

Most Accomplished Presenter

MAP Award winner uses PowerPoint to bring accessibility to visually impaired student

by Margaret Kavanagh

We'd like to give a hearty congratulations to our MAP (Most Accomplished Presenter) award winner—**Dr. Debby Gilden!** She was nominated by Mr. Harold Murphy, who wrote, "While I was Director of the Center on Disabilities at California State University, Northridge, I used Dr. Debby as a consultant to prepare some of my presentations to international audiences. Her work was outstanding and the presentations given many accolades by my peers. I told her, 'You make PowerPoint tape dance!'"

Dr. Gilden is the owner of GigaGraphics in San Rafael, CA, and is an accomplished PowerPoint creative force. In fact, Dr. Gilden is also known as the *PowerPoint Princess!*

Words from the winner

We asked Dr. Debby a few questions about her work in PowerPoint and here's what she had to say:

How long have you worked in PowerPoint and how did you become so proficient?

I've been working in PowerPoint for 11 years. Amazingly, it was PowerPoint that replaced my hatred of computers with an intense desire to be a quality computer user.

Since then I've never stopped experimenting, and I've never stopped being thrilled with seeing the magic that appears on my slides.

I love sharing both my work and my knowledge of the application. I've taught PowerPoint classes at venues as diverse as cruise ships and public libraries. In June, I taught "The Private Parts of PowerPoint" as part of Eli Journals' web conference series.

What PowerPoint project are you most proud of and why?

I've used PowerPoint in many unusual ways, but there's one that brought tears to my eyes. I was watching a bright engineering student who has very, very little vision use his computer as if he were totally blind. To access text on the screen, he either listened to it spoken in synthetic speech or read it on a mechanical Braille display. He was unable to access graphics at all. This was most unfortunate because as he longed to see the curves that resulted from his engineering formulas.

After some experimenting with color combinations and sizes to see what might be best for him, I made him a PowerPoint template with a black background, a default text of huge yellow Arial letters, and AutoShapes defaults of bright yellow fill with a thick, bright blue border.

Not only was he able to see text and some graphics on the screen, but he actually learned to use AutoShapes to create circuit diagrams. And after I made some modifications to his graphs (e.g. greatly increased line thickness), he was indeed able to see the curves of his formulas.



"Amazingly, it was PowerPoint that replaced my hatred of computers with an intense desire to be a quality computer user."

*- Dr. Debby Gilden
MAP Award Winner*

Do you have favorite PowerPoint tricks to share with our readers?

I use a lot of PowerPoint tricks. Some help me work faster; others allow me to create unique effects. Here are three of my favorite speed-up tricks:

1. Duplicate an object by holding [Ctrl] while clicking on the border of the original, and then dragging the duplicate to any location on the slide.
2. Make multiple copies of an object, with the copies equally spaced from one another and in the same direction. Press [Ctrl]D, drag the duplicate to the desired location, and then repeatedly press [Ctrl]D.
3. Make the magic of what I call "Two = Infinity." This means that by clicking twice, you can keep doing something forever. For example, click twice on the Format Painter button and you can apply the properties of the original to as many other objects as you wish—even if they're on a different slide.

Way to go, Dr. Debby!

Be sure to check out her PowerPoint Princess website at www.pptprincess.com for examples as diverse as a Photo Album with pizzazz, a bulletless presentation design, lessons about how AutoShapes can be used by both children and adults to draw, and more. You'll also find some great articles and information about her PowerPoint courses. 