

An Introduction to Adobe Captivate 4

Sarah L. Mabrouk
Framingham State College
smabrouk@framingham.edu

Captivate 4, a product of Adobe Systems Incorporated, can be used to create video demonstrations and virtual guided tours, tutorials, and software simulations as well as online quizzes. MS PowerPoint slides, including those in PPTX format, can be incorporated into Captivate 4 projects and synchronized with the original PowerPoint file using the linked import option. Captivate movies can be embedded into Adobe PDF files, and variables can be used within interactive Captivate projects to personalize the user's learning experience. Captivate 4 can include text or voice-over that can be directly recorded or automatic voice-over converted from text. Captivate is a great resource for creating tools designed to help students to explore their online learning environment, to gain necessary computer skills, to learn software, and to create tools for tutorials and testing. We will explore the Captivate 4 environment in the guise of creating a video demonstration for accessing and using Blackboard's virtual classroom.

From the Adobe Captivate 4 page, <http://www.adobe.com/products/captivate/>, on the Adobe.com site, we can access information about Captivate 4 as well as new features information, <http://www.adobe.com/products/captivate/features/?view=topnew>, and the trial download page, <http://www.adobe.com/go/trycaptivate>. Once we create an Adobe account, we can download and install Captivate 4 for a 30-day trial period; the list of Adobe product downloads is available at <http://www.adobe.com/downloads/>. The Captivate 4 trial version converts to the full-featured version upon entering of a serial number after the purchase of the software.

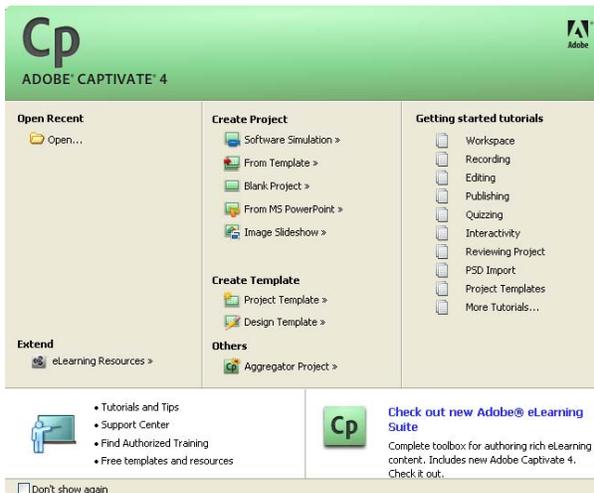


Figure 1: The Captivate main menu.

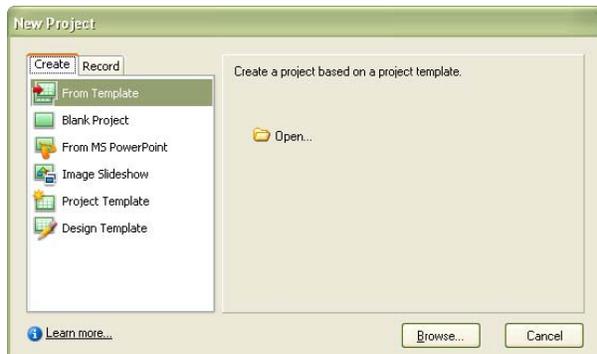


Figure 2: The Create tab of the *From Template* entry in the New Project dialog box.

Let us begin by examining the main Captivate menu, Figure 1. There are five sections. The first section on the top left displays a list of recent projects as well as an option for opening others and at the bottom of this section there is a hyperlink to the Adobe Captivate Exchange. The Adobe Captivate Exchange, <http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/exchange/index.cfm?event=productHome&exc=22>, provides access to Captivate resources for purchase and exchange such as, for example, caption types and auto-text, project and design templates, games, media, playback controls, and sample projects. The second section has subsections for creating a new project, creating a template, and for creating an aggregator project. There are five (5) project types listed in the project subsection, software simulation, projects created from a template, blank project, projects created from a MS PowerPoint, and image slideshows. Two types of templates can be created, a project template and a design template. Design templates provide a standard look for projects as well as a set of custom visual properties for buttons, text captions, click boxes, highlight boxes, the mouse, question slides, quiz results slides, rollover captions, slides and

slidelets, text animations, and text entry boxes. Project templates are useful in providing consistency among related projects or similar modules and, when multiple authors work together on a project, they allow project preferences to be used across multiple projects. The aggregator allows one to combined multiple projects that have been published as SWF files and then publish the combined project as SWF output, an executable file, as a PDF file or as HTML. The third section provides access to several tutorials that provide helpful examples and information about using and creating learning tools with Captivate. Tutorial topics include recording, editing, publishing, quizzing, and interactivity and the last entry in this section provides direct access to the Community Help page on Adobe's Captivate Help and Support site. The first lower section provides access to the Adobe Captivate Developer Center, <http://www.adobe.com/devnet/captivate/?trackingid=ZOGA>, the Community Help page on the Adobe Captivate Help and Support site, <http://www.adobe.com/support/captivate/?trackingid=ZOGB>, and the Adobe Captivate Training page and the Adobe Captivate Exchange page, <http://www.adobe.com/support/training/products/captivate.html?trackingid=ZOGC> and http://www.adobe.com/cfusion/exchange/index.cfm?event=productHome&exc=22&loc=en_us&trackingid=ZOGD, respectively. The second lower section provides access to information about the Adobe eLearning suite, http://www.adobe.com/products/elearningsuite/?trackingid=EENEM&pss=cp_4.0_win_en_full_20040226. So, this main menu/window provides access to all Captivate projects and templates as well as to helpful information and examples.

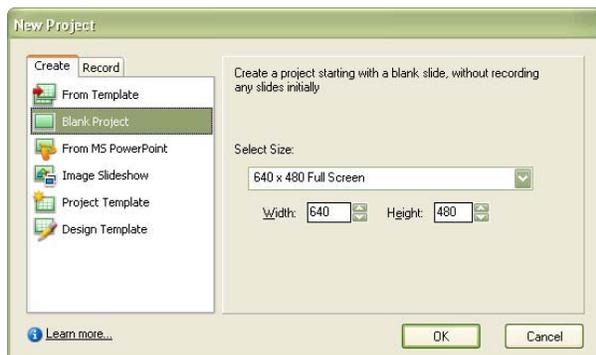


Figure 3: The Create tab of the *Blank Project* entry in the New Project dialog box.

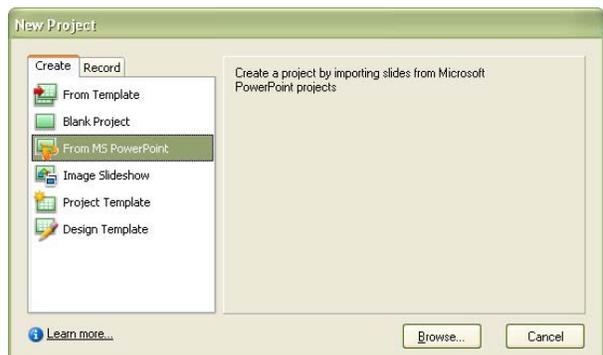


Figure 4: The Create tab of the *From MS PowerPoint* entry in the New Project dialog box

In the Create Project section, the Software Simulation, Blank Project, Image Slideshow, Project Template, and Design Template entries open the New Project dialog box. The New Project dialog Box has two tabs, the Create tab and the Record tab. Since the create tab lists options *From Template*, *Blank Project*, *From PowerPoint*, *Image Slideshow*, *Project Template*, and *Design Template*, we can change project types by selecting the desired project type in the left-window of the dialog box. From the Create tab for the *From Template* entry, Figure 2, we can open the template that we want to use for a project. For the

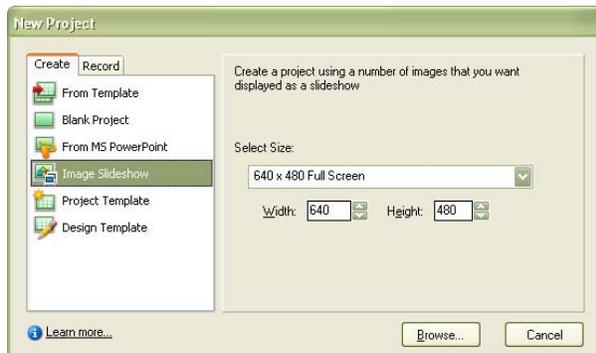


Figure 5: The Create tab of the *Image Slideshow* entry in the New Project dialog box.

