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Keynote

A Tool is not Enough: Research Contributions Through Design Study

Miriah Meyer

Abstract

The most commonly reported research contribution of a design study is a new tool for a group of domain experts. In my own experiences, however, tools are often the least interesting outcome of design study. In this talk I'll argue that design study is a rich opportunity to question visualization dogma, to extend our research methods and approaches, and to probe into the relationship of people and data. These opportunities provide the possibility for a wealth of new visualization knowledge, grounded in the real needs of real people in the real world. Using design study as a method of inquiry, rather than as a process for developing a tool, however, requires us to rethink our methods, approaches, and values for conducting research. I'll discuss the ways that design study upends normative visualization research foundations and present views from other fields that offer insight into new ways forward.

Short Biography

Miriah is an associate professor in the School of Computing at the University of Utah and a faculty member in the Scientific Computing and Imaging Institute. She co-directs the Visualization Design Lab, which focuses on the design of visualization systems for helping people make sense of complex data, and on the development of methods for helping visualization designers make sense of the world. She obtained her bachelors degree in astronomy and astrophysics at Penn State University, and earned a PhD in computer science from the University of Utah. Prior to joining the faculty at Utah Miriah was a postdoctoral research fellow at Harvard University and a visiting scientist at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard.

Miriah is the recipient of a NSF CAREER grant, a Microsoft Research Faculty Fellowship, and a NSF/CRA Computing Innovation Fellow award. She was named a University of Utah Distinguished Alumni, both a TED Fellow and a PopTech Science Fellow, and included on MIT Technology Review's TR35 list of the top young innovators. She was also awarded an AAAS Mass Media Fellowship that landed her a stint as a science writer for the Chicago Tribune.