggestions: Things everyone should (probably) listen too:
 - 15-minutes is not a lot of time. Concentrate on what makes **your** project **novel**. Do not waste time describing well-understood CIS concepts, or the work of others.
 - Your task is not to present your entire work in 15-minutes – that's why you have to write a 12-page paper, too. Rather than trying to impress (or alternatively, overwhelm) us with how much you have done and its low-level details, just help us to **understand** via **intuition**.
 - Use figures to illustrate points (using corresponding examples) whenever possible.
 - Should I do a demonstration, or just provide screen-shots? My suggestion is highly interactive projects should do a demo – otherwise stick to well chosen screen-shots – they are guaranteed to be error-free, and irrelevant details can be abstracted away.
 - Your presentations should not be a sales pitch, but instead more academic in nature. Be frank when discussing your shortcomings.

- Things To Avoid: You really *really* should (probably) not have these in your presentation:
 - (Unless a math or theory project) If you have a LaTeX typeset equation or algorithm, **especially** one cut from a related work, you might want to reconsider.
 - Large blocks of text quoted from related works are like a giant billboard that screams “I have absolutely no idea what is going on here”. There are two solutions: (1) It is not important, omit it, or (2) Learn it, or else you will never be able to impart intuition.
 - Source code, screen-shots of source code, unnecessarily complex examples, technical specifications (like RFCs), SQL statements (outside of examples) – these are all things which leave a very bad taste in my mouth (in a presentation setting).

Yes, many of these things I have listed are painfully obvious and almost cliché. However, there will almost surely be offenders come presentation time. When you're done with your presentation, try to take a step back and revisit the points I have made herein to ensure general compliance.

Good luck with your presentations. Feel free to contact me with further questions. Thanks, -AW