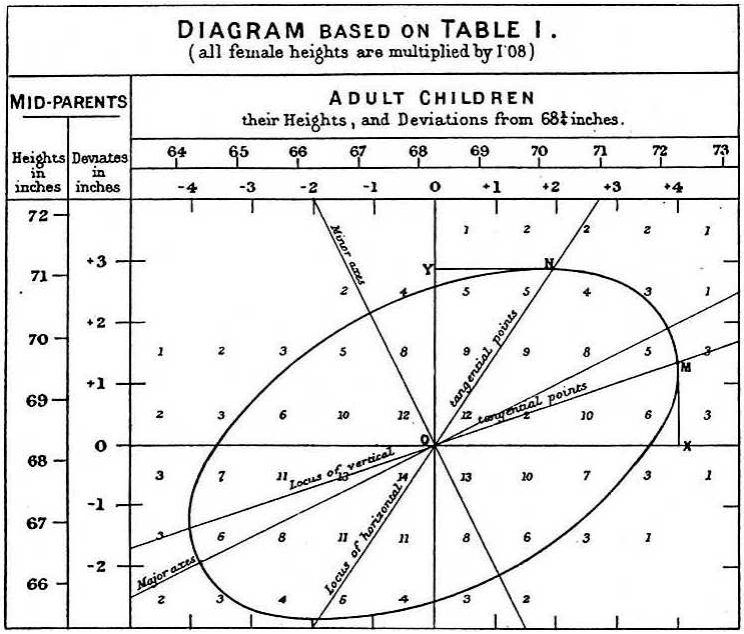
High Resolution Data Visualization: Lessons from Edward Tufte

2018-01-26 Amin Adibi



The first scatter plot was not drawn until 1886. That is 250 years after Galileo Galilei explained the law of falling bodies, and 200 years after Newton and Leibniz developed integration and differentiation. It took imagination to draw two abstract axes on a piece of paper and put little dots to represent experimental observations.

Visualizing data has become easy in our time, in part thanks to technological developments. What was once an art and a science has now become pop-culture. And our obsession with the technology has left little time and room for many of us to think better about the content – a problem that has been exacerbated by a few bad choices made by software developers who wrote Microsoft Office.

In December 2017, I attended Edward Tufte's data visualization workshop. Tufte fundamentally changed the way I think about visual data. My goal – and hope – is to share a few lessons from what I learned with you.

For the next 10 minutes, I ask you to read the handout, and then we will have a short discussion about resolution in data representation and a few dos and don'ts. If you happened to enjoy the material and wanted to read more, I encourage you to read Edward's books.