

FINAL REFLECTION

I started this course with two major goals and although I still have a long way to go, I feel I made great progress in both of them. The first one was learning enough of d3/JavaScript/html/CSS to be more comfortable to keep learning on my own. The second one was to be able to select and prioritize the types of data visualization projects when I have no specific requirements. The tutorials and then the two projects allowed me to be comfortable with experimenting, thinking without limits and then prioritizing and making it happen.

For both of my projects I initially started with all the visual and functional design ideas and laid out the dependencies and limitations (mostly knowledge). Thus, my submitted versions are the MVP-1 of the projects and the next versions will be coming.

Exploratory Project: Filming in NYC

Having come from abroad, I am thrilled to be living in the liveliest city in the world and experiencing the details of the city which most people can only watch in the movies. This fascination becomes very ordinary for us after a while, but it is curious to see a filming crew every once in a while, in your own neighborhood. That is how I came across this data set in NYC Open Data a year ago, when I was seeing a filming crew setting up in my street but never got a chance to ask what they were filming.

Unfortunately, although the earlier versions of the dataset included the individual filming event names, the most recent versions did not. But it was still very interesting when aggregated to see where, when and which filming activities occur the most.

I started my design with 3 different visuals but was able to implement only two within the time I had available. But using the state management shell will make it easier to expand on it later. There were some additional features I originally thought of for this project, such as hovering over to see individual data points with pictures. I was able to use them and was more relevant and available with the second project.

For data preparation I used many different iterations of aggregation and accessing inside the code. But since I was also using the multi-interactive architecture for the first time, I brought the data to the most simplistic form.

Narrative Project: Broadway Theater

Again, along the same themes of happenings in NYC and me making most of my time here with multiple theater memberships until COVID hit, I wanted to draw a high-level picture of "when, where and what?" of Broadway Theater. I came across the Internet Broadway Database and wanted to explore the industry.

I started my design process with understanding the data first, which I can do fastest and visually using Tableau. This might have influenced how I saw the story coming together and thus the design. However, I did have some more experimental ideas of animating profiles, but I pushed them to a later stage in my "Roadmap".

Unlike the first project, this one doesn't rely on one source of information. I started with a summary view of a transactional database. But asked more fundamental questions like any journalistic piece that grounds the reader on the basics.

Thinking from narrative perspective, I wanted to start with the broader question of what makes "Broadway" theater. There were many sources stating the basic numbers, but I wanted to show visually where the theaters are, and then "see" them like GoogleStreet view. I manually created the data I used from multiple websites, then bulk-generated the coordinates. I also intend to be more fluent in using python and R for such data collection activities.

Then thinking about the shows, themselves, I wanted to understand the biggest productions. The data is cited in many different sources but I believe the visualization is unique in the sense that it allows user to see them from multiple perspectives.

I already have a long list of features I will implement, but beyond that I want to explore more of guided-narrative formats to immerse the reader in a linear yet interactive way.

CONCLUSION

In addition to choosing and doing interactive visualization projects, I developed a more systematic approach to project-manage my own thoughts and ideas. Although I still have a tendency to play a lot with styles while they might not be the most important part of the task, I became better at parking my thoughts and time-boxing the "play-time". And I was pleasantly surprised in how systematic I started to think in resolving and iterating solutions.

In terms of how to start a new project, I expressed my frustration in now knowing how to start with the very abstract project ideas I have. The two projects gave me confidence in creating a framework for two different ways to start: "starting with a data set: explore" or "starting with a question: find". Also, in terms of the "so-what" of a visualization project, I now take my ideas through the selection process of "new data", "new insight" and "new design".

This was the most ambitious course I thought I would have in the program, with steepest learning curve considering my background. Hopefully, I want to build up on the momentum I gained this semester to keep improving on and have a richer personal portfolio.