CMSC 734 Homework #1

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NY Times interactive visualization URL:

Letter to the designers:

Dear Designers of New York Times interactive visualizations,

I have had the opportunity to play with one of your visualizations titled “The Ebb and Flow of Movies: Box Office Receipts 1986 – 2008” in our Information Visualization class. I found the interactive design very attractive. The texts were nicely spaced and do not interfere with the reading of the chart. However, I found that for some movies which don’t do very well in their first week of release and sort of pick-up with time don’t really stand out in the graph. Graphs for such movies will be very long and flowing and this is one such aspect where the visualization doesn’t help its readers to make out good movies which had a good “overall” run. I am not really sure about the idea of placement of the movies where one is on top (or bottom) of the other, other than for aesthetic appeal.

I have noticed that it is somewhat difficult to compare total collections of one film with the other, which required comparing obscure shapes of hills. Similarly, it is hard to compare across years since there is so much data spread over space. I have also noticed that those movies which are blockbusters that run for shorter periods are best seen over this timeline of events. So, a zoom-out feature for this interactive design would have been nice. Similarly, a zoom-in feature would have been nice which gives me the box office numbers and the duration of the run of a particular movie, instead of its synopsis and the Times’ review.

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to critique your design.
Sincerely,

Praveen