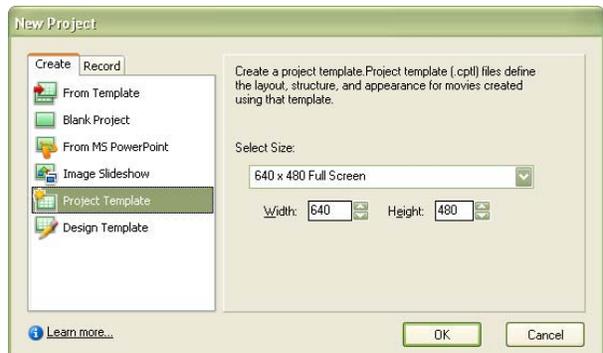


Figure 6: The Create tab of the *Project Template* entry in the New Project dialog box.

Blank Project, *Image Slideshow*, and *Project Template* entries, we can select the size of the recording/capture window and/or the display method, for example full screen, Flash Player or Browser as well as Custom or Customize ..., for the project using the Create Tab, Figure 3, Figure 5, and Figure 6, respectively; the pull-down menu for these options can be viewed in Figure 8. The screen size is set in pixels.

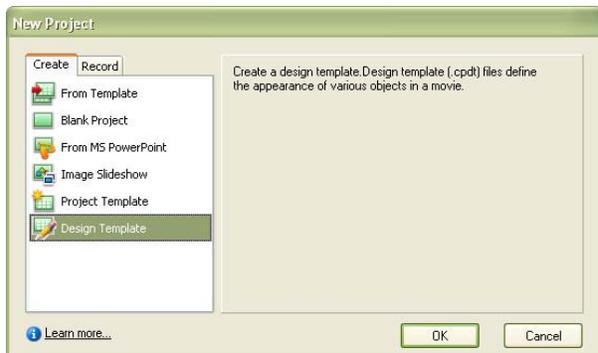


Figure 7: The Create tab of the *Design Template* entry in the New Project dialog box.

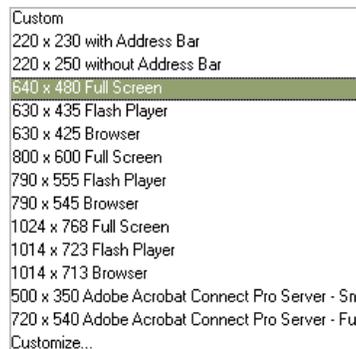


Figure 8: The Select Size menu on the Create tab for the *Blank Project*, *Image Slideshow*, and *Project Template* entries.

For the *From MS PowerPoint* entry on the Create tab, we can browse to find the MS PowerPoint file that we would like to import into our Captivate project, Figure 4, and the *From Template* entry on the Create tab, opens the Open dialog box to the Templates folder in Captivate, Figure 9, so that we can select the template that we want to use. As with all applications, we should be careful to save all templates, both design templates and application templates, in the same main folder so that we can find them easily when we need them.

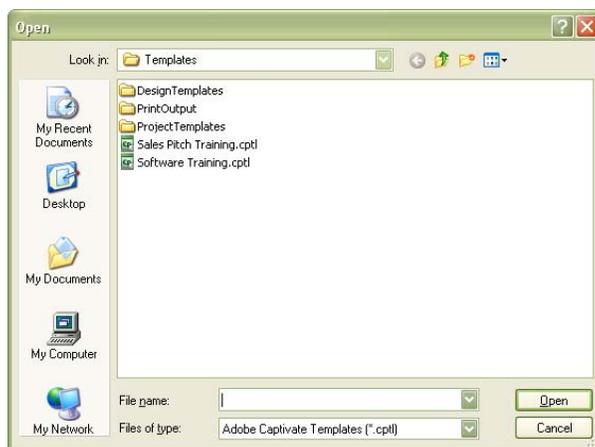


Figure 9: The Open Template dialog box.

Using the *Application* entry on the Record tab, Figure 10, we select the window from which we would like to create our project. Once the window has been selected, Figure 10, we can set the size of the recording rectangle. The pull-down menu has the same size options as those in the Select Size menu on the Create tab, Figure 8. In addition to the options on the pull-down menu, we can set the width and height directly as well as select the Application Training Region or the Application Window.

The *Screen Area* entry on the Record tab of the New Project dialog box, Figure 12, contains options for setting the size of the recording rectangle; these include the same pull-down menu options as in the *Application* entry and on the Create tab, Figure 8. Selecting the Custom option on the Recording Rectangle pull-down menu, Figure 13, changes the available screen options to full screen and custom size with direct entry of the width and height.

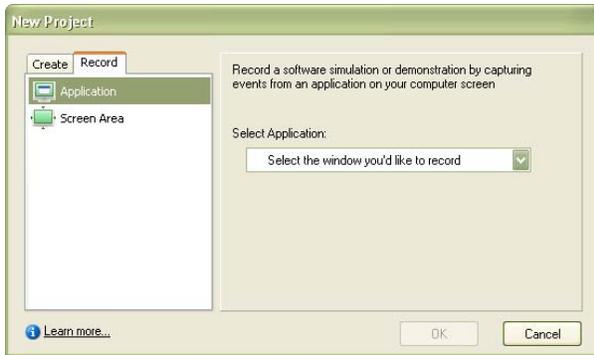


Figure 10: The Record tab in the New Project dialog box before the application window has been selected.

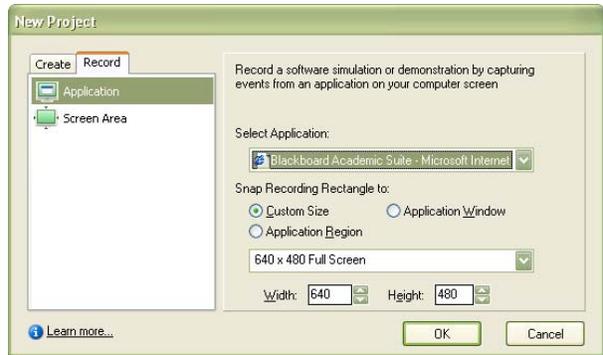


Figure 11: The Record tab in the New Project dialog box after the application window has been selected

There is no perfect window size. Creating several projects of different sizes and viewing them on computers with different screen sizes and screen settings will help you to decide the rectangle size that you prefer. Overall, it is important to consider the window size and the position for the region to be recorded carefully. There are a variety of screen sizes, laptops with diagonals of twelve inches or less, wide-screen laptops with diagonals of fifteen inches or more, and PC's with large monitors having diagonals of eighteen inches or more, and, although most folks set their screen resolutions as 1024 pixels by 768 pixels or higher, there are still those who set their screen resolution as 800 pixels by 600 pixels. Selecting an appropriate window size makes it possible for the project, be it a video demonstration, tutorial, or quiz, to be viewed on any computer.

