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CV Design Discussion

Explanation

For this design I was trying to choose between two similar idioms. Because a CV is a time series plot, the x axis was always going to be time, but I wasn't sure what to encode on the y axis. My first thought was that the y axis would simply categorize the data attributes, and the length of time would be encoded by length along the x axis like a Gantt chart. However, I liked the idea of using the vertical axis to encode a continuous attribute in the form of a stream graph. I mostly made this decision because I think they are more eye catching than a Gantt chart, which is hugely important in a CV. The y axis of my plot is completely subjective, which could pose a bit of a problem, but I think that the stream graph better captures my changing interests over time (plus if I were really sending this CV out I would not draw it by hand and the lines would look much cleaner). Also, to me the stream graph allows for a nice separation between the skills and academic/professional portions of the CV, while still linking them in time and showing what I learned in each job.

Layered on top of the stream graphs are career and academic milestones (denoted by dotted lines intersecting with the time axis), to draw attention to certain accomplishments that I think employers will be looking for on a resume. This allowed me to include my list of publications and presentations in the stream graph, rather than as a separate section on the CV. Also, in addition to the core of the resume which shows my academic and professional life, I wanted to include something personal, which I think helps to humanize a CV and make it stand out. Music has always been the most important hobby to me, so I wanted to include it in my plot. Unfortunately, a stream graph would probably be my first choice to display this information, but I decided to use stacked bar charts instead to break up the visualization a bit. Plus, it's harder to remember my music taste over continuous time and I tend to group it in yearly phases anyway, which is more conducive to a stacked bar chart.

Interactivity

This CV would benefit enormously from interactivity, particularly detail on demand features. The most difficult thing about making this plot was fitting all of the information in without making it too cluttered. For example, CVs usually have a more detailed description of each job's responsibilities than I was able to include here, so I would like users to be able to click on part of the stream graph and see a short description of the item. This could be done with pop out text when the mouse hovers, a text box to the side of the plot, or by distorting the stream graph to reveal additional text.

I would also like to group the various skills and jobs into categories and allow the user to filter them. For example, they could select "programming" and hide unrelated information (possibly with an automatic camera zoom/shift, to best use the screen space). The user could also filter everything except milestones like publications, allowing them to drill down further into my most important work. Publication milestones would additionally link to the papers or provide the publication abstract for a brief synopsis.

It might also be interesting to add some fun interactivity to the music taste section of the plot. Similar to the stream graph approach, hovering over or clicking a particular genre might result in a short description or examples of my favorite artists. Part of me wants to link to albums or playlists on Spotify as well, but this feels like potentially too much and is verging on the MySpace profile song. That interaction would require a lot of user testing to make sure the execution wasn't too cheesy.