In 2008, a team of researchers at MIT ran what became known as the “Social Evolution” experiment. Using smart phone apps and digital sensors, they tracked the lives of an entire dormitory full of student volunteers, over the course of a school year. The result was a massive dataset, consisting of millions of moment-by-moment records of a year in the lives of 84 individuals, as they met, socialized, and formed relationships. Our aim was to bring this data to life, by creating a set of interactive tools to visually explore the Social Evolution network.

Using d3, an online visualization library, we created a simple user navigation interface. Users can choose from one of three different visualizations – a classic force-directed layout, a chord graph, or a heatmap cluster.

The Time Slider and the Animation button allow you to watch social connections emerge and grow across time; more detailed information about individuals or specific connections shows up in the Network Details pane. You can see how two people match up on a number of dimensions, including personality, preferences, and politics. There’s also a Friend Meter that identifies how two people feel about each other.

Heatmaps show aggregate relationships among groups of people based on personal preferences and activities – how often liberals talked with conservatives, for example. If you want to look at a subset of the overall network, use the Filters tab to add and remove categories of individuals.

Together these tools give you enormous flexibility to customize network exploration. Our hope is that this application can aid researchers in better understanding the dynamics of social networks.

[end display]

For more details and instructions , check out our User Manual and About tabs – thank you!