SLIS Faculty News

Wikipedia Visualization - Research at Indiana University Feature

Katy Börner's Information Visualization (InfoVis) Laboratory was featured on the *Research at Indiana University* website for December 2007. The website is sponsored by the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and promotes: Ingenuity - Insight - Inquiry - Integrity - Involvement - Innovation - and - Inspiration. In particular, the article features information visualization research about Wikipedia.

Bruce Herr, Senior Software Developer with the lab was the visualization lead on the Wikipedia project. One version of the visualization was featured the May 19, 2007 issue of **New Scientist**. Details about the Wikipedia mosaic are included under the **Places and Spaces: Mapping Science** website managed by Börner's lab. Other versions (interactive maps) of the Wikipedia visualization:

- **NetSci Contest, New Scientist, Smaller Version**
- **5'x5' Version for Viszards '07**
- **P&S Version**

The InfoVis Lab is based at the School of Library and Information Science. Students can take Börner's course in **Information Visualization** (SLIS-S637) during the Spring 2008 semester.

Excerpts from *Research at Indiana University:*

"Making Sense of Everything: Who can possibly grasp the contents of Wikipedia? In the six years since it was launched, the "free encyclopedia of everything" has grown to include 2.1 million articles in English alone, written by more than 150,000 contributors, with a combined 7.5 million articles in Wikipedias of all languages.

But Katy Börner knows what Wikipedia looks like. Börner, the Victor H. Yngve Professor in the School of Library and Information Science at Indiana University Bloomington, is also director of the Information Visualization (InfoVis) Laboratory at IUB. With her InfoVis colleagues Bruce Herr and Todd Holloway, Börner has analyzed and "visualized" the network of knowledge that is Wikipedia in English (**http://en.wikipedia.org**). They categorized Wikipedia articles, then gathered images from the most popular pages (approximately one picture for every 64 articles). The researchers laid out the article images on a circular grid, positioning similar, linked articles close together. The result is a mosaic revealing Wikipedia's most popular knowledge areas.

Colored dots on top of the grid indicate how often and how recently the articles were edited. Large dark dots indicate lots of activity… The Wikipedia picture is fascinating and fun. It's also potentially quite useful to Wikipedia administrators, according to collaborator Bruce Herr. In a May report on the mosaic in New Scientist, Herr suggested that updating the image in real time could allow Wikipedia's administrators to track the articles being most actively edited and thus spot controversial arguments that may be popping up… The methods of data analysis and visualization used by Börner and her colleagues are widely relevant beyond Wikipedia…"

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