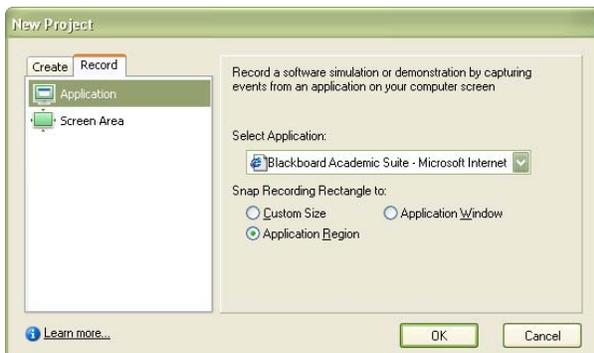


Figure 12: .The application, MS Internet Explorer, is selected for the *Application* entry on the Record tab of the New Project dialog box.

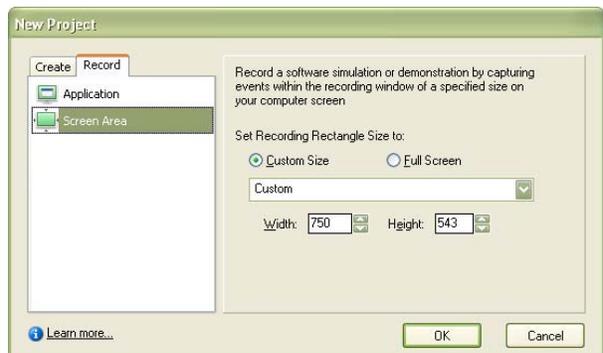


Figure 13: The dimensions of the recording rectangle are set on the *Screen Area* entry of the Record tab of the New Project dialog box.

Since we want to create a video demonstration for accessing and using Blackboard's virtual classroom, we select the *Software Simulation* entry in *Create Project* section of the main Captivate 4 window, select the MS Internet Explorer application (this must be open to the desired initial page on Blackboard) and set the recording rectangle to capture the application region rather than the application window in the *Application* entry on the Record tab, Figure 12, and set the desired size for the recording rectangle in the *Screen Area* entry on the Record tab, Figure 13. Here, initially, we will use a custom setting of 750 pixels by 543 pixels, Figure 13. Once the recording rectangle opens, we will be able to adjust its placement and size as needed.

Setting the recording rectangle to record the application region rather than the application window allows us to set our recording region to a selected region rather than to the entire application window, Figure 14. We should consider the region that we want to display when choosing between recording the application region and the application window. With panning, recording a selected region can help the user to focus on the information of interest as well as eliminate distractions that may be present in the application window. In addition, the closer focus on the application region can make information easier to see than in the application window.

We use the handles, the white rectangles displayed at the corners and in the middle of each side of the red recording rectangle, to adjust the size of the recording rectangle. Positioning the cursor over the red recording rectangle turns the white arrow cursor, , into the black four headed arrow cursor, , which can be used to move the recording rectangle to a different position in the application window. Comparing Figure 14 with Figure 15, we see that the location and width of the recording rectangle have been adjusted so that the Blackboard menu at the left-hand side of the window and the *Join* and *Recordings*

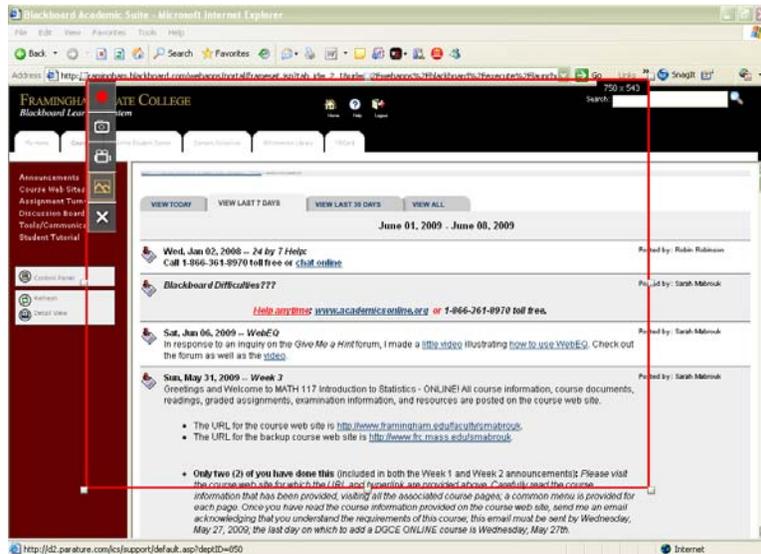


Figure 14: The recording rectangle displayed over the MS Internet Explorer window in its initial position and initial size, 750 pixels by 543 pixels.

buttons on the Collaboration Sessions page will be displayed within the recording rectangle; the width of the rectangle has been increased to 850 pixels. Before beginning the recording, we should always make sure that the desired elements will be included within the recording rectangle.

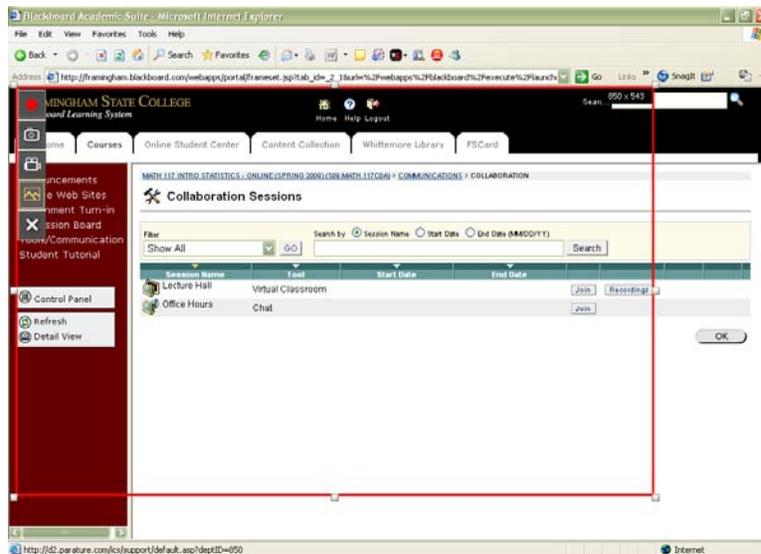


Figure 15: The recording rectangle displayed over the MS Internet Explorer window – resized to 850 pixels by 543 pixels and adjusted to display the desired region .

To do this, we can open the recording rectangle and step through the movements that we want to make and the parts of the pages that we want to display. Since the recording rectangle remains on top of all windows displayed on screen until recording is completed or cancelled, we can check the view of the pages and entries to be displayed.



Figure 16: The recording control buttons.

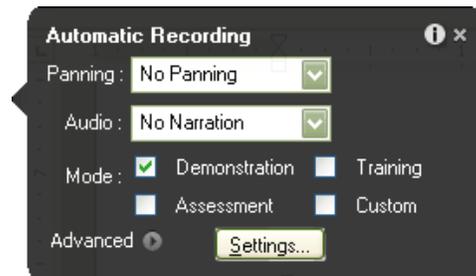


Figure 17: The Automatic Recording settings.

The size of the recording rectangle is displayed at the top right-hand corner of the rectangle and the recording controls, Figure 16, are displayed vertically along the top left-hand side of the rectangle. The first recording control,  is used to begin recording in the selected mode. The automatic recording mode can be changed using the second control, . The third control button, , is used to select the options for the full motion recording mode.  is used to set the options for the manual recording mode. The last button, , is used to cancel the recording.

Left-clicking  opens the Automatic Recordings settings dialog box, Figure 17, left-clicking  opens the Full Motion Recording settings dialog box, Figure 18, and left-clicking , opens the Manual Recording settings dialog box, Figure 19. In each of these, we can set the panning option (no panning, automatic



Figure 18: The Full Motion Recording settings.



