Michaela Jai-Mei Kane

CS 171: Visualization

10/17/16

**HW 6: Visualization Critique**

1. Critique of the “How the forecast has changed” line graphs:

The intended audience appears to be the general American public, or anyone interested in the 2016 American presidential election. This visualization mostly addresses the question of: “how have vote forecasts changed over the course of this election season?” The visualization gives forecasts for the popular vote, electoral vote, and overall chances of winning of each candidate. Color is used to encode each party’s nominee (red for Trump, blue for Clinton, and other colors for third parties), and the average for the electoral and popular vote forecasts is encoded in a bolded line while the 80% confidence interval is encoded as a lightly colored area on the chart. This chart makes use of layering in showing the average over the 80% range, as well as line position and shape to show trends in the forecasts. The viewer can also mouse over the chart area in order to get specific forecast values for each of the candidates, as well as markers on the timeline for significant events (i.e. debates, conventions, etc). Finally, the viewer can toggle between the three forecasts (winner, popular vote, electoral vote) by clicking a button on the top left. This visualization appears to be telling the story of voter sentiment during the course of the election, and how it has changed or remained static before/after debates and conventions. The information density is fairly low, making it an easily understandable and accessible visualization.

1. A question I think is answered by the visualization: how have the presidential debates impacted voting forecasts in the election?
2. I would describe my story as somewhat opinionated – there is a clear trend in the data that indicates that Clinton’s popularity goes up after each debate, and that, I think, is an interesting story worth telling.
3. The main visualization component is essentially the same as the original: a user can filter what data they are most interested in seeing by selecting a button, and can hover over the line chart for more specific percentage values for each candidate. I did, however, choose to use layering to highlight the debate events on the original timeline in order to draw viewers’ attention to that detail. Users can also now filter data by brushing along the x-axis of the original timline in order to zoom into to specific dates, thus allowing users to explore more of the details behind overall trends in the data. Users can also select events from the main timeline (such as debates) by clicking on them in order to view a bar chart in a separate section of the webpage that shows the breakdown of the percentages (chance of winning, popular vote, and electoral vote) for each candidate. If more data can be collected, it would perhaps be more informative and interesting to see more about the voter breakdown (by race, gender, age, etc.) in this bar chart component. Color is still used to encode candidate, but the different categories are encoded using color gradient of the bars. This interaction makes use of both selection and organization, since the data is just being organized in a way that makes it easier to compare candidates’ percentages across categories. The bar chart also makes use of Gestalt’s principle of similarity, since candidates’ bars are grouped by proximity and color.