Carly Hu & Myna Lim
Professor Rzeszortarski
INFO 4310
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INFO 4310 Final Project:

My Neighbor Takahata: A Studio Ghibli Director Analysis

A glimpse into the not-so-dynamic directing duo of Studio Ghibli

Link to project: https://carlyhu.github.io/INFO4310-fp/

Project goal

Our project aimed to create an interactive article centered around films produced by **Studio Ghibli**. Using the Studio Ghibli Dataset sourced from Kaggle, we will offer users a comprehensive overview of the studio's films accompanied by interactions that offer varied insights. The article's style will stay true to Studio Ghibli's playful animated theme, incorporating designs and animations related to the movies to attract user attention.

More specifically, our article will **highlight the differences between Ghibli films directed by Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata.** While researching the film studio, we stumbled upon an intriguing article that explained how the two directors initially had a strong relationship, but that Takahata was a very difficult person to work with— from not showing up to the studio, to not planning projects, becoming obsessive with details and delaying work, and "taking advantage of others benevolence."

Due to this interesting history (and beef) between the two primary studio directors, we want to explore how the movies they directed vary in attributes such as revenue, budget, and genre. Users will be able to dive into the directors' respective films and make side-by-side comparisons.

Intended Audience/Use cases

Our intended audience is **fans of Studio Ghibli films** who are interested in **learning more about the studio's directors.** As we ourselves are both fans of Studio Ghibli, it was easy to make this article with our audience in mind.

The main use cases we aimed to cover include:

- **Learn about the personal dynamic between Miyazaki and Takahata:** We achieved this partially through the introduction to our article, as well as through our film timeline,

which incorporated the most revealing quotes from the original article that led us to focus on the directors' relationship. In doing so, we selected quotes that reflected Takahata's weaknesses and Miyazaki's strengths.

- **View differences in director *frequency* and *success*:** This was the more data-driven use case of our article, meant to bolster our narrative surrounding the directors' dynamic. Through our film timeline and line plot, as well as the text blurbs, users are able to see how many films were directed by either director, as well as how much the films profited the studio.

Related materials

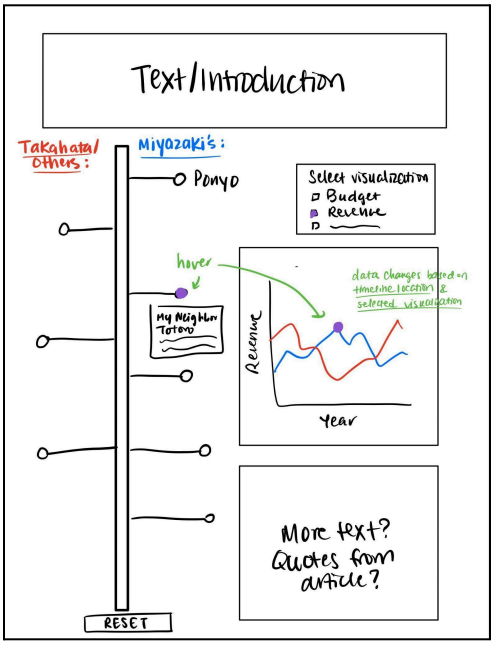
- Studio Ghibli timeline - used for inspiration during timeline design
- Miyazaki & Takahata's Work Relationship and How It Ended - provided the narrative arc of our article

Data source

Our data source provides a significant amount of data about each movie, including year of release, director, screenwriter, budget, revenue, genre(s), and duration. We aimed to incorporate all of these details for each film in our final visualization.

Due to the small size of our dataset, there was essentially no data processing. Most data values were numerical without null values which didn't require further data manipulation. Some numerical values, however, were read as strings which were easily converted to numerical values in JavaScript.

Design & development process



Our initial storyboard from Milestone 1 is actually very similar to our final design. Below, we will detail a couple of the dead ends and discoveries we made throughout our development process:

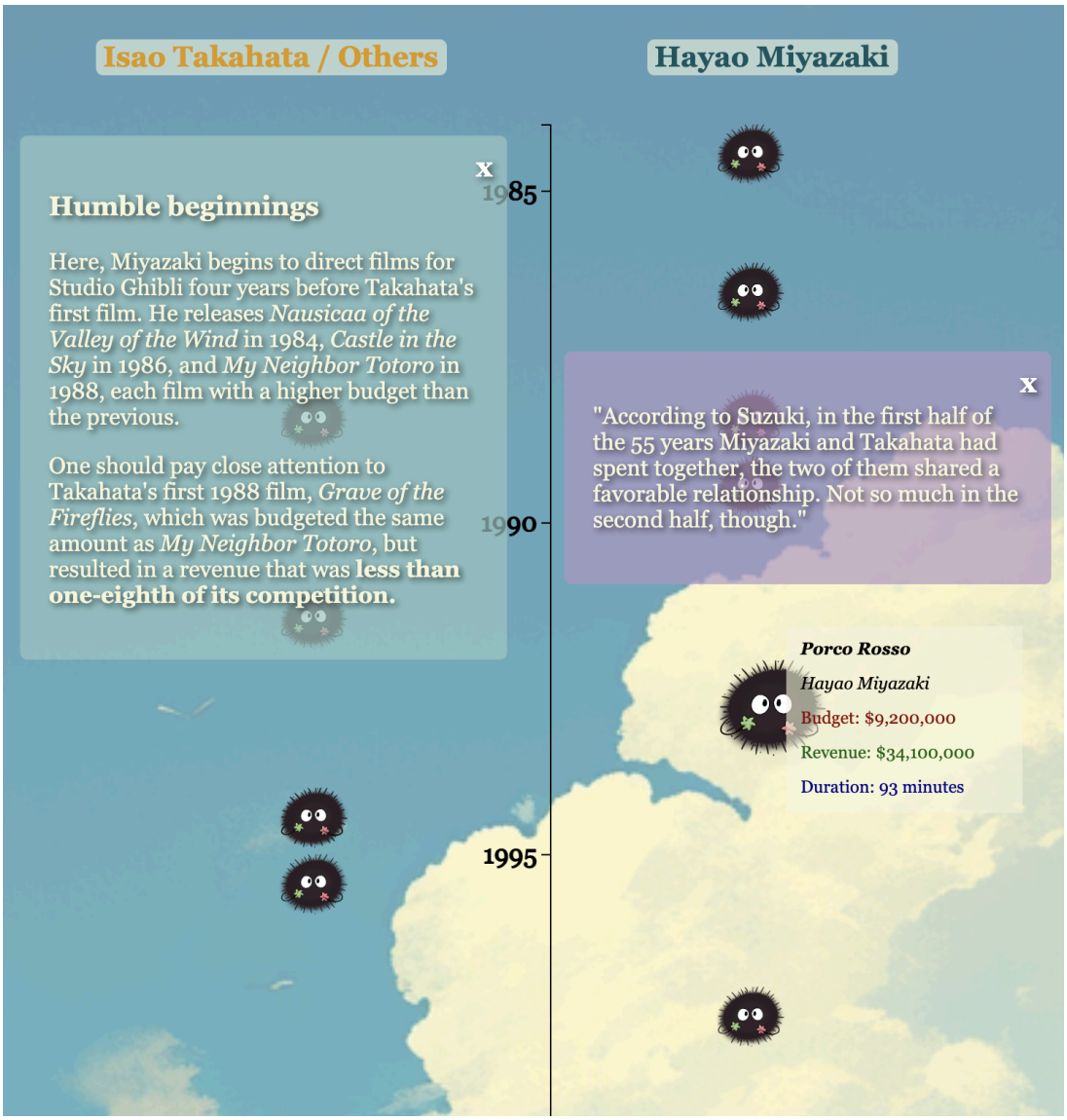
Scrolly.js (good news): After our second milestone submission, Professor Rzeszortarski suggested we look into the Scrolly.js library to aid in displaying our vertical timeline elements. This library ended up being a great help towards strengthening the narrative of our article— it enabled us to add several **text blurbs** that appear as users scroll down the timeline, which

helped to **provide additional context to the data** and **highlight notable data points.**

Scrolly.js (bad news): Upon learning about this JavaScript library, we began brainstorming ways to incorporate it into our visualizations—specifically, our goal was to have the line plot's data points appear as users scrolled through the timeline on the left. Unfortunately, this was a very difficult technical challenge for us, due to the complexity of working with two visualizations at once and having one be responsive to the other. We ultimately decided to forego this feature once we determined how difficult it would be to implement.

