Using treemaps to visualize threaded discussion forums on PDAs

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Abstract:
This paper describes a new way of visualizing threaded discussion forums on compact displays. The technique uses squarified treemaps to render the threads in discussion forums as colored rectangles, thereby using 100% of the limited screen space. We conducted a preliminary user study, which compared the treemap version and a traditional text based tree interface. This showed that the contents of the discussion forum were easily grasped when using a treemap, even though there were in excess of one hundred threads. In particular our technique showed a significant improvement in time for finding the largest and most active threads. Overall, it was shown that the benefits derived from using treemaps on desktop computers are still valid for small screens.

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