

Greasemonkey for tags? A conversation with Noriaki-san

Ginza is a different world from Ikebukuro, where I stay and hang out most of the time: While Ikebukuro is becoming the “real Akihabara” (Akihabara got so famous that Otakus tend to evade it more and more), Ginza is full of suits, lots of skyscrapers, and the whole area speaks of power and money. This is where Noriaki-san works, in a media lab for a big company that specialises in human resources. But he only works there since recently. Before, he was a student. As a student he became a Nico Chuu, and he also started to develop in his spare time Greasemonkey scripts for Nico Nico Douga. Nowadays he still develops them, though he has even less spare time. He publishes the scripts on his blog with the telling title: “We Ain’t Seen Nothin’ Yet”

So what is Greasemonkey? It’s a small program that enables you to add even smaller programs to your Firefox browser – the latter programs are called scripts. These scripts extract and visualise information of a website that otherwise would not be visible. They are written by an international community of Greasemonkey-fans, and generally freely available for download. Noriaki-san was the guy who developed such applications for Nico Nico Douga. He does so in intense cooperation, where, again, Koizuka-san is the most important conversation partner. So far there are three Greasemonkey applications, a fourth one has just reached beta stage.

The first script visualises the amount of comments at each moment of time in the video. It does so in the form of a “heat map”. Red means: A

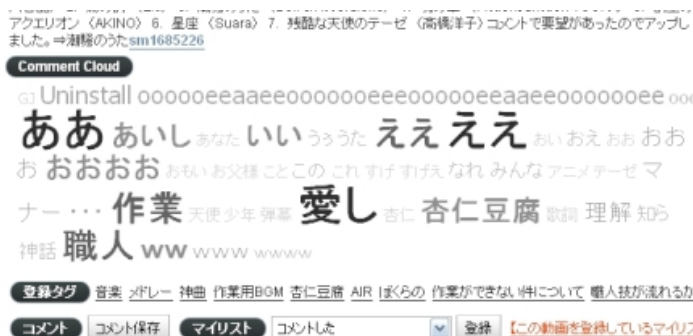
¹ In this series of short and preliminary (!!) texts we publish first results of the Metadata Project’s ethnographic research on Nico Nico Douga. You can find more under “output” on <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/media-research-centre/project2.php> and on our research blog: <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/metagold/>.

lot of comments. Blue: Very little comments. It also allows you to download the videos with one click.



The first script of Noriaki-san: Heat map (image by Noriaki-san)

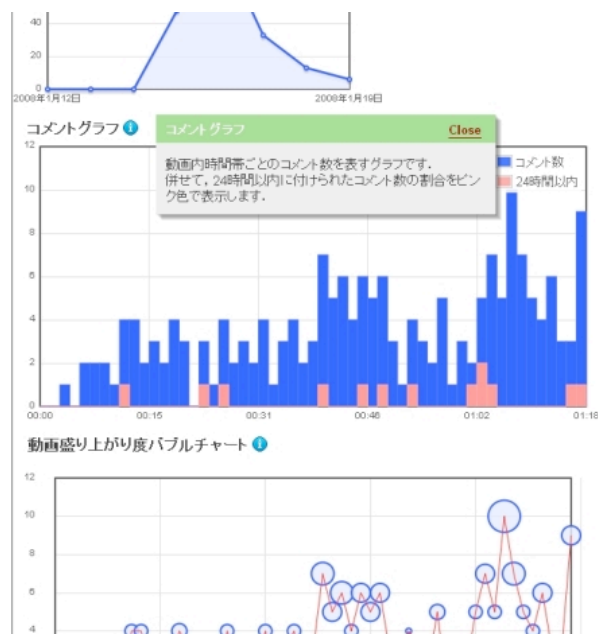
The second script enables you to see a “comment cloud”. Just as in a tag cloud, the size of the comments signal how often they were used in the past.



The second script of Noriaki-san: Comment cloud (image by Noriaki-san)

The third application is more complex and contains three graphs at once. These graphs symbolise (a.) the amount of recent comments, (b.) the time, when comments were put in and (c.) how many different people were commenting at one point of time: When one person puts in a lot of comments, the curve in the graph is high, but the circle is small. When many different people put in these comments, the circle gets bigger. Smart, ey? For us in the metadata project these three

scripts are fascinating: Yet another form how comments are turned into metadata.



The third script of Noriaki-san: Nico Nico Analytics (image by Noriaki-san)

In the discussion that follows we come up with further ideas. I notice that all scripts of Noriaki-san analyse the data of one single video, and the manifold comments on it. But how about turning this relationship around and analyse one comment, and the manifold videos on which it is used? How about an application that does the same thing with tags? This could meet interest. We encountered in our focus groups and interviews growing interest of the users in tags. Users are passionate about them, are curious about them, and use them to express a lot of things from humour to fandom. So why not build an add-on that visualises their history? Noriaki-san cools my enthusiasm: This would be much harder to do, not only for technical reasons, but also because there would have to be a deeper access to the database of Niwango (he company behind Nico Nico Douga). If it gets too complicated, the whole script might also become too slow. So maybe this idea is not realisable. But we should try and find out.

Anyway. So far, the three existing applications are already interesting enough! Each one of them is used by several thousand people. So if you are curious, how you can get them, this is what you have to do: (1) Use Firefox. (2.) Go to <http://www.greasespot.net/> and download and install Greasemonkey. (3.) If Greasemonkey is not activated automatically, you should do so. You can do this by clicking on the little monkey on the lower right corner of your Firefox browser: When it smiles, it is active. (4.) Go to Noriaki-san's blog and download the scripts of the three add-ons. You can recognise the script by the end “.. user.js”. Just click on this link and it will install automatically.

Here are the URLs of the three posts on Noriaki-san's blog, where you can find the links (the links with “user.js” in the end):

- <http://blog.fulltext-search.biz/pages/nicomment>
- <http://blog.fulltext-search.biz/pages/visualize-comments-upsurge-greasemonkey-script-for-nicovideo>
- <http://blog.fulltext-search.biz/articles/2008/01/19/niconicodouga-analytics>

Now you only have to go to Nico Nico Douga. The scripts should appear automatically as part of Nico Nico Douga interface. The first two add-ons you see directly. The third one opens form the link below the video. Have fun in adding yet another layer to the many-layered world of Nico Nico Douga.