Dear ManyEyes team,

I have had the opportunity to explore ManyEyes as part of my homework for an Information Visualization course at the University of Maryland. I am impressed with your software, as well as pleased with the overall user-friendliness of your website. The interface is intuitive and it takes very little time for the user to understand how to upload datasets and create new visualizations.

Given that all datasets and visualizations are public, ManyEyes provides great potential for collaboration and interaction between users. The ability to use anyone's data to further explore one's own visualizations is likely to produce many insightful discoveries.

I applaud your efforts to create such a wonderful tool, however, I have some suggestions for further improvements.

Uploading the data works very smoothly the way it is set up right now. Nevertheless, it would helpful if there was more flexibility in the type of inputs permitted. Options such as uploading from an .xls or .csv file instead of having to copy and paste all the information into the given form I feel would be an improvement. It would also be useful to allow for uploading of several files into the same dataset. Lastly in this regard, I would suggest enhancing the dataset creation application to allow for more complex editing such as manual creation of new columns.

It is very useful that the table creation form detects whether a column contains numbers or text, and also the fact that the user can change those settings. It would be better, though, if the user could also switch between text and number when creating a visualization; sometimes numbers can also be used simply as labels. Having to create an entirely new dataset to make such a minor change is slightly inconvenient.

An improvement for the bubble chart visualization would be to allow users to group several items under the same color, or simply to give the option to manually specify individual color labels. Furthermore, dragging a box over the chart to select multiple items would also come in handy.

It would be beneficial if error messages contained more intuitive information about what might have gone wrong. For instance, when a user logs in with the wrong password, a generic error page shows up specifying that "createCriteria is not valid without active transaction", which is quite cryptic for most users who are not at all familiar with the implementation details of ManyEyes. The further option of showing the stack trace yields similarly confusing results.

Finally, it would be nice if you could acquire the www.manyeyes.com URL. While this is a very minor inconvenience, I suspect there are a number of users like myself who find it hard to remember a long URL like "services.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/". I found myself typing "manyeyes" in my browser and then having to google for it every time I wanted to use it.

Despite the various issues I pointed out, my experience with your software was positive. You have done a fantastic job and I look forward to creating more visualizations with your product.

Best regards,
Andreea Olea