Project 1: Archaeology of a Visualization

Due Date: 7 days after session 5, 10 pm

1. Pick a visualization, start with a single example of one, ideally printed, or a screen shot if it is never printed. A detailed paragraph describing it. How much information can you pack into a paragraph?

2. Who made it? How may people were involved? What were their roles? Does this reflect a division of labor along training lines (students, grads, postdocs) or technical (specific technicians, outsourced work). How much of it could be done by one person? Who is being trained on the job?

3. What made it? How many machines of all sorts were involved? What software packages? Where were these made? Were they bought, made, modified, off-the-shelf, invented here? How was the original data made – experiments?

4. How was it made? (could be combined with 3) How many processes can you identify and outline? What assumptions can you identify or guess at in these processes? How long does each step take? How long does the visualization take to make? Are some of these processes very new, being invented on the fly?

5. Where does it go? Where is this visualization used? Does it travel to popular culture? Does it travel alone (as visual) or with captions or with text? How does it interact with the text it is with – does one take priority over the other? Does the visual itself change when it travels? Do the assumptions it invokes change? How?

6. What series is it part of? Are there other visualizations just like it? Does it have siblings at the same lab? Is it one of a whole brood? Does it have ancestors – prior visualizations that anticipate it? Does it have cousins at other labs? What differences are there among its relatives?

7. Conclusions you have about the visualization. The point is to get as specific as possible about how the assumptions are used, the advantages and limitations of them, and your own evaluations of this. You are not necessarily criticizing the visualization but restoring the work put into it and the context it requires.

If there are some questions you can't answer, suggest ways you could get the answer. Length: At least 1600 words (approx 5 pages). You are not to quote more than a phrase or short sentence at a time and no summaries. Don't forget Bibliography of your sources.

Grading:
- A: Excellent writing, careful descriptions with citations, critical use of concepts from class with citation, use of secondary or contextual literature (other articles).
- B: Good writing, flow of paragraphs, respond to all questions, identification of assumptions, use of concepts from class.
- C: Good grammar, Good descriptions.