Gmail Visualizer

Overview

I would like to continue working on my visualization application for Gmail. Although it accomplished what was originally outlined in the description/mockup, there were still some unanswered questions as well as areas for significant improvement (particularly in the code itself, I feel). Beyond these relatively simple fixes, the program would ideally download and classify all data, including live update of new and unread messages automatically. From my experience and failure during the development process of the first implementation of this project, I think it will take a considerable amount of work and risk to get around the lack of an official API for Gmail as well as potentially unintentionally abusing the service. It might be in my best interest to create a dummy account for testing the “safety” of this application.

Thread Arcs

This segment of the project seemed more complete and perhaps only needs refinement. Arrangement of the circles and arcs seem OK as it is, but both types of outstanding conversations need to be accentuated somehow. Currently, only the threads which receive responses after an extended period of relative time show up better than others. The idea I have in mind for long strings of messages is to make the translucent arc fillings (the areas underneath the arcs) more and more opaque as the number of mutual responses grows. An aesthetic feature that could be revised is the display of contacts and message labels. First of all, contacts’ display colors should be assigned from some pre-defined list rather than purely random. Secondly, having both label and contact colors could confuse some people; I thought that having the inner circle be the color of the label and trimming it with a stroke of the sender’s color would emphasize the labels of messages. At this point I do not know which attribute the users are more interested in, but the thread arcs mode was supposed to focus on message categorization. As with any e-mail-based data, this won’t reliably map out every aspect of a person’s life, but it can point out habits and trends with certain types of e-mail.

Label Map + Contact Frequencies

The realm of this “social network visualization” will probably remain personal. I don’t believe it’s possible to get any sort of accurate reading of a person’s social network solely from e-mail, so I won’t even attempt to get any sort of picture of everyone else’s social networks (even if it’s confined to only friends of friends, etc.).

Areas requiring improvement:

- Contacts’ assigned colors (currently unrestricted random).
- Contact arrangement? This will require user feedback.
- Inclusion of sent messages. Closeness rating should be based on two-way interaction.