Data as Art

The art of data collection, visualization, and sonification

Kelsey Brod, Computational Media, Arts and Cultures PhD Candidate, Duke University, Feb. 8 2024
• Hi, I’m Kelsey Brod, Computational Media, Arts and Cultures (CMAC) PhD Candidate here at Duke.

• Project Lead TA

• Reminders: HW1 regrade requests are due by Sunday, project proposals need to be updated from peer review feedback by

Friday at 5pm, and HW2 is due Tuesday at 5pm

• (This lecture material is not a test nor will it be a part of grading... but hopefully it will get you thinking about the “art” of data)
What my job has taught me over the years is that to really understand data and their true potential, sometimes we actually have to forget about them and see through them instead. Because data are just a tool we use to represent reality. They’re always just a placeholder for something else, but they are never the real thing.

Questions for today

• What is data?

• How is the collection, curation, and presentation of data like an art?

• How can data be used to communicate material, process, and means rather than just an end?
Data is cultural; it can be words, texts, images, sounds, and books.

words, conversations, and poetry are data in software
Feminist Data Set is a multi-year project that interrogates every step of the AI process that includes data collection, data labeling, data training, selecting an algorithm to use, the algorithmic model, and then designing how the model is then placed into a chat bot (and what the chatbot looks like) through intersectional feminism as an investigatory framework. Every step exists to question and analyze the pipeline of creating using machine learning—is each step feminist, is it intersectional, does each step have bias and how can that bias be removed? Really, what does it mean to think through every step slowly and thoughtfully; metaphorically, can we think of this as farm to server table, as slow data and consensual data?

Caroline Sinders
1. Observe the room or a part of the room. Create at least 2 variables, create a classification system for the observations, and record the observations. (5-10 minutes) Note: following the sentiment of consensual data, do not classify and record people in the room.

2. What did you choose?

3. What potential problems did you run into?
Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec, *Dear Data*, 2015
Giorgia Lupi and Stefanie Posavec, *Dear Data*, 2015.
1. Think about how you will represent your data. Start to make sketches either in RStudio or by hand. (5-10 minutes)

2. How are you choosing to represent your data and why? What meaning is the aesthetic bringing to the data?
Graphing with metaphors

THE MONEY ISSUE

9 WAYS TO IMAGINE JEFF BEZOS’ WEALTH

By Mona Chalabi

The number of billionaires is out of control. This special issue of the magazine examines what that means for the rest of us.

Mona Cholabi’s Pulitzer Prize winning series, 9 ways to Imagine Jeff Bezos’ Wealth, 2023
Exercise part 3

1. Can you visualize your data using a metaphor? (5 min)
Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin, Moveable Type, lobby installation in the NYT building, 2007
Kelsey Brod, Untitled (reported North Carolina Covid-19 death increases as wind in the trees), Unity open
Kelsey Brod, Untitled (four audio channels), 2021 (image of process with software Max)
Iris data and classification