Mike Bostock, Shan Carter and Josh Keller,

I would like to thank you for designing the wonderful "Among the Oscar Contenders, a Host of Connections" visualization (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/02/20/movies/among-the-oscar-contenders-a-host-of-connections.html?_r=0).

The graph design is excellent; using different styled nodes for films and people makes identifying highly nominated films and Hollywood actors/producers/directors with a history of many nominations visually distinctive. In addition, people with a history of working together on highly-nominated films are easily identified with the number of connections providing a visual sense of the extent of their collaboration.

[Silver Linings Playbook is easily seen to be a highly-nominated film. Robert De Niro is easily seen to be a highly nominated actor. Kennedy and Spielberg clearly have a long history of collaboration.]

The color coding of nominees by "role" packs in even more information without cluttering the graph and tracing out the edges with the appropriate color makes the edges easier for the human eye to follow. Inserting a headshot of each nominee on their node is a particularly clever choice serving the dual purpose of distinguishing nominee nodes from film nodes and also making it easier to find a particular person, seeing as many actors are most easily identified by their face.

In general, a remarkable amount of information is available instantly, with the on-hover tooltips filling in the rest of the details. However, I think it is possible to make even more information visually available without cluttering the graph. Some suggested changes:

There is no way to tell if a person was merely involved in a film with a nomination, or if that person was actually nominated (but lost out to another person). For example, the Hugh Jackman node is surrounded by Oscar nominated movies he was involved in, but has received only one nomination - the only way to recover this information is to hover over each film node, and read the details from the tooltip.
In fact, hovering over a nominee node only generates black lines to the movies that nominee was involved which adds no information. It would be nice if hovering over a nominee generated a "summary tooltip" listing their lifetime nominations and wins. This would save the user from having to hover over each film node to recover that information. Perhaps the black lines that currently appear when hovering over a nominee could be used to distinguish a person's involvement in an Oscar nominated film from an actual nomination.

Also, the movie nodes appeared to be labeled inconsistently. Some of the 2012 Oscar nominations are in bold text (e.g. Argo, Django unchained), but others (e.g. The Master) are not - inconsistency is a bit jarring to most users, I think bold text would be best if and only if the film is a 2012 nomination, with the lighter colored film labels reserved for previous winners.

Finally, it would be nice if it was possible to drag-and-drop nodes in the graph, with the edges being dynamically redrawn, making it easier to compare people and their history of nominations. In fact, if dynamic graph layout was built into the system, it should be relatively easy to add a feature to compare Oscar nominees over multiple years. The visualization, as it is, is so wonderful, it's a shame that it can only be used on the 2012 nominees - a historical perspective would be even better.

Thank you again for producing a great visualization.

~Joshua Brulé

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