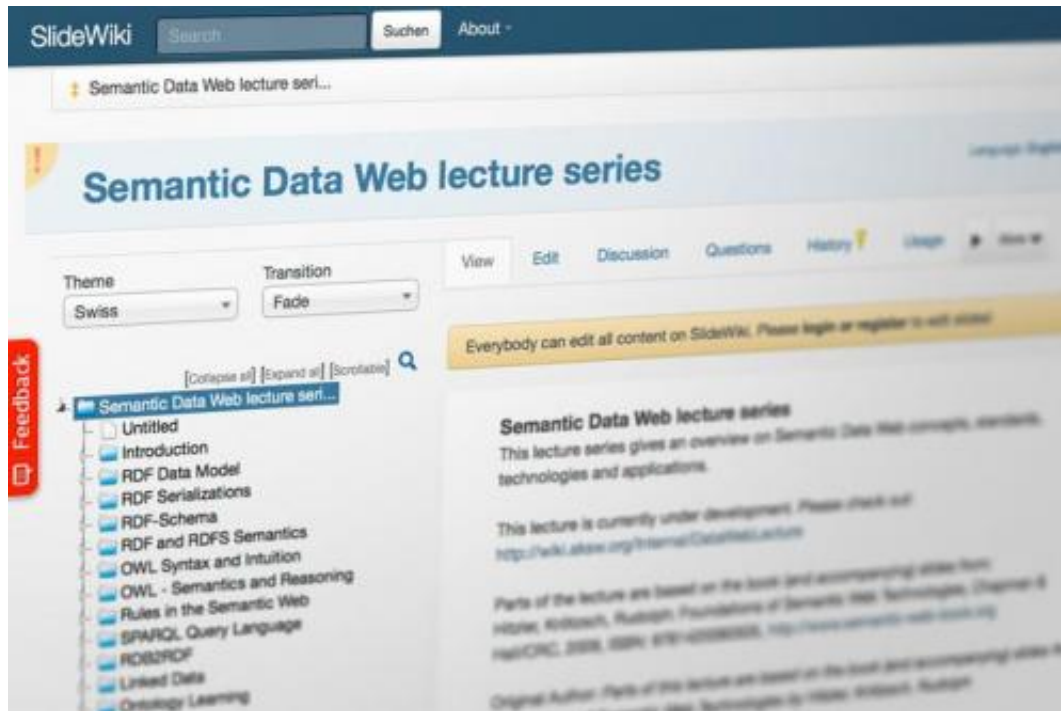


Presentations collectively prepared

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On the Internet platform 'SlideWiki,' users can prepare, optimize and translate presentations collectively, just like Wikipedia, the platform on which it is modeled. Currently presentations from the field of information technology predominate. However, the portal is open to users from all scientific disciplines, along with industry as well. Credit: Fraunhofer Gesellschaft

Today, every speaker compiles his or her own presentations to accompany their lectures. With a new Internet platform that uses Wikipedia as its model, slide show presentations can now be drafted, distributed, and translated together with others.

Presentations are ubiquitous. If you want to pass on your knowledge or expertise nowadays, you throw it on the wall via beamer. At the office, employees use presentations to share the latest business figures with their coworkers; at universities, professors structure their presentations with them. Anyone who has attempted to compile a presentation knows how much time it will cost. Typically days pass before thoughts have been wheedled down to a handful of words, with the relevant graphics worked in. The problem: Every speaker creates a personalized version - even though good slide shows may already exist on many myriad topics. That is an immense waste of time.

Sharing the work: SlideWiki

In order to save precious time, researchers from the Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems IAIS in Sankt Augustin, in collaboration with the Universities of Bonn and Leipzig, have developed an open-source Internet Platform where interesting presentations can be prepared and translated collectively. "The challenge was to write a software which enables all authors to work on the slides simultaneously. Slides are more complex than plain text. They include texts and pictures and can change their order," says Project Manager Prof. Dr. Sören Auer from the Department of Organized Knowledge at IAIS. In the style of Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, the developers have named their platform "SlideWiki," because the operating principle is quite similar. With Wikipedia, hundreds of people work as a collective force to put together the entries in this virtual reference resource. Thus, after some time, a vast treasure trove of knowledge has come into being. The same thing is taking place with SlideWiki. Each registered user can upload his or her presentations onto the platform, or change or amend those of other members. "This saves lecturers from having to constantly reinvent the wheel," says Auer.

Auer is also a professor at the University of Bonn and works there,

among other things, on the topic of "open education," i.e., the development of educational platforms on the Internet that are accessible to every human being with Internet access. Unlike in German or English, he explained, in some languages there is so far hardly any publicly accessible information on too many subjects. In the future, SlideWiki could help with this by allowing the experts to make their presentations accessible to other people in various languages. What's more: in many regions today, only a marginal number of people attend schools or universities. But with SlideWiki, soon anybody with an Internet connection can acquire this knowledge.

Of course, there are already websites on the Internet from which users can download presentations on a variety of topics. However, the presentations are frequently out-of-date and cannot just be simply updated. Moreover, they typically originate just from a single author. By contrast, in SlideWiki, a whole slew of experts are constantly contributing and revising the presentations so that they are kept up-to-date. In addition, no copyrights are violated with SlideWiki. Since the content on this open platform is openly available, users can utilize them without hesitation. On SlideWiki, users can additionally compile new presentations at their discretion, embellish them with their own slides, and upload them again. One unique feature is the "question function," which lecturers can attach questions to their own slides. This way it is possible for students to test their knowledge on their own.

A translation function is linked to SlideWiki that transfers the presentations into another language at the push of a button. Of course, post-editing work is necessary, because the program is incapable of conveying the terms or concepts with any precision, Auer adds. Nonetheless this clearly saves more time than having to manually translate slide after slide.

There are currently more than 3,000 presentations on SlideWiki, and

with each new user, more are added on. Auer and his team have already earned recognition for their innovative approach to making knowledge publicly accessible – and editable – in presentation format. In April of this year, they received the Creative Innovation Award of the Open Education Consortium, a global association that advocates the free and open access to knowledge and expertise.

Provided by Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft

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