Figure 19: The Manual Recording settings.

panning, or manual panning), the audio option (no narration, stereo mix, microphone, or CD player) and the general settings for the project (using the Settings ... button). The Advanced option in the Automatic Recording dialog box opens the language options for the Captions.

Left-clicking the Settings ... button opens the Preferences dialog box.

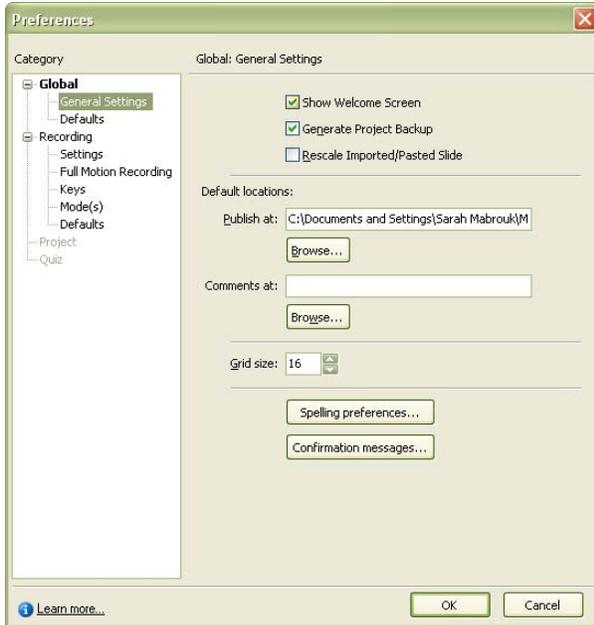


Figure 20: The General Settings.

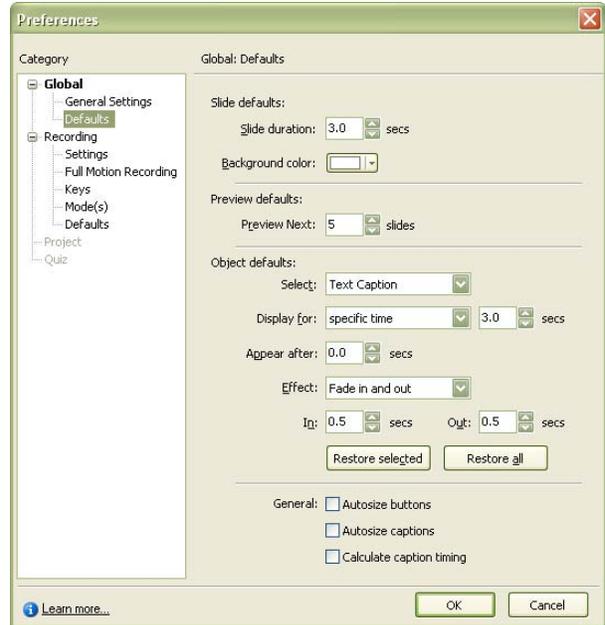


Figure 21: The Default settings.

The General settings entry, Figure 20, in the Global settings can be used to change file location to which projects are published, the grid size, to change the spelling preferences and confirmation messages preferences, the rescaling of imported/pasted slides preference, the generation of project backup preference, and the display of the welcome screen preference. The timings for the various elements of the project, including the slide duration, timing of the text caption, mouse, highlight box, rollover effects, buttons, and animation, for example, can be set using the Defaults entry in the Global Category, Figure 21; the defaults can be restored for selected objects or for all objects using the Restore selected and Restore all buttons, respectively.

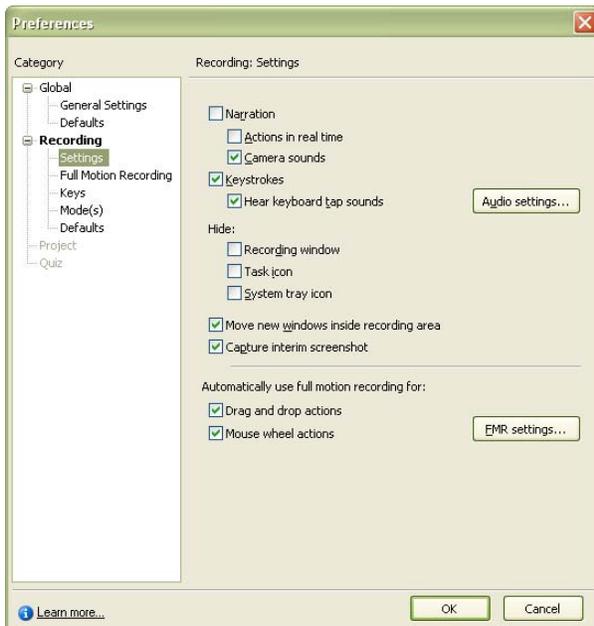


Figure 22: The Recording Settings..

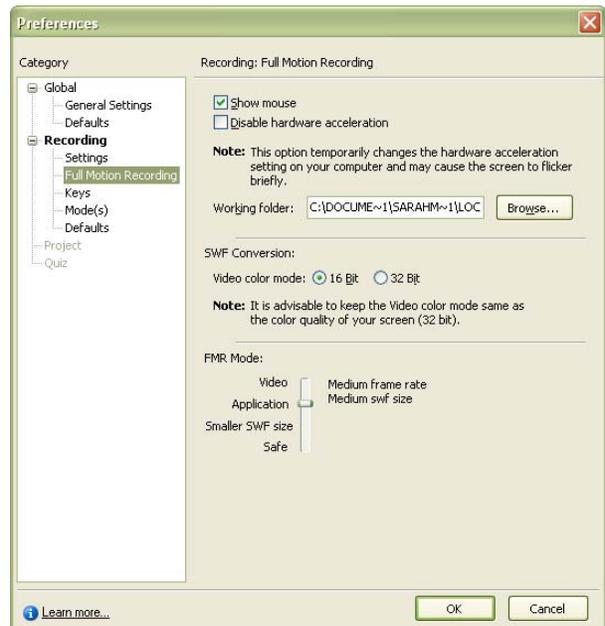


Figure 23: The Full Motion Recording options.

The Recording Settings, Figure 22, include options for narration, camera sounds when screen captures are taken, keyboard tap sounds for keystrokes, hiding the system tray icon, moving new windows within

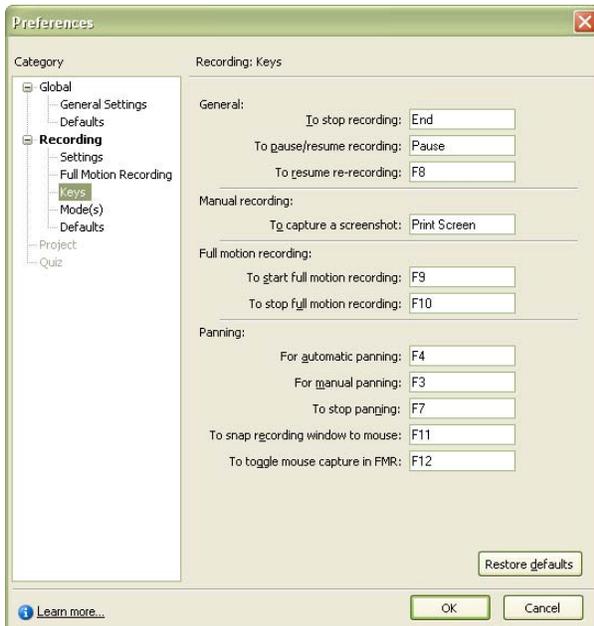


Figure 24: The Recording Keys.

