Overview

- Fundamental principles of graphic design and visual communication
  - help you create more effective information visualizations.

- Use of salience, colour, consistency and layout
  - communicate large data sets and complex ideas with greater immediacy and clarity.
Why Visualise?  

To see what’s in the data

Anscombe’s quartet

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Correlation between x and y in each case:  

Linear regression line in each case: $y = 3 + 0.5x$
Information Visualization

- 2 main objectives
- Data analysis
  - understand the data
  - derive information from them
  - involves comprehensivity
- Communication
  - of information
  - involves simplification

How do we get from Data to Visualization?

- Need to understand
  - the properties of the data or information
  - the properties of the image
  - the rules mapping data to images
How do we get from Data to Visualization?

Need to understand

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Types of Data

- **Nominal (labels or types)**
  - Sex: Male, Female,
  - Genotype: AA, AT, AG...

- **Ordinal**
  - Days: Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
  - Abundance: abundant - common – rare

- **Quantitative**
  - Physical measurements: temperature, expression level

S. S. Stevens, On the theory of scales of measurements, 1946
Data Type Taxonomy

1D e.g. DNA sequences

Temporal e.g. time series microarray expression

2D e.g. distribution maps

3D e.g. Anatomical structures

nD e.g. Fisher’s Iris data set

Trees e.g Linnean taxonomies, phylogenies

Networks e.g. Metabolic pathways

Text and documents e.g. publications

B. Shneiderman, The eyes have it: A task by data type taxonomy for information visualization, 1996
Types of Data

- Data
  - Tabular
    - Ordered
      - Categorical/Nominal
        - Male
        - Female
      - Ordinal
        - Abundant
        - Common
        - Rare
      - Quantitative
        - 10 mm
        - 15.5 mm
        - 23 mm
      - Relational
        - Trees
        - Networks
      - Spatial
        - Maps

slide adapted from Munzner 2011, Visualization Principles
How do we get from Data to Visualization?

Need to understand

- the properties of the data or information
- the properties of the image
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Theory of Graphics

- Application of human perception
  - understand and memorize forms in an image
  - XY dimensions of the plane and variation in Z dimension

- Correspondence between data and image

- Level of perception required by objective

- Mobility or immobility of the image

Semiology of Graphics

visual encoding
- points, lines, areas
  - patterns, trees/networks, grids
- positional: XY
  - 1D, 2D, 3D
- retinal: Z
  - size, lightness, texture,
    - colour, orientation, shape,
- temporal:
  - animation

Language of Graphics

- Graphics can be thought of as forming a sign system:
  - Each mark (point, line, or area) represents a data element.
  - Choose visual variables to encode relationships between data elements
    - difference, similarity, order, proportion
    - only position supports all relationships

- Huge range of alternatives for data with many attributes
  - find images that express and effectively convey the information.
Accuracy of Quantitative Perceptual Tasks

Gestalt Effects

- Visual system tries to structure what we see into patterns
- Gestalt is the interplay between the parts and the whole
  - “The whole is ‘other’ than the sum of its parts.” – Kurt Koffka

Gestalt Laws/Principles
Principle of Simplicity

- Every pattern is seen such that the resulting structure is as simple as possible
  - Different projections of same cube
  - Perceived as 2 or 3 D
  - Depending on the simpler interpretation
Principle of Proximity

 Things that are near to each other appear to be grouped together
Principle of Similarity

Similar things appear to be grouped together
Variable Opacity for Clarity

- Use of similarity of stroke and opacity to clarify image
  - Layers in the image

-flat

-layered

M. Krzynowski, behind every great visualization is a design principle, 2012
Principle of Closure

The law of closure posits that we perceptually close up, or complete, objects that are not, in fact, complete.
Principle of Connectedness

- Things that are physically connected are perceived as a unit

- Stronger than colour, shape, proximity, size
Principle of Good Continuation

Points connected in a straight or smoothly curving line are seen as belonging together

- lines tend to be seen as to follow the smoothest path
Principle of Common Fate

Things that are moving in the same direction appear to be grouped together
Principle of Familiarity

Things are more likely to form groups if the groups appear familiar or meaningful.
Figure-Ground & Smallness

- Smaller areas seen as figures against larger background

- Surroundedness
Principle of Symmetry

The principle of symmetry is that, the symmetrical areas tend to be seen as figures against the asymmetrical background.
3D Effect
Context affects perceptual tasks

