A Guide to Reading the Visualizations

A few initial notes:

All the data in these displays represents my own outgoing mail from April to December 2002.

As a result of being outgoing mail, it doesn’t reflect spam, and closely reflects my own working and online habits. The account in question is a general box for both work and social mail.

Most displays in this system center on repeated, group interactions. Messages to a single close friend won’t show up at all.

At some point in September 2002, I moved from the West to the East coast. However, all times in the displays are Eastern time.

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Cambridge
December, 2002

Irvine
October, 2003
The min tie strength is fairly high (A), which separates the different clusters (numbered) into distinct groups. The groups have been pulled apart with the stretch (B) slider, which keeps the names slightly farther apart. The groups are distinct colors, marked with the (C) colorize checkbox. Additionally, a number of other elements—not so tightly tied to each other—have fallen into the background (D).

These groups represent different work and social clusters in my life, which separate themselves fairly nicely:

(1) is two research teams, connected at paul_moody@us.ibm.com
(2) through (5) are all social groups
(6) is a team publishing an article.
This large (A) colorful (B) mass actually consists of several connected components that don’t touch each other: the forest-green (and pale versions) series; the olive-green (and pale versions) series; the bright-green series; and the reddish.
In this image, I’ve grabbed one of the nodes and right-clicked on it. I selected “show only this component”, and let the others fall away. (I’ve also re-colorized it once, and this is a new set of colors.)
This weekly (1) view shows my messages sent to jpd@ics.uci.edu (2), cumulative across the whole database. A red tick indicates a message sent from me to jpd. The horizontal position indicates the day of the week; the vertical position indicates the time of day. A thin line shows one message; thicker lines suggest two or more messages about the same time.

Thus, (3) is a message on a Monday morning, at 9:30 am. It seems fairly thick—it probably represents a series of messages. Perhaps I regularly send a message at that time?

The half-red message at (4) has only half the line highlighted: this shows a message with more than one recipient.
The tiny blip at (5) was clearly a message with many recipients—I sent it to an entire list, of whom JPD was only one.

The mouse highlights a message sent to both Rosie and Lueg (1). The colors are in the same order as their portions of the highlighted line. The two names tend to occur together; there are slightly more messages to Lueg (in blue, the second name on the list) than to Rosie (in red, the first name in the list).

It is easy to see that I never send mail to Rosie without also sending it to Lueg; I sometimes send it to even more people, though (as in 2).
With the cumulative display (1) on, messages are covered with little black towers. The towers give an idea of how many messages are at that time: tall skinny towers suggest many messages at once; broader towers show a sustained series of messages.

Red messages are those to JPD, the currently-selected name.

By this graph, Wednesday is my big email day; right around noon, I send a great deal of mail (3). I send the least email on Saturdays, except for that mysterious cluster—all to JPD—on Saturday around 5 am (2). If one assumes that email is a good indicator of my working hours, I often sleep at night, and rest on Friday evenings. I send lots of email on Mondays, but far less of it to JPD.
This graph is the same as the previous one, except it stacks all the days on top of each other: a message sent at 3 pm on any day will show up on the 3 pm line. I send virtually no email late at night—from 5 am to around 7 am—and send the most around noon.
This graph does the opposite: it unstacks all the days, so that the date runs across the top of the screen.

I took a vacation in late August; I started working much earlier in the morning sometime mid-September (when I moved from the West to the East coast). May was a quiet email month.
This is a “top ten” list of correspondents, by month. In April, I sent the most mail to michelle, followed by jpd and gmark.

I have highlighted the name lueg, and this chart now highlights when I’ve interacted with him. Note that he was my sixth-most frequent correspondent in April, and then fell off my top-ten list until August. I corresponded with lueg repeatedly in August, September, and November.