Dear Editor,

I am writing regarding your interactive visualization entitled "The Ebb and Flow of Movies: Box Office Receipts 1986 - 2008" (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2008/02/23/movies/20080223_REVENUE_GRAPHIC.html). I found this utility informative, interesting, and easy to use even as a first-time visitor. I was particularly pleased by its ability to provide title suggestions based on partially entered queries, and by its flexibility in accepting either mouse or keyboard input for movie selection and query submission. Please therefore take the following as constructive criticism meant only to help fine-tune an already excellent application.

In my experimentation, I encountered only one serious issue: when I searched for a movie that was not present in the database, the tool revised my query to specify a movie that *was* present in the database, and presented the results for this alternate movie without alerting me to the change. At first glance I assumed that the data being presented was regarding the movie I had searched for, unaware that my search had been revised.

The following are minor style-related points:

- When the user selects a movie of interest, a synopsis appears. The synopsis frame is transparent and the timeline text is still visible behind it, overlapping with the synopsis text. This is distracting.
- A note next to the timeline explains that "The area of the shape ... corresponds to the film's total domestic gross, through Feb. 21." A year would be nice.
- The key shows which colors correspond to which revenue ranges. Only the highest revenue range is fully qualified ("$862 million"); the rest say only, e.g., "250" or "1." The user may not understand these numbers at first glance.
- When the user clicks on a movie, a link to a review of that movie is presented. If the user clicks this link, the review replaces the timeline. The user must click the "Back" button to return to the timeline, only to find that his or her search results and position within the timeline have been reset.

The following relate to potential bugs (encountered using Firefox 3.5.2 on Mac OS 10.5.8), none of which could be replicated reliably:

- Dragging the slider at the bottom of the timeline allows the user to move forward and backward in time. However, even after I had released the mouse button and navigated away from the slider, the timeline continued to shift backward and forward in time as I moved the cursor.
- A label pops up and displays the title of whatever movie the user's cursor is currently hovering above. However, this pop-up label followed my cursor
around the entire web page in one case even though I had moved it away from any of the movies within the timeline.

- When a user searches for, clicks on, or mouses over a particular movie, it is highlighted in the timeline. However, there are times when a second movie is simultaneously highlighted for reasons that are unclear.

Congratulations on an excellent tool.

Sincerely,
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