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Homework 8

Process Explanations

I consider "The Patent Process" to be the best process explanation. The biggest reason is its clear layout, both aesthetically, with good use of visuals, whitespace, and clearly defined sections, and substantially, with a clear outline at the beginning, and conceptually, with a clear organization that allows the reader to immediately know where he or she is in the process.

It elides more technical information then the other two papers, making it insufficient for some readers, but it outlines the process clearly and is simply written, significantly improving the reader's retention. Furthermore, it provides references for further information, somewhat alleviating this information sparsity.

Both "Data Compression Using Huffman Coding" and "How Internet Routing Works" are difficult to grasp in detail because of the lack of visuals and whitespace. The section titles in "Data Compression" do not stand out *at all* from the text, making it easy for the reader to get lost. Also, the figures really need descriptive captions, since their contents are by no means apparent. In fact, despite being more familiar with Huffman Coding than either the Patent Process or Internet Routing, I found "Data Compression" the most difficult to follow. Both papers also have issues with page numbering ("Data Compression" has none, and "Internet Routing" begins with 2).

It terms of the "Planning a Process Explanation" outline, the biggest asset of "The Patent Process" is the clear enumeration of the steps on the first page. The flowchart is extraneous (and perhaps even confusing, since it omits Step 4) but still better than not enumerating the steps. Both the conclusion and the introduction also provide a clear purpose for engineers to read the document (although it doesn't explicitly identify the audience), and the conclusion provides some interesting secondary applications of patents. The simple presentation of the steps means that the summary at the end of each of the other two documents is uncessary.

Perhaps a final major reason for the readability of "The Patent Process" is that the process is broken into more steps, and, consequently, the steps are smaller and simpler than in the other two.