Project 2: Infographics Comparison Chart

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Introduction

In order to compare and contrast the three infographic tools I selected for this project, I chose to examine each tool’s capabilities in terms of five different criteria: “Technical Ease/Difficulty,” “Data Organization/Representation Capabilities or Tools,” “Availability/Range of Templates or Designs,” “Availability of Icons, Images, and External Content,” and “Exportability/Sharing Capabilities.” When comparing the sites, the overall concern I had was the site’s ability to allow me to best showcase the specific data I chose to represent in my infographic. I have also included a brief explanation of each set of criteria used to compare each tool in order to clarify my thinking when making my comparisons. My overall observations about each tool’s performance or capabilities in the selected areas were recorded in the comparison chart below.

For the “Technical Ease/Difficulty” component, I took into consideration the overall technical function of the tool, its ease of use, and any difficulties I experienced while creating my sample infographics. For this particular category, I examined each tool’s interface and made note of its overall functionality in terms of ease of use. As someone who had never used an infographic tool, I also considered how easy or difficult it was for me to get started or to figure out all of the site’s accompanying features or tools. I noted any difficulties or issues I had when using the interface and considered how clear or unclear the site’s labels or organization of tools were for the user. Some of the questions used to guide my comparisons for this category were:

- Does one need a great deal of technical or design expertise to use the tool?
- How can the different design components be added or removed from the infographic?
- How easy/difficult is it to arrange/re-arrange components?
- Are tools labeled or represented in a way that lets the user know what they do?
- Does the site save work in progress and allow one to pick up where he/she left off?
The next criteria I chose to examine, “Data Organization/Representation Capabilities or Tools,” allowed me to assess each tool’s capabilities to organize and represent data. I looked at what types of data tools each site contained and noted the number of different options for data representation. For example, some of the tools had bar graph, pie chart, or bubble graph tools while others had text-based data comparison capabilities (for written facts/figures or comparisons). I looked at each site’s possibility to vary the display of data/information in a way that would not be redundant or visually boring. For me, this was perhaps the most important category to consider because my selected data mostly contained percentages. Examining each tool’s capabilities in this regard helped me to see how one might be more desirable than the other for certain projects, depending on the amount or type of data being represented. Some of the questions I used to guide my comparisons were:

- How many different ways can I choose to visually represent data?
- Can multiple data sets be displayed/compared in one data tool?
- Which site is best for different types of data or information?
- Do the tools vary enough to help make the representations
- How easy was it to input data or modify existing data tools?

The third area I used for comparison was each tool’s “Availability/Range of Templates or Designs.” For this category, I considered the number of available pre-designed templates as well as the ability to change or reconfigure the existing elements. I also noted which sites allowed me to start with a “blank canvas” and build the infographic to my own specific design needs or preferences. When considering this category, I also examined the potential uses for each template and how they might apply to different uses or contexts. Another area that I considered was whether or not the tool allowed me to change the color scheme of the template and its elements. Some of the questions I asked myself during my creation and comparison processes were:

- How many templates are available?
- How easy is it to customize or change an existing template?
- Can I start from scratch and build my infographic according to my own preferences?
- Are certain features or tools only available on certain templates?
The fourth area I considered when comparing the infographic tools was the “Availability of Icons, Images, and External Content.” This category allowed me to examine the available design elements/tools for each site and how they would (or in some cases, would not) allow me to further customize or tailor my infographic to my own needs/context. I noted whether or not each site allowed me to upload external content such as a video, map, or image from another source and considered such a capability’s value upon the finished product. When experimenting with the various design tools on each site, I looked at the number or available icons or images, how they were categorized, and what categories were represented. I also noted the different ways or meanings each icon could potentially have in the eyes of the viewer and how well the icons conveyed a specific concept or idea. The capabilities of each site helped me narrow down the ideal potential uses for each site based on my specific needs. Some questions I asked myself during the process were:

- How many icons (if any) are available?
- What concepts/ideas do the icons or images represent?
- In what context could the icons be used? Are there a wide range of images to chose from?
- Are there any shape icons available? If so, what relationships can they help convey?
- How can the icons help the user effectively represent ideas or concepts?

