

leverage the chance to see their email information in a different way. The team's underlying question is fetching enough: What if people have control over their own metadata, able to view it, learn from it, and even delete it? For Hidalgo and his colleagues, Daniel Smilkov and Deepak Jagdish, their online project, dubbed *Immersion*, is about "self-reflection, art, privacy and strategy."

People who sign up to participate in Immersion give the project their Gmail address and password; Immersion currently supports Gmail accounts. It scans every email in the person's account and scrapes the metadata to create a portrait of the person's personal network. Content of the email is not involved; only the fields of From, To, Cc and Time. Taking that information, a map evolves showing interconnections with lines and sized, color coded circles. The map shows how the user is related to the 100 most-contacted people in the mailbox.

Why would anyone want to get immersed in the first place? One argument is that Immersion permits you to get a larger perspective on your email life and at the same time have a [safety net](#) of knowing that you can always delete your data. "Just like a cubist painting," said the team, "Immersion presents users with a number of different perspectives of their email data." At a time when users milk the opportunity of [social networking](#) for self-promotion, a metadata view of one's email life might flip the coin toward self reflection. Another value is that "it presents users wanting to be more strategic with their professional interactions, with a map to plan more effectively who they connect with," according to the team.

Being able to pull the off switch is especially emphasized: Upon logging out of Immersion, the project participant is presented with a choice to save or delete the data, which contains compressed email metadata and user profile.

More information: immersion.media.mit.edu/

via [Boston](#)

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