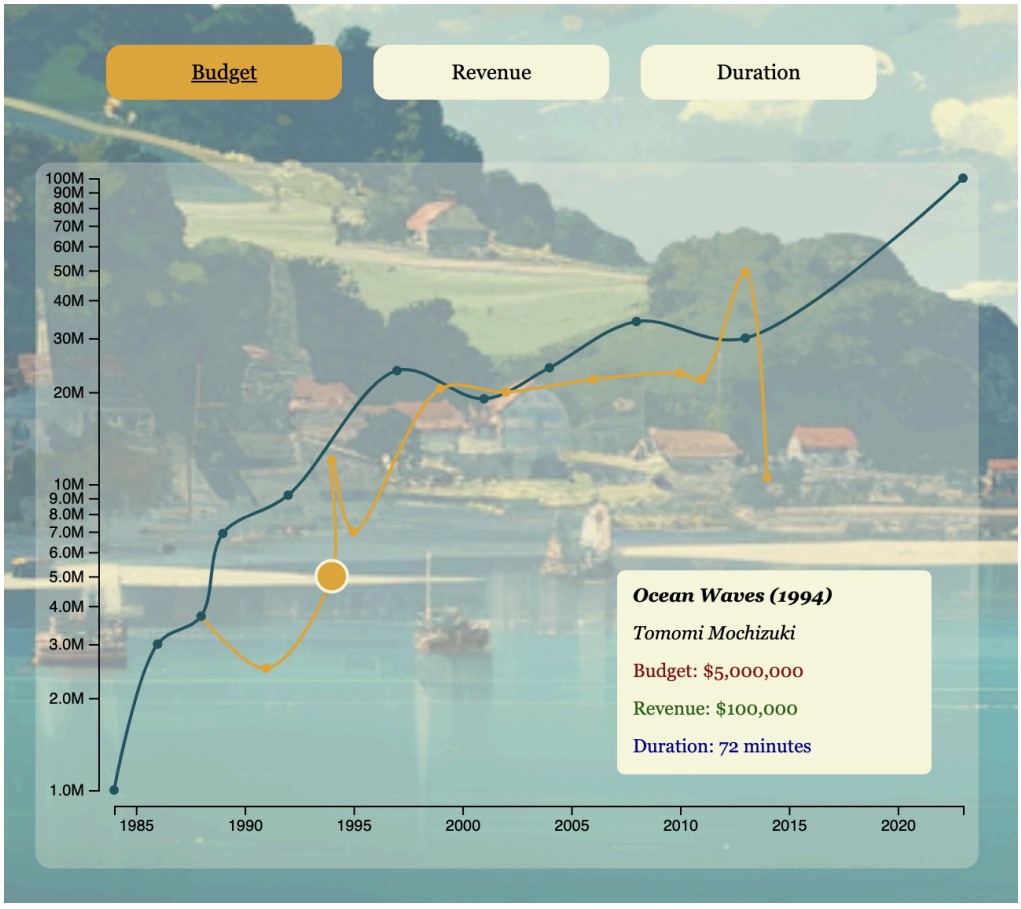
Final design & implementation

Our final design features a **vertical timeline** that users can scroll through to see the progression of film releases over time, segmented by director.



- As users scroll through the timeline, several unique **text blurbs** appear. These narrative blurbs give more context to the studio's film production, provide quotes about the directors, and highlight interesting data trends and insights. They can be removed easily with an "x" button after reading, encouraging users to read the blurbs but also access the timeline. We implemented this element using the **Scrolly.js** library.
- Each data point on this timeline is represented by a dust sprite; these are creatures featured in the Miyazaki films *Spirited Away* and *My Neighbor Totoro*.
- When users **hover** over these images, the soot sprites shake up and down for a fun touch, and a **detail box** on the specific film appears to the side of the data point (to demonstrate, *Whisper of the Heart* is hovered over on the right).

For our second visualization, users have the option to select what type of data visualization they would like to see. Users can decide to view either film budget, film revenue, or film duration (versus time) by director, and the resulting **line plot** will change based on their selection. This line plot has **hover interactivity** as well, if users desire to view a film's details independently from the timeline.



- This line plot is also linked with the timeline: upon hovering on the timeline's data points (dust sprites), the line plot visualization will highlight the corresponding data point (circles), representing where that film falls in terms of budget/revenue/duration.
- In terms of specific design decisions, we chose a dark teal and warm orange for the lines in this plot because they are contrasting colors that are complementary to the background image. We also made sure that while budget and revenue charts are plotted on y-axes with log scales, the duration chart uses a linear scale.

Trade-offs

We made a number of sacrifices throughout our development process due to time constraints. In addition to implementing scrolling responsiveness into our line plot (as detailed in the *Design & Development Process* section), below are some of the areas in which we would have liked to dedicate more time to:

- **Genre visualization:** One of the visualization ideas we had surrounded differences in the films' genres. The original dataset provided up to three genres for each film, such as "animation," "family," "fantasy," "romance," and "drama." In prioritizing data on the films' directors, budgets, revenues, and release years, we were unable to add a visualization that informed users on the films' genres. One of the reasons for this was indecision on how to deal with having multiple genres for each film, as well as the rather useless genre of "animation" (all Ghibli films are animated!).

- **Film posters:** Another goal that we had was to incorporate film posters or character images from each film into our article. Most film visualization articles make sure to do this, as this helps refresh the memories of Ghibli fans on what each film looked like. However, knowing that manually gathering images from each of the 23 films would be a very tedious task, we decided this was not a priority for the project.

- **Film duration:** We also recognize that the data provided about film duration may not be the most valuable information in terms of pulling insights about the studio directors. Perhaps this is an insight itself (film duration does not have any correlation with director success), but with more time, we would have wanted to create a more informative duration visualization.

Member contributions

- **Myna** implemented the entire timeline visualization and soot sprite hover interactivity, and also helped incorporate the source article's quotes into the existing text blurbs.
- **Carly** implemented the article styling, line plot, as well as the text blurbs with Scrolly.js.
- Both members contributed to the final writeup.