

## Week 2 Assignment

The goal of the Minnesota Employment by Industry visualization below was to engage readers in finding and telling their own stories in the data. It was hoped that residents in various occupations would engage in social data analysis, sharing expertise from their respective industries. Despite good intentions, the visualization failed in this goal. A total of 23 people submitted 62 comments, with 25 of these comments being posted by the producers of the visualization. Other guests pointed out trends of interest and shared pointers to other related data sets; for example, a registered nurse shared his first-hand experiences in the Health sector. However, the majority of posters were not citizens of Minnesota; they were visualization and statistics enthusiasts drawn by the technology (the piece was mentioned on a popular visualization blog) and not by the story.

A post-mortem analysis reveals multiple areas for improvement. Some issues revolve around usability: the visualization was placed below-the-fold on the web site, and thus possibly overlooked by Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) readers. The visualization also lacked a tacit tutorial—it dropped readers into the data with little orientation and no example of a rich, emergent story. Seed comments served to highlight interesting patterns and raise questions, but did not develop a larger narrative. Most importantly, the graphics are disconnected from the narrative. While unemployment statistics are topically relevant to the feature, they were not related to any of the other news stories. Moreover, only unemployment data from 2000-2007 was available from the state at that time—yet the main concern of the feature is the economic woes of 2008. Though the Employment Explorer was designed with the hopes of having people annotate data with stories, this example suggests that it may be more fruitful to first annotate stories with data. By immersing readers in a narrative and providing a tacit tutorial, readers may become invested in exploring new perspectives of a story—and perhaps branch out in search of new stories of their own.

**Scenario:** You are a data scientist with Minnesota Public Radio, and have been asked to revamp the failed data visualization project from 2007. Using the information in *Storytelling in Data* chapters 1-10 as a reference, re-frame the project to ensure a more successful outcome. Create a paper (minimum 2 pages) that includes the information listed below.

- 1. Describe the context**

Make sure your team has a robust understanding of the context and what you need to communicate. You must identify a specific audience and what they need to know or do, and determine the data we'll use to illustrate our case. We should craft the Big Idea. The Big Idea should be stated in 1-2 sentences.

- 2. Use the Data Visualization Checklist to help you assess the visualization.**

(W2DataVizChecklist.pdf in the Course Resources folder). Fill out the checklist and upload to the Week 2 Project Assignment dropbox.

- 3. Eliminate clutter**

List and briefly discuss the features of the old visualization that are/are not effective, and why. Include relevant items from the checklist, as well as any others that you identify. For example, What needs to be removed (color, content, labels, text)? What makes the visualization cluttered? Is there clutter in the old story – does the story need to be simplified? Should the data be grouped into categories/industry types?

4. **Choose an appropriate display to draw attention where you want it**

What display is currently being used to tell the story? Why doesn't it work? Do you need multiple displays? What display would be more effective? Why is this more effective?

5. **Think like a designer**

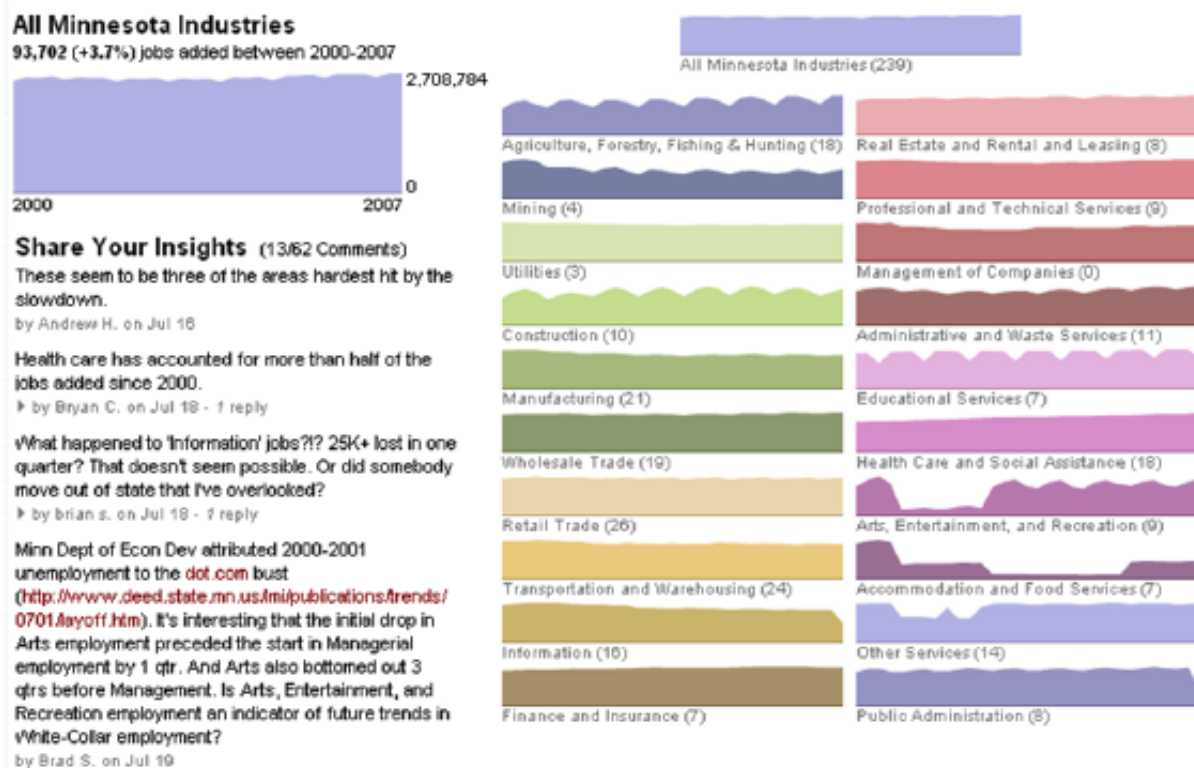
Sketch the graph manually or electronically. If you do a manual sketch you can take a picture of it or scan it in and upload it to the Week 3 assignment dropbox. Next week we will have a hands on exercise in which you create the graph, this week's focus is to plan the design.

6. **Tell a story**

Finally, it is time to think about how we can use the visual we've created in Figure 8.10 as a foundation to walk our audience through the story in the way that we want them to experience it. Imagine we have five minutes in a live presentation setting to get your story across. Review the sequence in the Storytelling with Data textbook, chapter 8, lesson 6 (Figures 8.11–8.19) that illustrates one path that could be taken to tell a story with the data they describe in the example.

**Upload your paper to the Week 2 Project dropbox along with your checklist, and design sketch – which can be hand sketched. You can use a visualization tool, but we haven't covered the use of tools for visualizations so hand sketched is fine.**

### Minnesota Quarterly Employment (by Industry) 2000-2007



Choose a new chart: [http://www.betterevaluation.org/plan/describe/visualise\\_data](http://www.betterevaluation.org/plan/describe/visualise_data)

<http://stephanieevergreen.com/gauge-diagram/>