Reviewer: 1

It seems that the listing of keywords a bit sparse. Given that it is a survey paper I would expect there to be many more.

The figures are very simple but certainly adequate. They could be polished for a better final paper. (This is optional, it's a stylistic preference.)

I found the conclusion section to be less than satisfying. I was looking for a paragraph on future changes (e.g., effects of approaching exascale, etc.). As a survey paper this may not be appropriate but it would be nice to know what the author thinks about future research directions.

I'm not sure that Figure 4 is correct. The box encapsulating the sub-pipeline "Reader 2->Filter 4->Filter 5" are the same for both T=t0 and T=t1. In the description in the text, the author indicates that Reader1 and Reader 2 begin executing together, followed by their downstream pipeline filters.

Here are a couple of recommended changes to the text (nothing critical):

Change the sentence (by replacing the word "thing") from "Throughout this document we have considered the visualization pipeline as a static thing that transforms data" to "Throughout this document we have considered the visualization pipeline as a static construct that transforms data"

Change the text: "...grown signiﬁcantly in recent years. Recent studies..." to "...grown signiﬁcantly in recent years. Studies..."

Change the text: "However, the constrains imposed" to "However, the constraints imposed"

Reviewer: 2

That said, it would be nice if the shortcomings of the pipeline approach were explicitly discussed. One problem revealed by the survey itself is that in actuality the simple pipeline model is inadequate to describe the recent advances in visualization systems. This is true even in the leading open-source toolkits that implement most of the features discussed (like the VTK). There seems to be no standard notation or pictorial representation of the modern visualization pipeline. An important feature of the pipeline architecture is the simplicity of its visual representation. Unfortunately, the notions of an executive, the multiple passes of information flow, flow of metadata (temporal, spatial and contextual) are always depicted in a non-standard fashion in much of software and literature. While this may not be the right place to discuss a new standard or proposal for this, I think the article would benefit from such a discussion.

Minor typo:

Page 3 line 29: a executive -> an executive

Minor comment on some references:

The reference for Mayavi is old and not easy to obtain, I believe a more

recent and accessible article is available here:

http://doi.ieeecomputersociety.org/10.1109/MCSE.2011.35

Reviewer: 3

My main problem with the "word" pipeline is that different systems, libraries and authors use it to mean substantially different software infrastructure. This can bee seen by the organization of the paper itself. For example, an "event-driven" pipeline is written in a completely different way than a "demand-driven" pipeline. Extending these two models in different directions requires fundamentally different design and software engineering decisions. As a concrete example, one can examine the difference between the VTK pipeline and the "shading pipeline" pioneered by Abram, Whitted and Cook in their publications. The first actually involves passing data around, some of which coming from disk, some coming from processing modules. Abram, Whitted and Cook, on the other hand, use an abstract-syntax tree that ends up being compiled into a shading description of some sort. These are literally nothing like each other aside from being "boxes and connections". VisTrails, as an additional example that this reviewer is more intimately familiar with, encodes boxes as arbitrary Python objects and connections and specific methods of these python objects.

If pretty much anything can become a pipeline, then, the crucial question is: what is this survey really about? It is too much to ask from the manuscript that the survey become about all of visualization, but it seems that most visualization software can be fairly described as being "pipeline-based". To give another example, consider recent infovis libraries such as Protovis and D3. The authors of these libraries would not describe them as pipeline-based, but they do closely follow the model.

To borrow from Protovis's website, read the following snippet of Javascript code:

vis.add(pv.Panel)

.data(data)

.add(pv.Dot)

.left(function(d) x(d.x))

.bottom(function(d) y(d.y))

.strokeStyle(function(d) c(d.z))

.fillStyle(function() this.strokeStyle().alpha(.2))

.size(function(d) d.z)

.title(function(d) d.z.toFixed(1));

vis.render();

It is pretty clearly separating the classic pipeline steps ("load data", "define visual mapping", "assign data properties to visuals", "render").

My assessment, then, is that it might be worthwhile for the author to try an articulate more clearly what separates "visualization pipelines" from "visualization libraries" in general.

To repeat, I do believe a survey of such visualization libraries is welcome and that it would be useful. At the same time, I think the technical contribution of a survey paper is to meaningfully categorize the field, or at least articulate why such a categorization is not possible. I don't quite see that in this paper.