The fifth area I examined when comparing my selected infographic tools were their “Sharing Capabilities.” Because an infographic is ultimately meant to be shared, I was interested to see how each tool allowed for the sharing or distribution of the final product. I looked at each tool’s options for publishing or making the infographic public as well as the capability to download or embed it into another site. As a visual person, I would be more drawn to read something made available in image format rather than clicking on and following a link. I also wanted to see if there were any differences in how the published infographic might look versus the one that was open in the creation/editing interface. Some of the questions I asked during my comparison process were:

- Is it easy to share or publish the infographic?
- How many different sharing options are given and what platforms/formats are available?
- Can the infographic be embedded?
Comparison Chart of Selected Infographic Tools

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Infogr.am</th>
<th>Easel.ly</th>
<th>Venngage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical Ease/Difficulty</td>
<td>A basic drop-and-drag interface makes it very easy to insert and arrange chosen components (graphs, charts, text, etc.) into the layout. Components can be moved by clicking on them and shifting them up or down based on the user’s preferences. Once components were placed on the background, they could easily be removed (by clicking on the “x” button) or edited by double-clicking on the component. The site also autosaves the infographic as you work, making it easy to work on projects in multiple sessions if needed. One drawback is the lack of an “undo” button.</td>
<td>Easel.ly also has a drag-and-drop interface that allows the user to easily place design components onto their infographic template. While the creation process is very easy and simple, I found myself having issues selecting and moving specific design elements. For example, I would select an object that was on the template and would try to move it, but (although what I wanted to move was highlighted) another item would move instead of the one I selected. It was a bit tedious as I kept adding information onto my infographic. Easel.ly also saves your progress as you work which is very helpful if you need to finish your work at another time.</td>
<td>Venngage also has a fairly simple interface that allows users to insert, move, and remove design elements. The major difficulty I had was deleting elements from the infographic. I had to right click on the element and choose “delete” from a drop-down menu that often ran off the page, making my choice unavailable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Organization/Representation Capabilities or Tools</td>
<td>Available data representational tools include a variety (1-3 of each) of bar graphs, pie charts, line graphs, pictorial charts, hierarchies, word clouds, progress gauges, financial graphs, tree maps, etc. Infogr.am</td>
<td>Easel.ly does not include any type of chart or bar graph on its design “menu.” Some of the pre-designed templates include bar graphs or pictographs, but they cannot be added to different layouts via the menu. One</td>
<td>Venngage has a nice variety of available charts, graphs, pictograms, and visual relationship tools to choose from. The data entry process was a bit easier to understand than Infogr.am’s although Venngage</td>
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provides a multitude of ways to organize and represent data. As Krauss (2012) mentions, how data is visually represented is just as important as the data itself (p. 12). Having multiple formats in which to represent data helps the creator find the best way to highlight their chosen data’s meaning or significance. Although the choices of data tools are impressive, it is difficult at first to determine how to enter data into the provided fields in order to make them display correctly. Data can be uploaded into the chart tools from an existing database/spreadsheet. Visual representations are nicely designed and help effectively convey data in a way that is easy to understand.

drawback to the pre-designed templates is that the data used for the included charts must be updated manually instead of entered/uploaded via a spreadsheet. I had to organize my data carefully and place it on each individual bar. It was also very tricky (and annoying) to try to change the size of the bar graph’s colored bar to visually match the percentage it represented. Because Easel.ly lacks the capability to create charts and graphs, it is difficult to use if you are trying to include visual representations of your data. That aspect was the most disappointing feature to me.

Availability/Range of Templates or Designs

Six slightly different templates are available on the free version. The major differences in available layouts are color scheme, layout/placement of components, and default font selections. Each template does allow you to modify colors for data components (charts, graphs, etc.) but does not allow you to change background or text colors. Once you select a specific template, there is no way to change the

does not have the capability to upload existing data. It took me a bit more time to enter everything into the individual data fields.