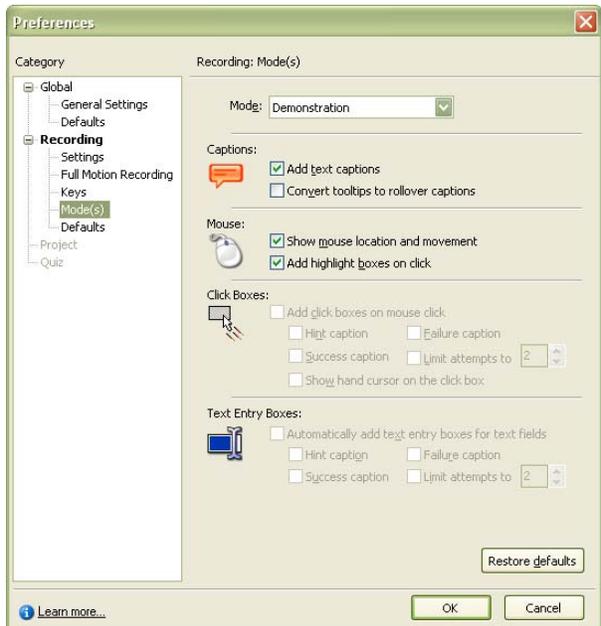


Figure 25: The Recording Modes.

the recording region, capturing interim screen shots, and automatically using full motion for drag-and-drop motion and mouse wheel actions. The Full Motion Recording options include showing the mouse, selecting the working folder, and the video color mode, Figure 23.

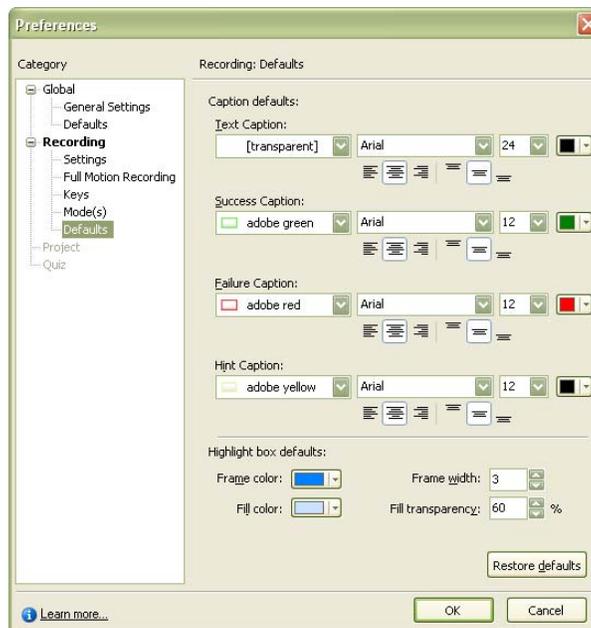


Figure 26: The Recording Defaults.

The Recording Keys, Figure 24, serve as the controls while recording. These include general controls such as the End key to stop recording, the Pause key to pause and resume recording, and the F8 key to resume re-recording, the Print Screen key for manual screen captures as well as controls for full motion recording and panning. The settings for adding captions, showing the mouse and mouse movement and adding highlight boxes are controlled using the Recording modes, Figure 25. The colors and settings for

text captions and highlight boxes as well as for success, failure, and hint captions are controlled using the Recording defaults, Figure 26.

With all our settings adjusted as desired, we are ready to record our project. We use the first recording control button, , to begin recording our project. Captivate will take a screen capture when we click on any buttons or hyperlinks as well as when the screen changes. Since the display of new windows can be delayed due to the connection speed, we can use the Print Screen button to add screen captures when desired/needed; adding screen captures is not problematic since the corresponding slide in the project can be easily deleted when we edit the project.

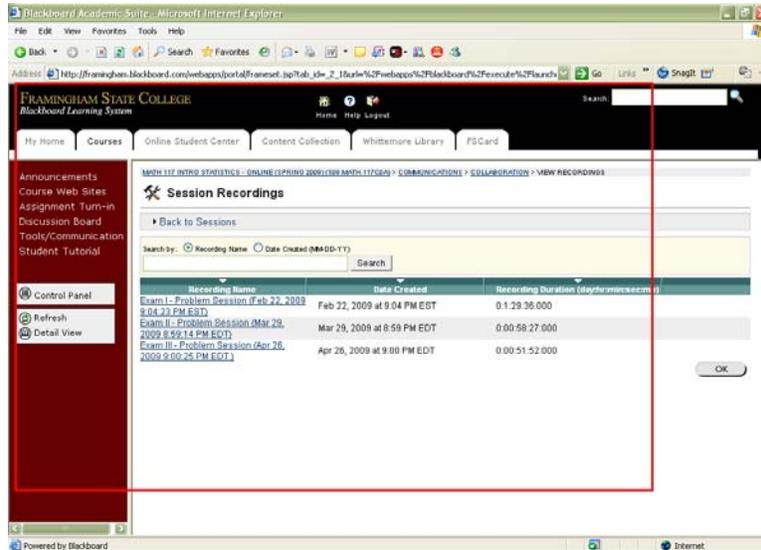


Figure 27: The Recording Rectangle displayed over the project window.

When we begin our project, the recording control buttons, Figure 16, disappear: the recording proceeds with the region inside the recording window being captured with each mouse click or screen change. Since there are no controls displayed on the screen, Figure 27, it is important to take note of the Recording Keys, Figure 24. While you can change the Recording Keys, the logical correspondence of the Pause, End, and Print Screen to their name-sake functions is beneficial to maintain for easy use.

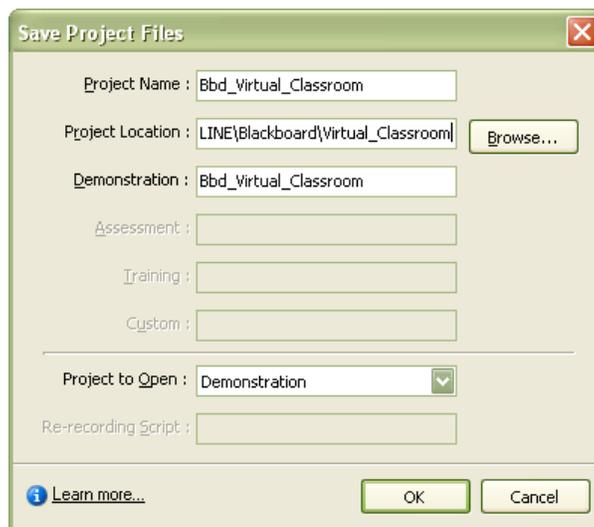


Figure 28: The Save Project Files dialog box.

Once we have completed the desired movements, we press the End key to conclude recording. The Save Project Files dialog box, Figure 28, opens. Using the Save Project Files dialog box, we name the project, and select the location to which to save the project using the Browse ... button. It is important to save projects to a location at which the files are easy to find as well as to use a project name that will make it easy to distinguish between similar projects. Saving all elements of a project in a main folder as well as grouping related projects within other folders makes it easier to find and to modify projects; organizing projects within folders makes them easier to find when making an aggregator project.

Once the project has been saved, the project opens in the Storyboard View, Figure 29. The Storyboard View allows us to examine all the project slides together. The Edit View, Figure 30, allows us to examine and to edit individual slides.

