fundamentals of social network visualizations

assignment

The Garton et al article is a good basic introduction to social network theory. Lin Freeman's article has a number of examples of network visualizations, including historical ones that have a rather different approach than today's graphs.

Please read both theses articles and look at the other examples of social visualization.

Write a short essay discussing/critiquing the work of Moreno (in Freeman), Mark Lombardi, and another piece of your choosing. You will want to discuss whether the images are legible, whether the information given is well encoded, etc. Are the features described in Garton et al visible? Which are and which are not? How would you depict them if they are not visible (please illustrate your response)

Draw a network diagram of your family, friends and acquaintances. Aim to have between 30 and 60 (or more) people in your network - you may want to start with people you think of offhand, then run through a contact list to get a range of additional names from different contexts. Show connections among those people whom you know know each other. As you draw the diagram, think about where you are placing people - how have you grouped them, what meaning, if any, are you giving to adjacency or top/bottom?

Go beyond the basic depiction of generic nodes and links. What do you want to say about the relationship between people? Is quantity of interaction important? How long the relationship has existed? The topics that the people have in common? What kind of relationship is it - is it formal? intimate? work-based? family? Think about what information you would like to depict by changing the node (it's shape, color, etc.) and what you would like to show by changing the link (it's thickness, color, curve, etc).

The goal of this work is to create something like a self-portrait in network connections. Does the final image reflect the mental model you have of your social surroundings?