Mapping the Universe

Potential Applications for Information Visualization Systems in Libraries

ARLIS/NA

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Information Visualization Is:

• The graphical depiction of information

• Frequently interactive

• Beneficial for visually-oriented users
Traditional OPAC search results: linear, textual.

May require a lot of time and reading to assess what’s available.

(Image from the University of Pittsburgh’s OPAC, PittCat.
http://pittcat.pitt.edu/)
Results for the same keyword search in Grokker (http://live.grokker.com/).

The user can see an immediate snapshot of what is available, and how similar concepts relate to one another.

Quick comprehension is possible due to iconography that relies on pre-attentive processing.

Ben Schneiderman’s mantra for infovis applications: overview first, zoom and filter, details on demand.
Gapminder
(http://graphs.gapminder.org/world/)

So much information can be deduced at a glance; when interactivity is added, a complete historical picture is formed.

Gapminder has taken volumes of information and created one elegant, multivariate display that is easy to understand.
This radial display created by **flare** (at [http://well-formed.eigenfactor.org/radial.html](http://well-formed.eigenfactor.org/radial.html)) charts the flow of information by mapping article citations in science journals.

This could be applied to art or humanities journals, or to reveal the vicissitudes of artistic influence and/or movements.

Is it intuitive enough? Is a beautiful display enough of an attractor to make users stick around long enough to learn a new visual language?
Jellyfish
(http://www.carohorn.de/jellyfish/jelly3.htm#)

Jellyfish is a visualization of an encyclopedia of the arts; it appears to be in beta.

It, like many great visualizations, can be a wonderful discovery tool for our users.
Many, many visualizations have been created. Obstacles include funding for programming and implementation, as well as a hesitance to move away from text-based displays (although some offer both options).

Creating your own is relatively simple; you need a design, metadata, usability testers, and programmers (in order to make it interactive).

Infovis could be used to visualize checkout statistics, the number and types of items available in your institution, members of a consortia…the sky’s the limit.
More Fun Stuff:

* **IBM’s Many Eyes:** http://manyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/
  Create your own visualizations, by importing data or using existing data.

* **InfoVis.info:** http://www.infovis.info/index.php
  Search or browse over 1,000 visualizations.

* **retrievr:** http://labs.systemone.at/retrievr/
  Searches Flickr images based on a sketch you create.