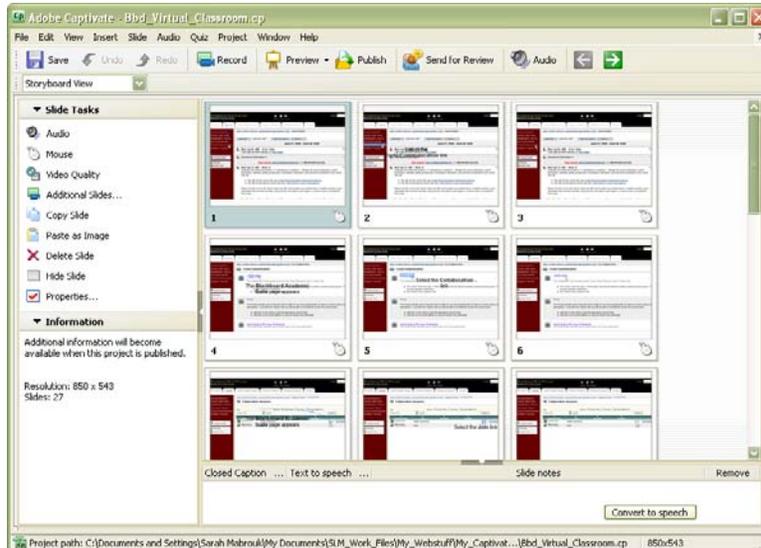


Figure 29: The Storyboard View for our project.

The base Edit View, Figure 30, allows us to examine the individual slides in a manner similar to that used in MS PowerPoint. However, it is helpful to be able to view the timings for the slides while editing the slides.

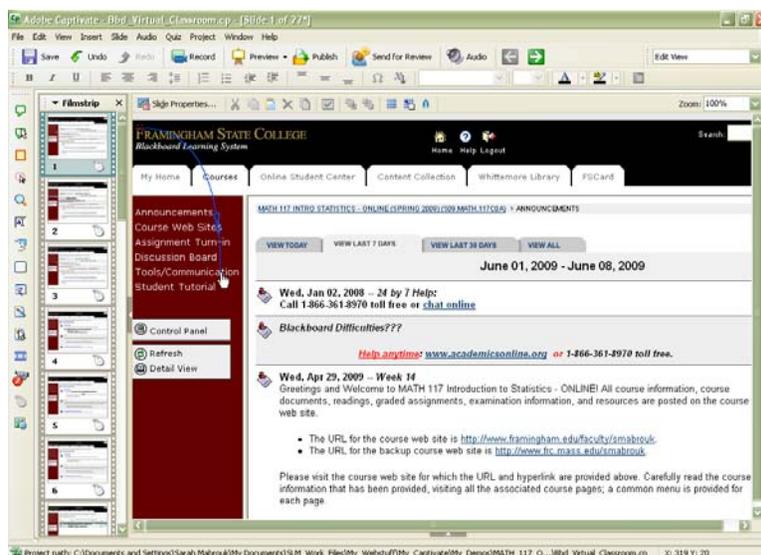


Figure 30: The Edit View for our project.

In order to display the slide timings Timeline as well as to display additional toolbars, we use the Window menu, Figure 33. Left-clicking the Timeline entry on the Window menu displays the slide Timeline at the bottom of the Edit View window, Figure 31. Positioning the cursor over the four vertical dots at the left end of the Timeline for Slide 1 bar, left-clicking, holding, and dragging, we can move the Timeline from the bottom to the top of the editing window below the menus and toolbars, Figure 32. Customizing the Captivate windows so that frequently used elements are positioned to make them easy to access/use makes the Captivate environment more comfortable and easier to use when working on projects.

Examining the Slide menu, Figure 34, for example, we see that there are many aspects of the project that we can customize including the mouse pointers, the slide transition, the video quality, slide properties, the

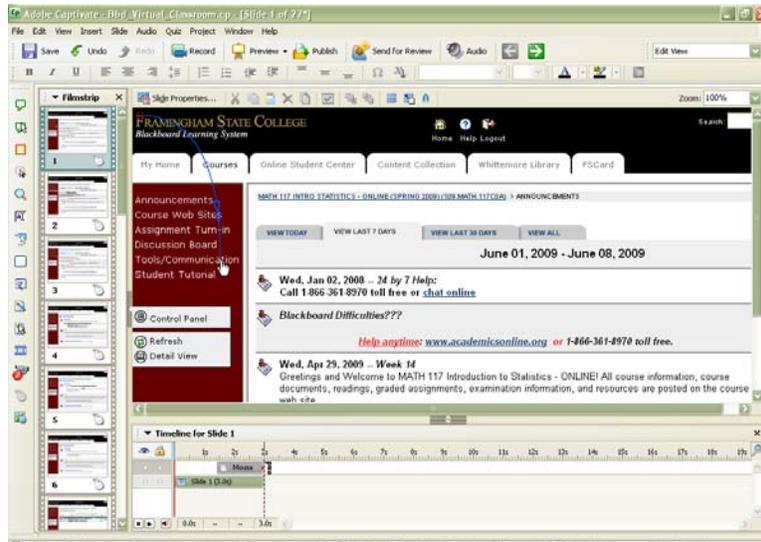


Figure 31: The Storyboard View with the slide Timeline displayed at the bottom of the project window.

pointer path on the slide, standardizing the pointers for all slides, and even lock the slide. As with MS PowerPoint slides, we need to be careful not to make our projects overly-busy (let's be honest – *irritating*) by adding frivolous elements.

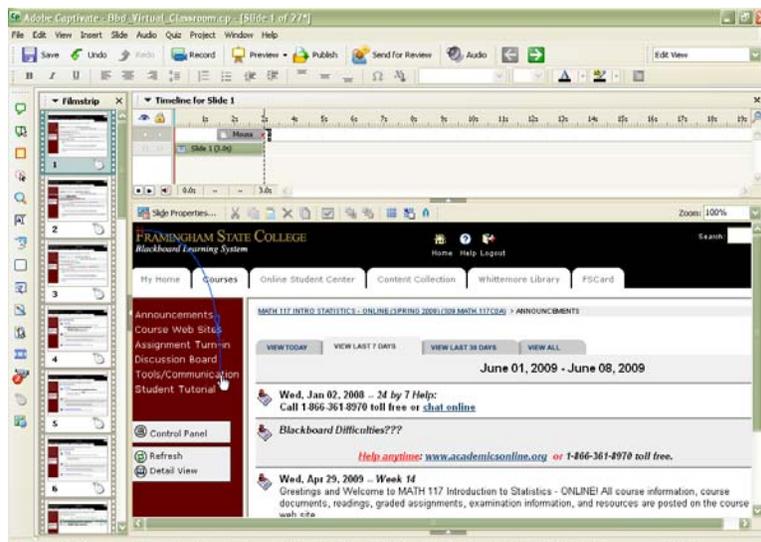


Figure 32: The Storyboard View with the slide Timeline displayed at the top of the project window.

Using the Branching View, we can view and edit the branching options for a project. Examining the Branching view for our project, Figure 35, we do not find any branches: our project was recorded in a linear manner, moving from one page to the next within the Blackboard site. The individual branches of a project must be recorded/created before they can be added as branches off individual slides. When we record the original project, we can record the various parts that we want to use as the branches and then edit these to become the branches of the project. The advantage to recording all parts of the project at the same time, with the same settings, and in the same window is consistency of the view of the project. Branches provide interactive elements in demonstrations and tutorials that enable the user to jump to other slides, to view selected URL's, and to open other projects.

Up to this point, we have not discussed adding audio to projects. While we can add narration as we capture images, it is more efficient to add audio *after* the visual aspects of the project have been collected

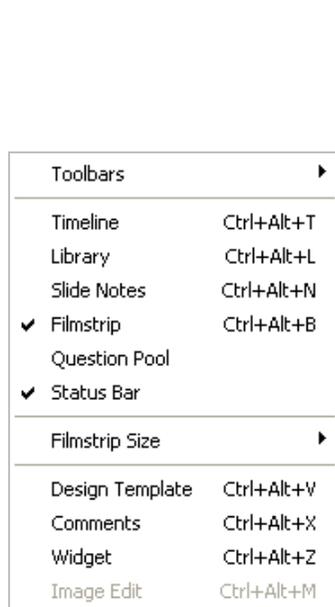


Figure 33: The Window menu.

