

Narrative Visualization Essay

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The message of my narrative visualization is to inform the user about income inequality between poor and rich Americans. The visualization also attempts to draw correlations between events in American history and the increases or decreases of income inequality during the time period surrounding that event.

I used an interactive slideshow structure for my narrative visualization. The user can step through the scenes of the visualization by clicking the “Next” button at the top of the page. In each scene, data is added to the chart and the user can explore the values of the data added as well as notable events in history that took place.

The layout of the visualization is a chart at the bottom of the screen with scene transition buttons above it. The button above the chart is labeled “Next” which tells the user that it is used for progressing through the visualization. The visualization starts with an empty chart and as scenes progress, data is added to the chart. As the data is put into the chart, grey vertical lines will pop up on the chart, which will tempt the user’s interest into what they are. Once moused over, they will have more information about the events in history that took place at that point in time.

The scenes of the visualization are blocks of data in the chart. The scenes are ordered from the earliest year in the dataset to the last year in the dataset. This is to emulate time passing in the chart for the user.

Annotations are displayed in an outlined box near the data of interest. This signals to the user that the annotation is referring to the data it is next to. The information in the annotation is related to the rise of income inequality and is used as correlating events to the trends lines in the chart. Annotations do not change within a single scene.

The parameters of the visualization are the year windows for the scenes. These year windows control what data is shown on screen.

The “Next” and “Reset” buttons trigger the scene changes in the visualization. These buttons are at the top of the page and look like standard HTML buttons. Because of this, it should be obvious to the user that they can be clicked. As the scenes progress, vertical grey lines will appear on the chart. The sudden appearance of these lines should attract the users attention; inviting them to mouse over them. When moused over, the lines will trigger annotations to pop up that have information about significant events that happened in that year.