Easel.ly's free version gives the user access to roughly 15 pre-designed templates as well as the capability to “start from scratch” with a blank layout. The available layouts/backgrounds include some very specific visuals that might make it difficult for users to apply context to their data and meet their specific needs. The pre-designed layouts are also difficult to edit as their components can be

Venngage has a wide variety of available templates that can selected and modified to the user's needs. The available designs are much more visually appealing and have more of a visual “theme” than the other two sites. They are also a bit more complex and colorful.
| Availability of Icons, Images, and External Resources | No drag-and-drop icons are included in the available tools, however, Infogr.am does allow you to upload/insert your own images, videos, and maps. The lack of icons and shapes make it difficult to vary the content/representation of my infographic. Having icons to use would have helped me provide more visual context for my data and would have helped break up the charts and graphs in my layout. The chart/graph tools do allow for some variation in icons when representing data (profile, male figure, female figure, star, etc.) | A wide range of icons and shapes are available for use within Easel.ly. Icons are organized into categories such as “Nature” or “People” and are easy to search and drag over into the body of the infographic. The available icons also included a variety of maps. Easel.ly also gives you the option to upload images from your own files. | Venngage has a wide variety of shapes and icons that can be added. Icons are categorized into different subject headings that help make selection a bit easier. The site also allows one to upload an image from their PC but there is no option to incorporate video. |
| Exportability/Sharing Capabilities | Infogr.am gives you the option to share instantly via social media sites Facebook, Twitter and, Pinterest. You can also choose to publish and access it via the web with an individual URL. Infogr.am also provides HTML code so you can embed your creation into a website/blog. One neat feature is that the HTML code can be for a fixed size (font, uppercase or sentence case) of the text. | Easel.ly allows you to download a copy of your infographic as a .jpg, share it as a web link, or embed it in a website/blog. You can also set your infographic to be public or private. | Venngage’s free version does not allow you to share instantly via a direct link to social media. The free version only provides you with a URL. The premium version appears to only allow one to export the infographic as a PDF or PNG file. |
### Summarization of Comparison Results and Implications for Teaching and Learning

Overall, Infogr.am is a helpful, easy-to-use infographic tool that I see working best to represent statistical data, but it is also capable of including quotes or other text. I found the program to be heavy in data tools and a bit lacking in other design elements such as icons or visuals, which made it difficult for me to feel like I could vary the layout to the degree I would have liked.

In the K-12 or higher education/adult classroom setting, I could see Infogr.am as a great tool for research projects, observations, or experiments that focus on data. The wide variety of data representation tools would help students think critically about how to best showcase their data and communicate its overall meaning. For example, many of our English instructors require students to research controversial topics and include a large amount of data in their papers. I would love to see students utilize this tool as an accompanying exercise to visually summarize their findings.

Easel.ly is a user-friendly infographic creator with a good variety of templates and pre-loaded visuals/icons. It suffers, however, in its lack of data representation tools. This tool would not be recommended when dealing with a great deal of statistical information. Its ease of use and well-designed templates do have redeeming qualities.

In the K-12 or higher education/adult classroom setting, I feel that Easel.ly would be a great introductory tool to infographics, but perhaps those that illustrate more abstract concepts rather than statistics.

From my experience with this project, Venngage has the most capability in terms of design layout and customization, however, it is perhaps the hardest site to navigate in terms of placement or removal of objects. I liked the possibilities I saw when utilizing Venngage, especially those involving data representation.

In the K-12 or higher education/adult classrooms, Venngage might be better geared towards users who have a bit more technical knowledge or expertise. I am pretty tech-savvy, but I sometimes struggled with the tiny selection windows and more complex graphics.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this exercise helped me apply my new knowledge of infographics and to fully examine the pros and cons of each creation tool. I found it quite interesting that some qualities were
quite similar across the board, while other categories of comparison showed one or more major
differences in function or structure. I was impressed with each tool's overall ease of use, but it was eye-
opening to me to see how long it took me to create three separate infographics. Granted, I am notorious
to start something, get disappointed with it, and delete it and start again (I refrained from doing that with
this project). What was especially helpful about the process was the use of the comparison chart; it gave
me more confidence in seeing and articulating the good and bad elements or oversights of each tool. I
enjoyed this project and plan to apply the use of a comparison chart when I explore other web tools.