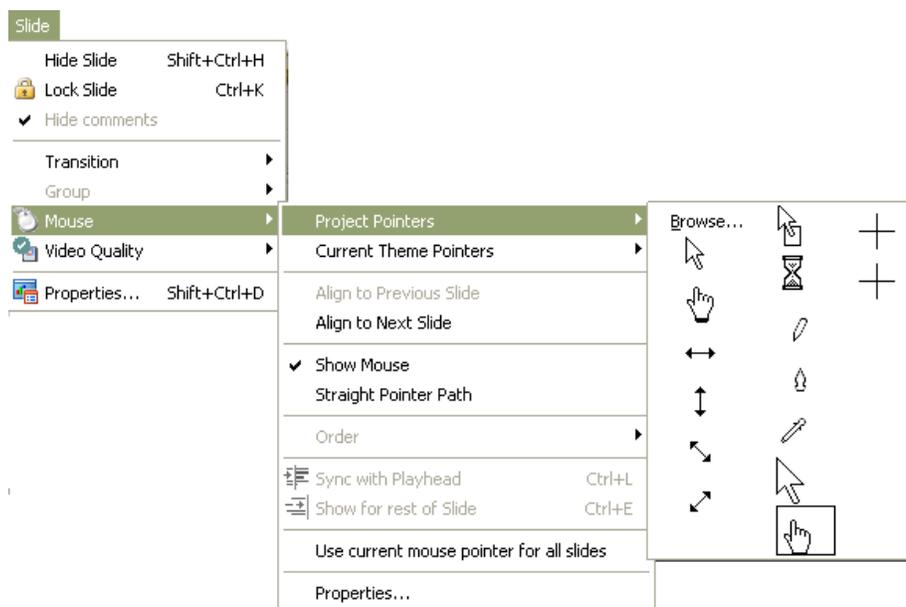


Figure 34: The Slide menu.

and edited. Using a computer's built-in microphone does not provide the best sound. Sound levels can be modified but the best sound recording is done using an external microphone. In order to avoid recording extra sounds due to movement of the microphone, it is best to place the microphone in a stand and to eliminate as much background noise as possible during the recording session. Creating a script for the narration and practicing is helpful. Using a script helps us to consider what we want to say, and practicing helps us to consider the speed at which the narrative should be read and the tone to be used during recording so that the audio is pleasing rather than grating. Even if audio is to be added to a demonstration, it is important to include text boxes.

We must carefully consider the needs of the user: audio is beneficial to some learners, and visual elements and text elements are important to others. While using background music may be tempting, the user may not appreciate/like the background music that we select. In addition, background music can distract the user from important details that the tool is meant to communicate.

Captivate 4 has an automatic voice-over function with which closed caption text can be converted to speech using installed voices. This text-to-speech conversion eliminates the need to purchase audio equipment for recording audio.

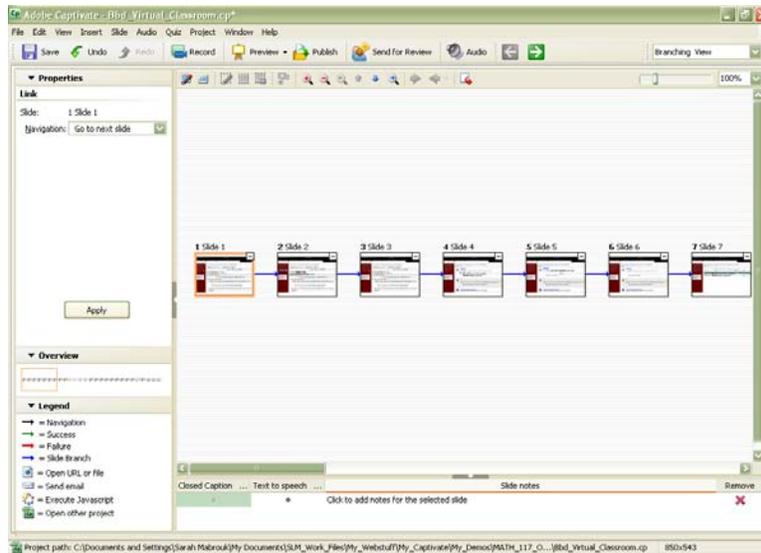


Figure 35: The Branching View for our project.

It is important to carefully consider how text captions will be displayed on slides. For example, text captions with a transparent background, Figure 36, can be difficult to read even when larger text is used.

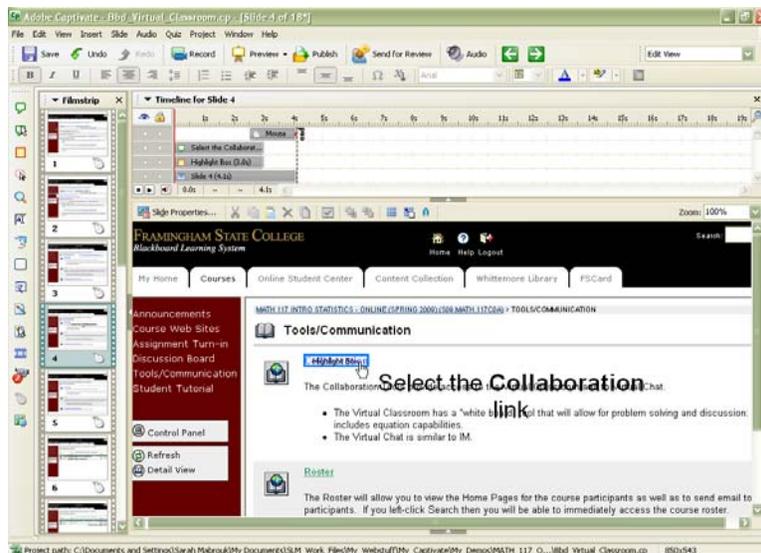


Figure 36: The slide with transparent text caption..

However, text captions within callouts with nontransparent backgrounds make reading the text easier; the color options for text captions are set in the Recording Defaults, Figure 26. Left-clicking the text caption and selecting Properties on the Edit menu or right-clicking the text caption and selecting Properties on the pop-up menu opens the Text Caption dialog box, Figure 38. Using the Text Caption tab, we can edit the text and formatting for the text caption as well as select the caption type and colors. There is a limited number of symbols that can be included in captions as well; to access these symbols, we would left-click the  button on the toolbar in the Text Caption window.

Text within captions can be directly edited by left-clicking the text: this places the caption in an edit mode in which the text within the caption can be modified. If more than the text for a caption is being modified then using the Properties entry on the Edit menu or on the right-click-pop-up menu to display the Text Caption dialog box is more efficient. The Text Caption dialog box opens when we double-click the caption's element in the slide Timeline.

