Data visualization in desktop applications

Asked 16 years, 2 months ago   Modified 3 years, 6 months ago

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I would like to create data visualizations in desktop apps, using frameworks, languages and libraries that help with this kind of task. Visualizations should be interactive: clickable, draggable, customizable, animated...

What I would like to create is something similar to the examples seen here: http://www.visualcomplexity.com/vc/
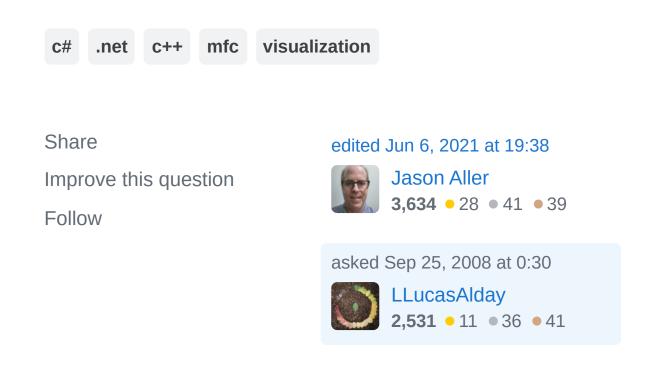
These are the links I already know: http://delicious.com/laura_laura/visualization?setcount=100

The preferred language is C++/Visual C++ (MFC) because I'm familiar with it, but any other technology is welcome, I would like to make a list from "as similar as possible" to Visual C++ to "very different" from Visual C++.

WPF, flex, Adobe Air, flare, JavaScript (running in a browser as client-side apps with access to local files or as desktop apps) are possibilities, post any good links to examples, tutorials, how-tos, etc. that you know of.

What are the learning curves and complexity for the different options? Which one would you choose and why? Which one have you already worked with and how was your experience? How would you start with a project of this characteristics?

c#   .net   c++   mfc   visualization

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2 Answers

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Your post has far too many questions in it to be answered easily in one response, so you might try re-posting with specific questions. Data visualization is a HUGE area of study and it's not significantly different for web applications versus desktop applications.

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Put simply, it's the display of data in a way that visually tells the story of the data. It's most useful in cases where the volume of data is such that tabular display isn't effective. Trends, outliers, and abnormal occurrences can sometimes only be seen when data is represented

visually. Visually can be a simple chart, or it can be more advanced visualizations such as treemaps or thematic mapping/GIS presentations.

If it's an area you're interested in studying, look into:

[Edward Tufte](#) - Author, professor, and all-around guru for the display of information

[Many Eyes](#) - from IBM AlphaWorks

[Processing](#) - A visual "sketching" language based on Java

[Visualizing Data](#) - An O'Reilly book by Ben Fry, one of the co-creators of Processing

Beyond that, I think specifics would depend on what you want to accomplish -- what data is being analyzed, who the audience is, and what the desired "message" is.

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answered Sep 25, 2008 at 0:59

[Jeff Donnici](#)
2,738 ● 19 ● 17

If you're willing to use the Flash/Flex/ActionScript/AIR development platform, then take a look at the "flare" library, from the prefuse project:

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http://flare.prefuse.org/

I've only gotten my feet wet with it at this point, but so far I like what I see.

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