Visualizing Email Archives

I used email for more than 10 years I believe and I never thought of having inconveniences because of other systems I could use to communicate with other people such as windows live messenger, telephone, and newsgroup. But after I read this paper, I strongly agree of inconveniences people might face using current email technology. It is true that it is hard to erase emails that are not that important but can be possible crucial to one’s future life; but as everyone knows, there is limitation of storing emails. And it is also true that searching previous email is sometimes extremely difficult unless you know what date you received it or the title of it. A lot of way to search and sort data are developed in most of database area but email archives that are used by almost everyone in this world are not developed comparing to those.

Since I know these inconveniences we are facing in these days, I pretty much liked those visualization tools listed in this paper and I agree those visualization somewhat developed the way of looking emails in archives. However, I feel the lacking of solution to the limitation in amount of email can be stored at archive; this paper mentioned about it but seems there is no solution to it. But other than that, I feel it is worth to develop those visualization tools mentioned in this paper for future generations that will use this email archives more often than we do.

First time base visualization called, *TimeStore*, was bit off the track I want to say, because, as the paper mentions, this is nothing like user interface people can use to look up emails in their daily life. It is so hard to look up email on the grid compose of dots that don’t have any information relating to emails. I don’t think this improves any portion of email archive management tool but it seems it can be any base of developing other visualization tools for future.

Another time base visualization Post-history in the other hand gave me such a great impression to me I would like to say because of its movie like figure shows interactivity between the user and other users. The image shown at the last page of this paper was quite interesting; those rectangles in calendar gave much detail of how many emails were transferred during that each particular date; if some sort of expanding technique of each date was implemented, this will give much convenience to users to make them search each email more thoroughly and easily. Expanding date figure can distribute not only squares representing each email but also other email information that can make user easier way to look up email.

Other two social visualizations were quite interesting to me also because both of visualization distributed people in terms of interactivity/relationship with user so that this implementation made user to distinguish which ones are actively interacting and which ones not quite easily. However, the personal map seems have a problem of having many email stacks one another which makes user hard to click a particular email. Movie like figure shown in post-history would give great improvement to this visualization and this personal map can be developed in the future giving many benefits to email users.
This social base email visualization tool was quite interesting to me because of its uniqueness to relate the user with other email users. Because of its uniqueness, I spend much time to exactly understand how the relationship among people is classified. I was actually doubt about how this works, but after reading discussion at the end of this paper, I was surprised at the result of usage of this visualization.

2 weeks period looked quite reasonable to distribute email transactions and movie like figure was also such a great idea to make user to look what users were more interacting than others. If there was no shading effect, it would’ve been quite hard to user names that could’ve been overlapped one another.

However, I thought time based visualization (even though this is social network related visualization, it also has time attributes shown what date each message is sent and received) has a little problem because the amount of email each person receives varies a lot. Person like junior high or lower would not get many emails at all which makes date interval is quite short time period to distribute galaxy figure fancy enough to make user satisfied; when I was about age 15, I got less than 5 email messages per week; it seems like a week interval could be enough for me at that time. But some people like business man can get some hundreds of email for each date which makes the business man confused by hundreds of messages pop up and down at short period of time. If there is some user interface makes user to manage the speed of shading out names, it would improve this visualization greater.

I also wonder whether there is a tool to distinguish email from a person or a company to sell their products; distributing those messages to this visualization tool seems quite unnecessary and wasting of time since it takes quite a time to calculate activeness of each email id with the user. And I also hope there is an icon to turn off/on shading effect in order to make user not angry about disappearing words when user tried to click it. And also, just for curiosity, I am just wondering whether there is possibility of having one name appears at different positions of galaxy at the same time; it is not exactly the same time though; one might appear not that brightly when another just came out with its max brightness. I am not sure whether this will give some problem to this tool but it was just a curiosity.

Even though I am not that sure of those ties classified as this paper is written, I don’t think I can make any critique against this classification of ties because the result seems quite reasonable and it does really satisfy the users who actually practiced this tool. I hope this can be developed more so that many people can use this visualization tool for future days.
Public displays of connection

Even though this paper doesn’t give us any visualization tool that is developed by the author, it gives quite broad sense of public displays of connection through internet which gives basic ideas of it and some of the concerns appear through online communication. I don’t really use any of websites to build my communication network since I already have hard time to set up network in the real life, so this fact made me a little unaware of this public network through online communities. But I strongly agree on the false identity problem in online community since I already had played some of RPG games that also have this kind of identity problem too.

Some people act like they are perfect, handsome guys or pretty ladies in this second life and there is no way to disprove their identity which makes people to believe others in online. However, as paper mentioned, it is also true that some of the websites for communication among people are unaware of figuring out real identity of oneself because it is most of time unnecessary to do. People communicate because there is something in common to them and that is quite good enough reason for those people to share their commons. Even if some of the members of communities have false identities, that doesn’t harm others unless their share of interest isn’t false. I also had one person who pretended himself as a lady during playing games, and it didn’t really matter to me after figuring that out because there was no problem of playing game after I knew he was having fun with his false identity. As author mentioned, some of the websites that have critical issue of having real identity can make some restrictions or identifying process for each person who tries to register to that website.

I also agree the fact that some of the personal identification should be hided to some particular people; everyone has their own private things they want to hide, and this can be shared to most beloved friends, but not other acquaintances. In my country, there is a website called cyworld.com, and it has a degree program makes user to decide what degree access is applicable to particular information of that person. Even though people opens same homepage of particular user, some people can also look up very private information of one, when others can only see some of the photos that the one allowed everyone to see it. I think this kind of restriction process is needed to almost all the websites to keep and protect each one’s privacy.

I also liked the notion of spreading one’s network and making oneself involved to more and more network for one’s social life. But I think this diversifying one’s network seems quite difficult to approach since its complicating property is nothing different to real world. Solving this problem would give lots of improvement to this communication network visualization tools.