Label Map

Since the data set for this social network analysis is email again, the visualization will probably be built as an additional module to my version of the Thread Arcs viewer. One possible implementation is to read from the same source of message data as the last program and allow the user to change viewing modes (Labeled Thread Arcs or Label Map).

One of the critiques of the Thread Arcs’ labeled circles was that too many colors were involved (sender + label). I still haven’t figured out a way to avoid that except for having a toggle for indicating sender information directly on the circle or, in this case, the general area.

The lack of time scaling used in my previous visualization should probably stay so the user isn’t confused when switching modes. This keeps the benefit of knowing with whom the user most recently communicated but again may not be able to distinguish between periods of lighter activity and regular usage. I am OK with that loss because of the assumption that email is either used often or seldom with little variation in patterns over time.

The most recently active label gets pushed to the left. Its size depends on the total number of conversations tagged with it. This would probably have to be an actively updating display to show anything significant. This first style shows what type(s) of network one establishes and maintains through email:
Contact Frequencies

This second mode is activated by a click on a label in the above display. I’m not sure whether to order these people by circle size or last message received. Users may see the left side as “closer” even when there is no chronology involved, or they may assume it means time like in the other contexts. In this sample the time-ordered approach is taken, and I’m hoping the size indicates closeness to the user (again, simply based on number of messages) well enough:

Things to Consider

- Sent items should probably be counted, even if they don’t receive responses. Some standard awareness/trust calculation may be involved.
- The concept of multi-labeled conversations must be addressed in a better way. Currently, all labels contribute to their total number.