

# Tipping Point Commentaries

## The Tipping View of OpenDX

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[rwclark@cyberanalysis.com](mailto:rwclark@cyberanalysis.com)

The perspectives of charts, graphs and maps shift the perception of data. Sometimes this shift (think tip) arouses a new way of thinking. Consider the following.

from:

***Lines and Bubbles and Bars, Oh My! New Ways to Sift Data***

By ANNE EISENBERG

Published: August 30, 2008

... At an experimental Web site, Many Eyes, ([www.many-eyes.com](http://www.many-eyes.com)), users can upload the data they want to visualize, then try sophisticated tools to generate interactive displays. These might range from maps of relationships in the New Testament to a display of the comparative frequency of words used in speeches by Senators [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) and [Barack Obama](#).

... “We want to bring visualization to a whole new audience,” he said — to people who have had relatively few ways to create and discuss such use of data.

Significantly:

Presenting results in a static spreadsheet or table may do the job. “But sometimes it’s like driving with your eyes closed,” he said. “With visualization, it might be possible to open your eyes and see something that will help you” — for instance, patterns, clusters, gaps or outliers in the data.

This work, as the article will explain, comes from the research arm of IBM, at the Cambridge lab of the Watson Research Center. Other work that is closely allied with a data tool box, OpenDX, can be found discussed in my paper [OpenDX Fundamentals](#). OpenDX allows the data miner to visualize data with a rich tool set that is more than slightly technical, but for the intrepid Maven, a tool set that will be absorbed and put to use with fascination for the possibilities offered.

What is it meant to *visualize* data? This is more than seeing, it is experiencing the data as you manipulate it. The OpenDX package allows the presentation of data that flows. You can take a moving slice through your data like a cat-scan and observe the hidden relationships while still seeing the whole. OpenDX will provide you with the ability to do false color mapping to enhance transitions (think tip) that would ordinarily be invisible.

OpenDX is, as I introduced it, a tool box for visualization. It comes with its own visual programming language. That language consists of a frame that you populate with tools, each taking an input, a taste of data, and providing an output, passing it on to the next tool for that tool's characteristic handling. Notably, you have input tools and screen tools. Along the way you have data coloring tools, and camera view tools. This package is like a Hollywood stage-set with stage hands invisibly supporting your actors and assisting them in making a movie.