

Your Corner of The News Ecosystem

Conor Kelly - Stephen Fleischman - Brendan King - Jingwei Zhang

CSE442 - Sp17

Problem

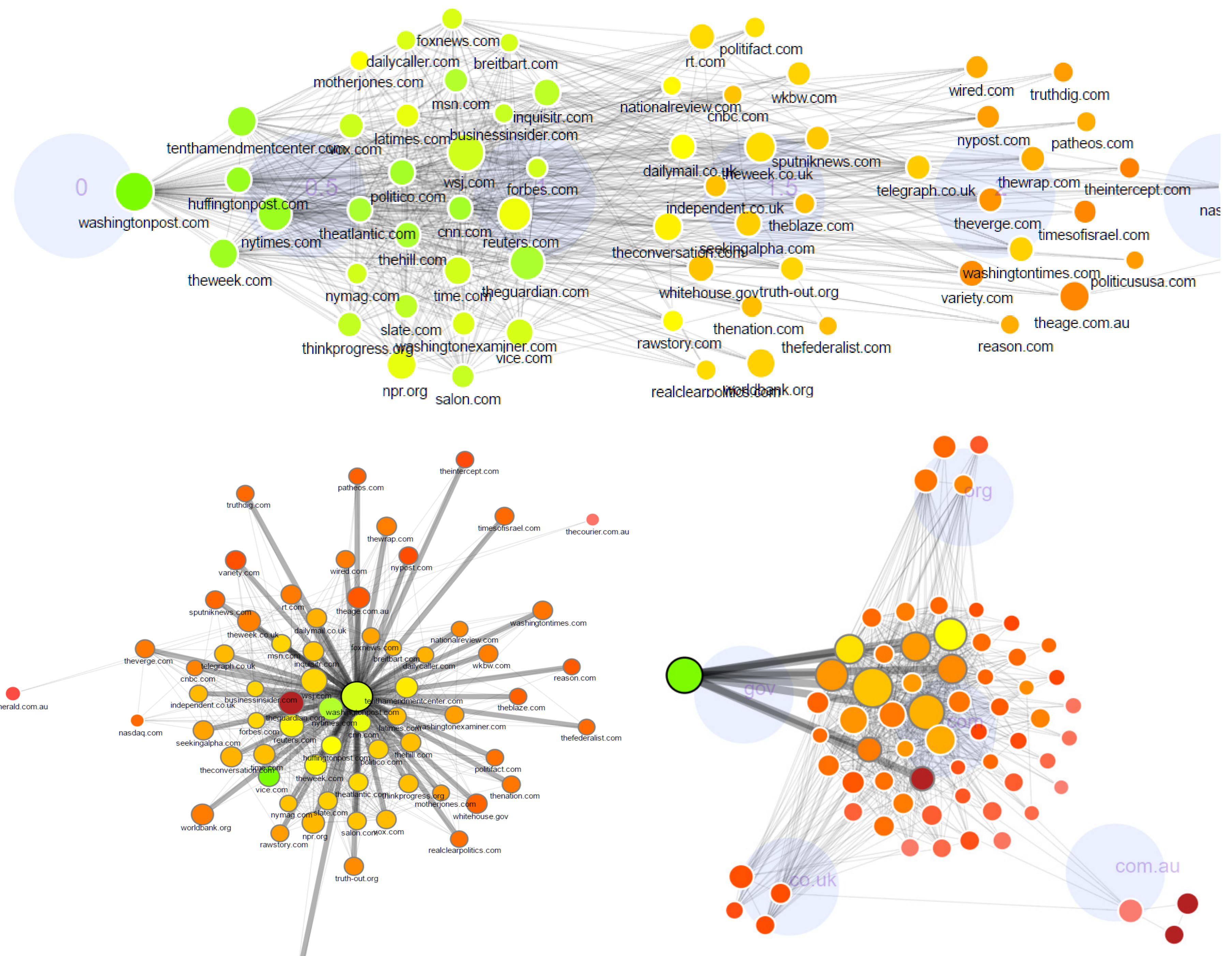
In today's divisive political climate, Americans are becoming increasingly aware of their consumption of political news. Serious questions have been raised about how we share, read, and propagate news. While user behavior can be studied and surveyed, understanding how political websites relate and link to one another is a fundamental step to understanding user consumption of news. For example, a user who frequents the site reuters.com might also frequent the site politico.com, in hopes of diversifying their consumption of news. Unfortunately for the user, there is no direct way to see how similar the two sites are.

Motivation

Our group felt that many of the discussions concerning user engagement with political news sites centered around the bubble created by social media. Rather than looking at how users interacted with websites, we set out to explore something deeper: the connections between these political news sites. Analyzing how news sites relate to each other hits two birds with one stone, as it shows where news sites get their news, alongside implicating the diversity of news viewers receive when visiting multiple sites. Our Project aims to visualize and allow user exploration of these hidden connections between news sites.

Approach

Crafting the Visualization consisted of two steps: curating the dataset and displaying the network using D3. The dataset we used was from the GDELT Project, consisting of a dataset containing aggregate counts of links to and from news sites. This dataset was filtered to contain only English-based politically oriented websites. The Visualization was created using D3.js, and is represented as an interactive network graph. Slider parameters allow the simulation to be altered and change shape. A color encoding is applied simply by clicking a node, representing the likelihood of linking to and from each site.



Future Work

The tool can be expanded in two capacities: including non-English based news sites and including other external datasets. Expanding this visualization to a global scale, rather than only english-based websites, would foster discovery of inter-country news linkages. Encoding additional datasets into each of the nodes could allow for further discoveries. For example: grouping the nodes by their respective parent companies.