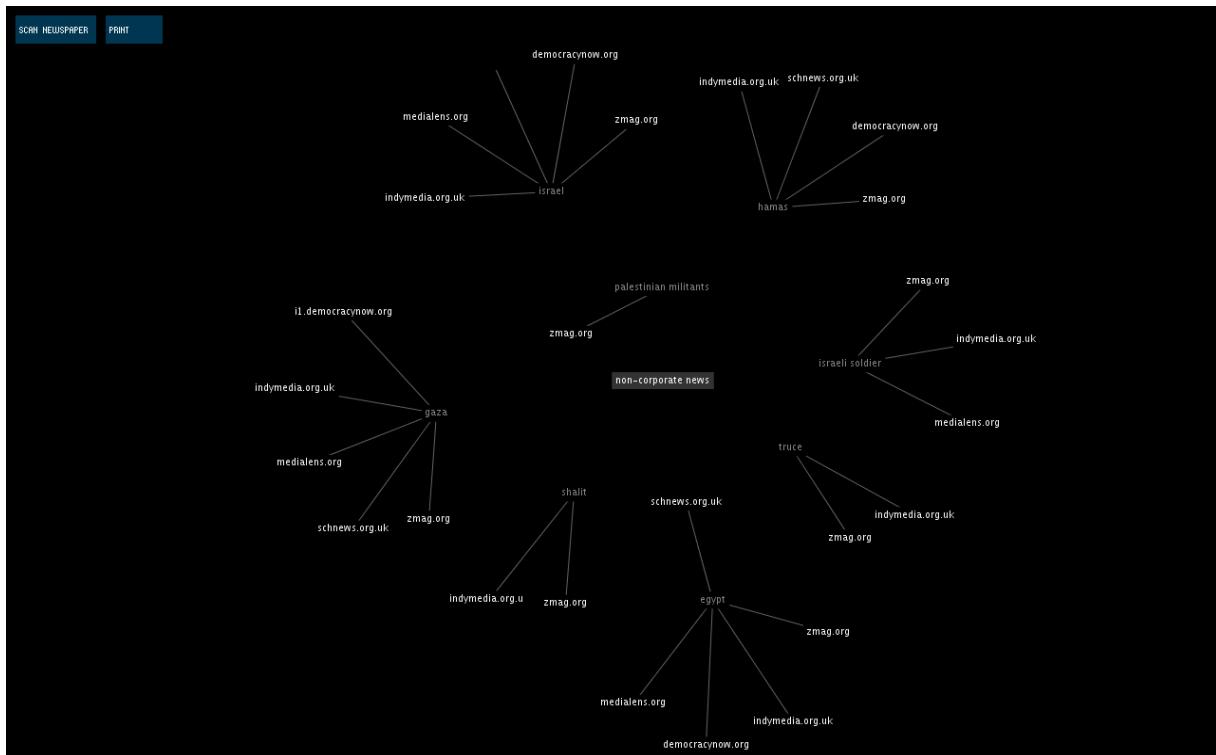


The Five Filters

Interactivos 09, Medialab Prado



Description

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky describe the media as businesses which sell a product (readers) to other businesses (advertisers). In their propaganda model of the media they point to five ‘filters’ which determine what we read in the newspapers and see on the television. These filters produce a very narrow view of the world that is in line with government policy and business interests.

In this project we try to encourage readers to explore the world of non-corporate online news, websites which avoid the five filters of the propaganda model. We also try to make these sources of news more accessible by allowing users to print the stories found on these alternative news sites in the format of a newspaper.

How to use

Start the program by double clicking the **FiveFilters** icon on the desktop. Each time the program starts it will scan the surface under the webcam for text (this takes a few seconds to give users time to place or move the text, it will continue scanning while there is movement). On the display you will see terms extracted from the text and from each term white news nodes will appear to indicate there is a story related to that term. To select a story and see its title, click on one of the white news nodes. Up to 5 stories can be selected in this way. To read the stories, click print and you should get a print out of the selected

news stories in newspaper format. To retrieve stories on a different topic, click ‘Scan newspaper’ and place a different piece of text under the webcam.

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Technologies

Five Filters runs on GNU/Linux (Ubuntu 8.10) and uses Processing, Java, PHP, OCROpus and a number of web services. The webcam is initialised with correct focus, brightness, contrast settings using uvcdynctrl. The JMyron library for Processing is used to display the video feed and to detect motion. OCR software (OCROpus) is used to analyse the captured frames and extract the text. Term extraction software is used (currently a free web service, but this will be changed to free software soon) to further analyse the extracted text and return a list of relevant terms. HTTP requests are then sent to retrieve related online stories for each term. Selected stories are then arranged in columnar format similar to a newspaper and printed out (due to the short time frame this step of formatting the text in columns is currently handled by a free web service, but will soon be handled by free software).

Actual state and next steps

The software currently works only for English texts and queries 6 alternative news sites for related news stories. The next steps are making it available online (fivefilters.org), adding support for Spanish texts (if I find a Spanish term extraction tool), allowing users to customise the sources that are queried, and building a Firefox extension.

Links

<http://fivefilters.org>

http://wiki.medialab-prado.es/index.php/The_Five_Filters

Alternative Media

<http://medialens.org>

<http://indymedia.org.uk>

<http://www.schnews.org.uk>

<http://www.zmag.org/znet>

<http://www.democracynow.org>