Using the concept of small multiples to elucidate patterns, weeklyRhythm will analyze the weekly flow of e-mail. The concept is simple; by comparing consecutive weeks separated by day, visually show when communication is greatest and least. The area of the bar denotes the percentage of email received on that day relative to the total amount of e-mail received that week. Green bars (above the axis) represent e-mail received (denoted “In”) while blue bars represent e-mail sent (denoted “Out”).

Instead of the standard calendar display having Saturday and Sunday on opposite ends of the week, the “weekend” is grouped on one end for ease of comparison with the “work week”.

Bars representing later days of the week slightly overlap (above) the previous day’s bar, reinforcing the passage of time. Bars are given outlines to ensure that they are viewed as discrete entities for comparison.

In this example, notice that Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays tend to bring a fair amount of email “in”. Weekends tend to show very little communication in either direction. This could be interpreted as many e-mails going in on Monday describing assignments due later in that week. Perhaps Wednesday is when massmail newsletters are sent out. Friday may see increased communication due to the discussion of plans for the weekend. Weekends may be relatively quiet because it’s time to party or catch up on reading in place of electronic activity.

Sunday of week #3 shows a huge spike in communication on Sunday as well as escalation since Friday. Perhaps the owner of this client is coordinating an event taking place the next Monday, and has been planning alone since Friday (instead of talking about nightlife). As the weekend passes, maybe more and more people become involved in the planning.