InfoVis Systems & Toolkits

CS 4460/7450 - Information Visualization
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Background

- In last few classes, we have examined different techniques for presenting multivariate data

- Today we look at systems that implement these ideas and provide some of their own new visualization techniques
### Agenda

- Systems providing a view or views
  - Improvise, ILOG Discovery, Many Eyes, Polaris
- Toolkits that can be used to build systems
  - InfoVis Toolkit, prefuse, Piccolo
- Commercial systems to come next class
  - Spotfire, Inxight, InfoZoom, InfoScope, Tableau, ...

### Systems/Tools

- Primarily examining academic systems that provide preexisting views
  - Commercial systems next time
Improvise

- We saw system earlier on hotel visitation project
  - Put together combinations of well-known views and coordinations
  - Designed for people to build these combinations, but that process is non-trivial (Chris admits)

Key Components

- Live Properties
  - For coordinating controls (eg, views, sliders)
  - Control defines live properties that bind to variables

- Coordinated Queries
  - Visual abstraction language
  - Visually encode data records into graphical attributes
Characteristics

- Large collection of views including scatterplots, parallel coordinates, treemaps, heatmaps, bar charts, ...

Polaris

http://www.graphics.stanford.edu/projects/polaris/

http://www.tableausoftware.com

Video

Stolte et al
TVCG '02
Basis

- Relational databases
- Pivot tables from spreadsheets
- N-dimensional data cubes

- Analytic approach is fundamental
- Provides visual representations of these concepts

Visualization

- Table of data (rows, columns)
- Each axis may have nested dimensions
- Table entry is a pane, and has visual marks to represent data

- Analyst drags and drops fields from database schema onto shelves of display
- Much interaction supported
Graphics

- Formal table algebra provided to describe data
- Visual mappings established from data types to appropriate (good) markings and encodings

Interaction

- Four main types
  - Deriving additional fields
  - Sorting and filtering
  - Brushing and tooltips
  - Undo and redo
Many Eyes

- InfoVis on the web
- Website developed from IBM’s infovis group
- Motivating infovis challenges:
  - Difficulty of creating new visualizations
  - How do you discuss the visualizations?
- Project goals:
  - Enable end-user creation of visualizations
  - Foster large-scale collaborative usage

Features

- Provides data upload capabilities and choice from library of visualizations
- Includes
  - Gallery of recently uploaded visualizations for browsing
  - Chosen highlighted visualizations
  - Attached discussion forums for each vis
**Data**

- Users upload their own data sets
  - All become public
- Format: table or unstructured text
  - Metadata allowed
- Immutable once uploaded

**Visualizations**

- Preloaded visualization types
  - Has grown over time
- User chooses one to combine with their data
- Provides named, typed slots that the user maps particular pieces of data to
  - System makes some reasonable guesses too
WordTree
Allows the user to control the mapping from data to image

**Social Aspects**

- Users identified by login ID
- Can leave comments about different visualizations
- Can take snapshot of visualization state
  - Unique URL
- “Blog this” button
Evaluation

• Quantitative, objective
• 1895 posts of March ‘07
• Wide variety of topics of visualizations and motivations for creating visualizations
• Does seem to be fostering discussion

Viégas et al
HICSS ’08

Evaluation

• Qualitative, subjective
• In-depth interviews with some ME users
• Visualizations used largely for communication and collaboration (not necessarily analysis)
  – Privacy and audience management a concern
• Highlights a number of interesting, non-expected uses of the technology

Danis et al
CHI ’08
Watch More

- Video of talk from Stanford HCI seminar

Thoughts?

- What do you think of the design choices they made?
Sense.us

- Related, follow-up to Many Eyes
- Discussion and visualization of US Census data
- Go beyond Many Eyes in terms of annotation, collaboration, and discussion

Components

- Doubly-linked discussion
  - Can go from visualization to threaded discussion items or vice-versa
- Graphical annotation
  - Simple graphics editor and comments (like transparent layer)
- Bookmark trail
  - Small strip of views
- Comment listings and social navigation
  - Searchable, sortable indices and links
Figure 1. The sense.us collaborative visualization system. (a) An interactive visualization widget, with a graphical annotation for the currently selected comment. The visualization is a stacked time-series visualization of the U.S. labor force, broken down by gender. Here the percentage of the work force in military jobs is shown. (b) A set of graphical annotation tools. (c) A bookmark trail of saved views. (d) Text-entry field for adding comments. Bookmarks can be dragged onto the text field to add a link to that view in the comment. (e) Threaded comments attached to the current view. (f) URL for the current state of the application. The URL is updated automatically as the visualization state changes.

Figure 4. Scatterplot of U.S. states showing median household income (x-axis), avg. retail sales per capita (y-axis). New Hampshire and Delaware have the highest retail sales.

Figure 6. Visualization of the number of teachers. Annotations indicate the start of compulsory education and the rise of teachers in the post World War II era.

Figure 7. Annotated view of word bubble. "I agree, depression killed a lot of brothers".

Sample annotations
Toolkits & Infrastructures

- Set of components or capabilities that allow others to put together visualization systems
- Growing trend

InfoVis Toolkit

http://ivtk.sourceforge.net

Demo

Fekete
InfoVis '04
Characteristics

- Coherent software architecture and set of Java components
  - Data structure is a table
  - Views: time series, parallel coordinates, scatterplots, node-link diagrams, treemaps
  - Added capabilities in color management, labeling, dynamic queries, ...

Critique

- Primarily limited to views it provides, but good & powerful support for them
- Documentation?
Prefuse

- Toolkit in Java for building information visualizations

Heer et al
CHI '05

http://prefuse.org

Demo
Video
Characteristics

- Fine-grained building blocks for constructing visualizations (as opposed to pre-made views)
- Data model is a graph (entities & relations)
- Includes library of layout algorithms, navigation and interaction techniques
- Written in Java2d
- Follows CMS vis process model
Applications

- DOI Trees (AVI ’04)
- Vizster (InfoVis ’05)
- Many more

Flare

- New version of prefuse implemented in ActionScript for running in Flash player

Demos
Design Patterns

- Heer used his experience with prefuse etc to describe common design patterns for infovis
  - Reference model
  - Data column
  - Cascaded table
  - Relational graph
  - Proxy tuple
  - Expression
  - Scheduler
  - Operator
  - Renderer
  - Production rule
  - Camera
  - Dynamic query binding

Heer & Agrawala
TVCG ’06

Piccolo

http://www.cs.umd.edu/hcil/piccolo/
Characteristics

- Graphics toolkit with built-in zooming and panning support
- Will discuss more later in course...

Reflection

- What would you seek in a good infovis system or toolkit?
More Next Time...

- Demos of commercial systems for HW 4
  - Spotfire
  - Table Lens/Eureka
  - SeeIt
  - InfoZoom
  - InfoScope

Upcoming

- Commercial systems
  - Reading
    - Spenke paper
- Learning Tableau
  - Guest demo from Jock Mackinlay
- Keep reading Tufte (following Tuesday)
- HW 3 due next Thursday