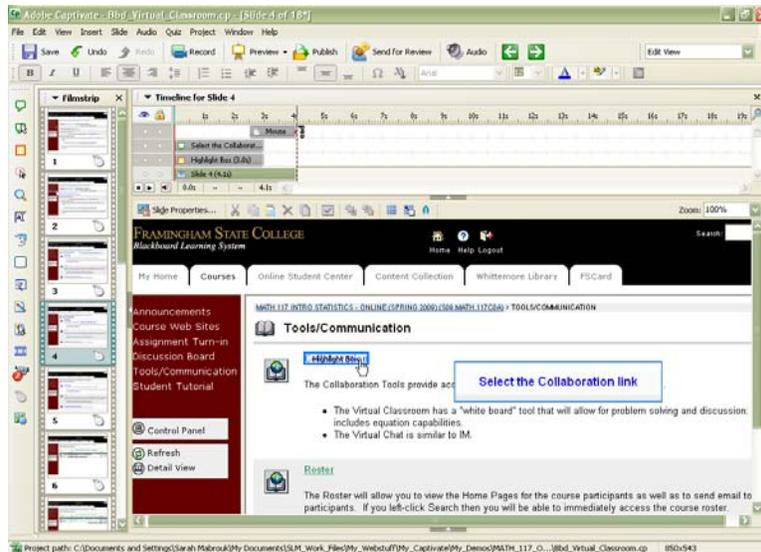


Figure 37: The slide with text caption within a callout.

We must be careful to use readable and available fonts. Unreadable text within captions are not helpful to the user. If we select a font that is not available on the user's computer then another font will be substituted: the font that is substituted may be unreadable using the size, color, and formats that have been set for the caption. While varying colors and fonts can be tempting, using a common color scheme makes elements easy to find on the screen. We must also be careful of color contrast and colorblindness since we want our project to be useful for everyone. You may find it helpful to read about color contrast, <http://www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/effective-color-contrast/>, and colorblindness, <http://colorvisiontesting.com/> and <http://www.visibone.com/colorblind/>.

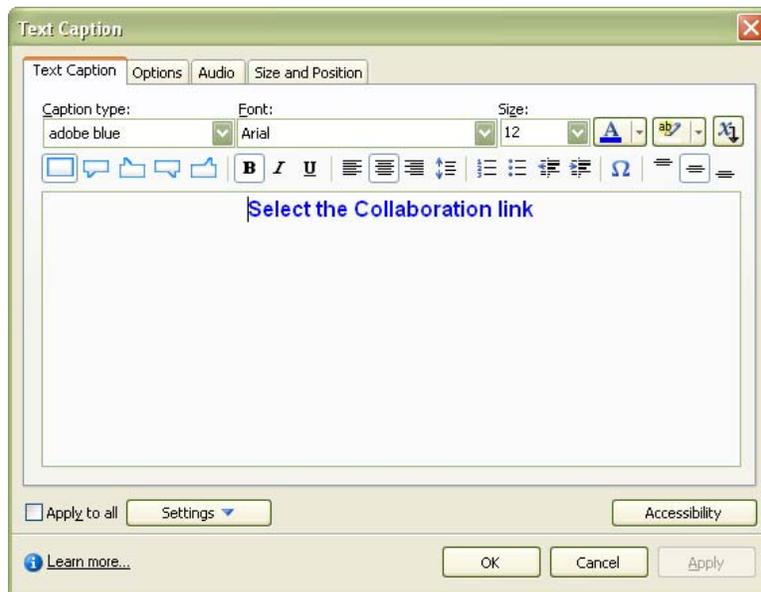


Figure 38: The Text Caption dialog box.

We can modify the display timings for each element individually using the Options tab on the element's editing dialog box, for example the Text Caption dialog box in Figure 38, or we can use the visual representation of the timing the elements on the slide provided in the Timeline. Each element can be modified by clicking and dragging as well as positioning the cursor at the beginning or the end of the

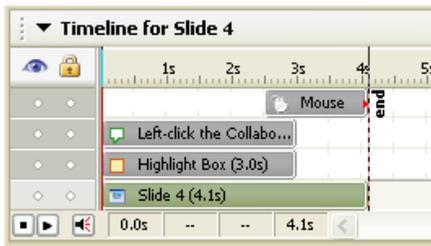


Figure 39: The unedited Timeline elements..

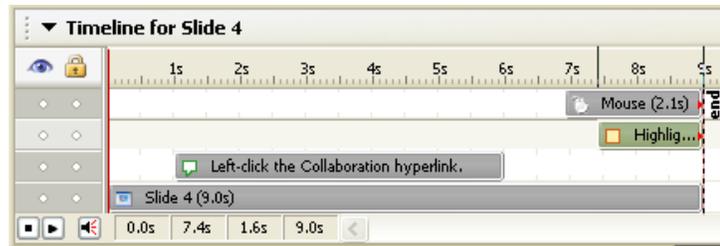


Figure 40: The edited Timeline elements.

element so that the cursor becomes the double headed black arrow and left-clicking and dragging it to the desired duration measured along the Timeline ruler. The elements can be dragged to the desired starting time and the slide's overall duration can be controlled in the same manner as well. When setting the timing for text elements it is important to make sure that the user has time during which to read the text; it is always best to err on the side of the slower reader. The slide elements can be modified to extend the display time as well as to modify when each element is displayed. Grouping elements in the Timeline makes it easier to visualize how they are displayed, and left-clicking the Preview button on the Edit View toolbar allows us to preview individual slides as well as the whole project, the next five slides and the slides from the selected slide to the end of the project.

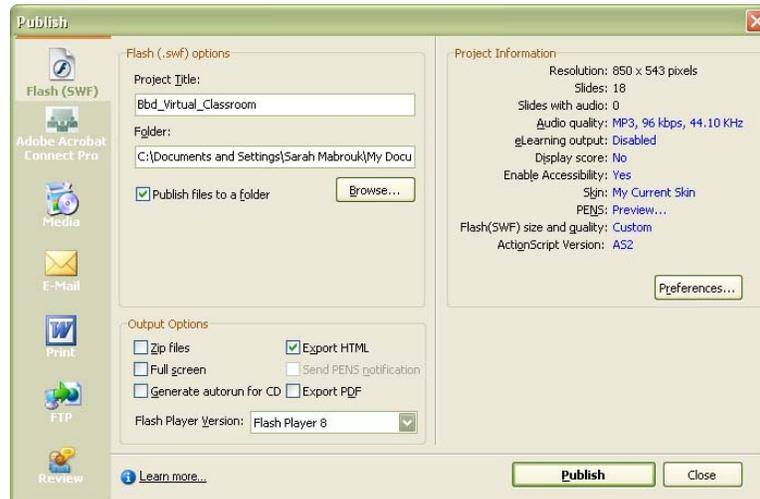


Figure 41: The Publish dialog box.

With the completion of editing of visual, audio, timing, and branching aspects of a project, we are ready to publish our project. Several publishing options are available including Flash, Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro, stand alone executable files, and creating a MS Word document for the project; Captivate can send files by email and send files to websites via ftp. The Flash version of the project can then be used in a website and directly launched in the browser window. Captivate 4 has four Flash version options, Flash 4, Flash 7, Flash 8, Flash 9, and Flash 10. Since the version of Flash Player must be selected when the Flash version of the project is created, users who need to update their version of Flash Player will appreciate the posting of update instructions and a download hyperlink with the project; publishing the project to an earlier version of Flash may be easier if the users are less computer savvy.

One particularly nice aspect of Captivate 4 is that it can be installed without uninstalling Captivate 3. So, if there are aspects of each version that we like, hard drive space permitting, we can keep and use both versions.

I hope that you found this handout helpful. I have tried to provide enough information to help you to get started without your feeling overwhelmed. The best way in which to learn how to use new software is to "mess around" with it. Explore the help facility, explore the keywords, make some test projects, explore

the different aspects of the slide elements, test the different ways in which to save the project and test how the project displays and runs on different computers. As you explore Captivate 4, remember to save the projects that you make so that you can compare them and refer to them in the future -- we learn through trial and error, and we can learn a lot from our mistakes.

Please feel free to contact me, smabrouk@framingham.edu, if you have any questions – I am always glad to help.