

WikiSym 2009 Invited Talks

Opening Keynote, Sunday October 25, 2009

Visualizing the Inner Lives of Texts

Speakers: Fernanda Viégas and Martin Wattenberg (IBM Research)

Abstract: Visualization is often viewed as a way to unlock the secrets of numeric data. But what about political speeches, novels, and blogs? These texts hold at least as many surprises. On the Many Eyes site, a place for collective visualization, we have seen an increasing appetite for analyzing documents. We present a series of techniques for visualizing and analyzing unstructured text. We also discuss how a technique developed for visualizing the authoring patterns of Wikipedia articles has recently revealed the collective lives of a much broader class of documents.

Speaker bios: Fernanda Viégas and Martin Wattenberg are research scientists in IBM's Visual Communication Lab. Viégas is known for her pioneering work on depicting chat histories and email. Wattenberg's visualizations of the stock market and baby names are considered Internet classics. Both Viégas and Wattenberg are also known for their visualization-based artwork, which has been exhibited in venues such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, London Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Whitney Museum of American Art. The two became a team in 2003 when they decided to visualize Wikipedia, leading to the "history flow" project that revealed the self-healing nature of the online encyclopedia. They are currently exploring the power of web-based visualization and the social forms of data analysis it enables.