- Comparing values
  - Length
  - Curvature
  - Area
  - 2.5D shape
  - Position in 2.5D
Ambiguous Information: Length
Ambiguous Information: Length
Horizontal-Vertical Illusion
Ambiguous Information: Curvature
Ambiguous Information: Area (Context)
2.5D Shape

Adapted from Shepard R N, 1990 Mind Sights: Original Visual Illusions, Ambiguities, and other Anomalies
2.5D Shape

Ambiguous Information: Position in 2.5D space
Preattentive Visual Features

- The ability of the low-level human visual system to rapidly identify certain basic visual properties
- A unique visual property e.g., colour red allows it to "pop out"
- Aids visual searching

Adapted from Perception in visualization C. Healey, http://www.csc.ncsu.edu/faculty/healey/PP/
Preattentive Visual Features

- Some more effective than others

- closure
- curvature
- length

Adapted from Perception in visualization C. Healey, http://www.csc.ncsu.edu/faculty/healey/PP/
Preattentive Visual Features

flicker
direction of movement
enclosure/containment

Adapted from Perception in visualization C. Healey, : http://www.csc.ncsu.edu/faculty/healey/PP/
More than 2 Preattentive visual features

A target made up of a combination of non-unique features normally cannot be detected preattentively

- spot the red square
- difficult to detect
- serial search required

Adapted from Perception in visualization C. Healey, : http://www.csc.ncsu.edu/faculty/healey/PP/
Boundary detection

Horizontal boundary

Vertical boundary

Adapted from Perception in visualization C. Healey, : http://www.csc.ncsu.edu/faculty/healey/PP/
Region tracking
Use of preattentive features

- **target detection:**
  - users rapidly and accurately detect the presence or absence of a "target" element with a unique visual feature within a field of distractor elements

- **boundary detection:**
  - users rapidly and accurately detect a texture boundary between two groups of elements, where all of the elements in each group have a common visual property

- **region tracking:**
  - users track one or more elements with a unique visual feature as they move in time and space, and

- **counting and estimation:**
  - users count or estimate the number of elements with a unique visual feature.
Colour

“Colour used poorly is worse than no colour at all” - Edward Tufte

- “Above all, do no harm”
- colour can cause the wrong information to stand out and
- make meaningful information difficult to see.
A *colour space* is a mathematical model for describing colour.

- RGB, HSB, HSL, Lab and LCH
- RGB is the most common in computer use,
  - but least useful for design
  - our eyes do not decompose colours into RGB constituents
- HSV, describes a colour in terms of its hue, saturation and value (lightness),
  - models colour based on intuitive parameters
  - more useful.
Colourimetry

- **Hue (colour)**
  - around the circle

- **Saturation**
  - Inside to outside
  - Colour to grey scale

- **Lightness (value)**
  - top to bottom

Figs. Courtesy of S Rogers, ONS
Brewer Palettes

Brewer palettes (colorbrewer.org) provide a range of palettes based on HSV model which make life easier for us.

Avoid the use of hue to encode quantitative variables

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<th>QUALITATIVE</th>
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<td>dark2</td>
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</table>

Fig. Courtesy of M. Krzywinski,
Examples

Poor use of colour

one color dominates

difficult to distinguish

murky

recolored with Brewer palettes

Brewer colours

M. Krzwiniski, behind every great visualization is a design principle, 2012
Conversion to Grey scale

- Ensure chosen colour set works well in grey scale
  - Sequential palette works well here

Fig. Courtesy of M Krzywinski
Trouble with perceptual colour....
Context Affects Perceived Colour

Figs. Courtesy of S Rogers, ONS
Colour & Accessibility….

Accessibility (W3C): 10-20% of population are red/green colour blind. (74? 21? No number at all?)….

Figs. Courtesy of S Rogers, ONS
Colour Blindness

8% males of USA descent

Red-green

Red-green

Blue-yellow

Fig. Courtesy of M Krzywinski
BioVis Example: Immunofluorescence images

red-green image of P2Y1 receptor and migrating granule neurons, effectively remapped to magenta-green using the channel mixing method.
Blue-Yellow might be better than Green-Magenta; talk about same colours.
From Data to Visualization…

- The properties of the data or information
- The properties of the image
- The rules mapping data to images
Encoding Schemes

Adapted from Mackinlay J (1986) Automating the design of graphical presentations of relational information.
Mapping data types to encoding

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