

# Social Networks: Introduction

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Social Computing course, CS60017

# Social networks in off-line world

- Social networks studied for several decades
  - Friendship networks among students of a school, members of a club, ...
  - Collaboration networks among scientists, movie actors, ...
  - Citation networks: scientists / papers referring to other scientists / papers

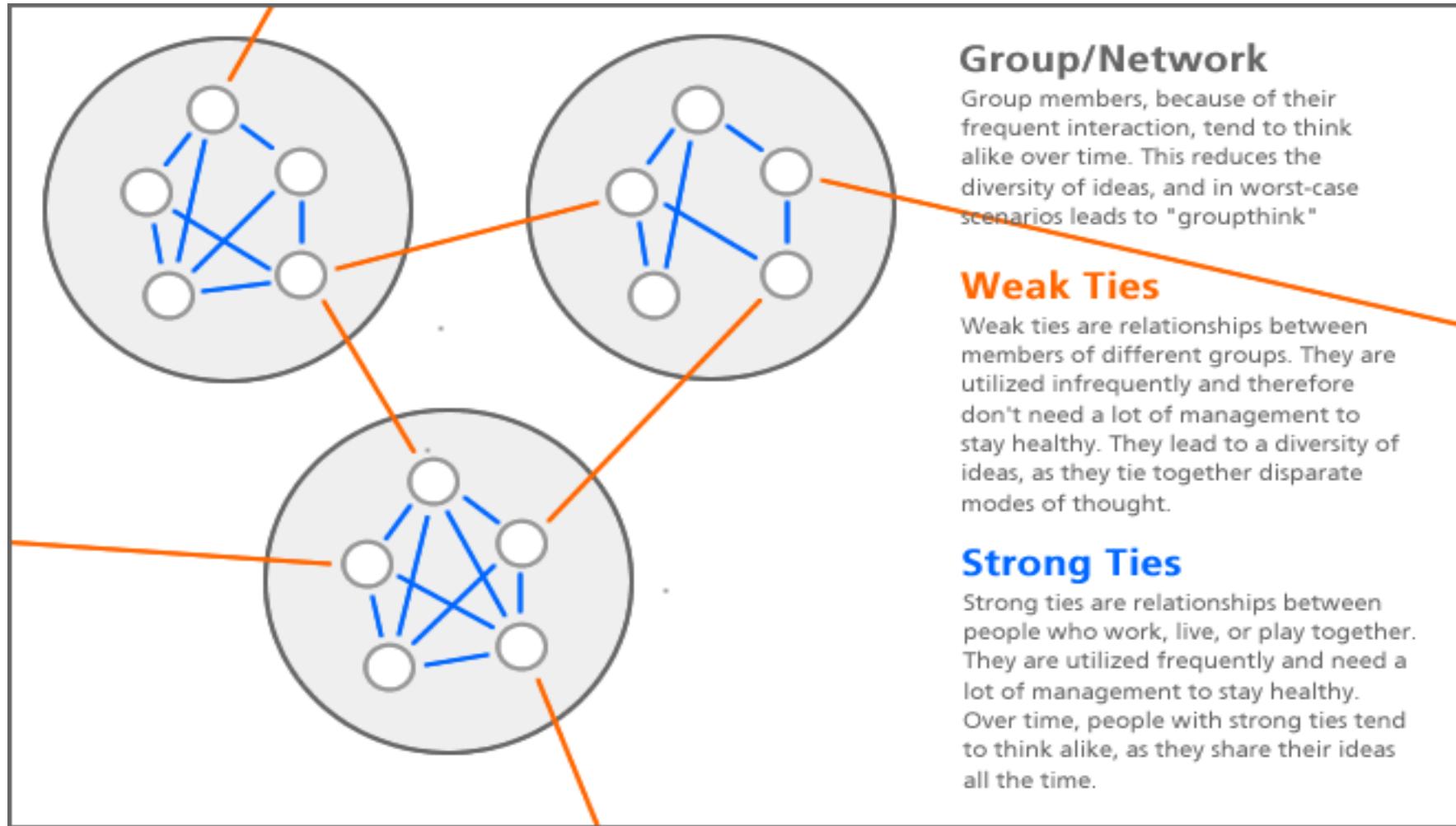
# Sociological theories

- Several sociological theories developed
  - Homophily – birds of a feather flock together
  - Six degrees of separation - Milgram's experiments (1967)
  - Strength of weak ties (1973)
  - Spread of epidemics / conventions / news / rumors

# Milgram's experiment in 1967

- Sent packets to people in Omaha, Nebraska and Wichita, Kansas
  - You need to get the packets to a specific person in Boston
  - If you know the recipient, send the packet directly to him
  - If not, think of a friend you know, who is likely to be closer to the recipient in Boston; sign your name to a roster, and send the packet to your friend
- Boston recipient examined the roster and saw how many steps it took for the letter to arrive
- 64 letters reached recipient, **average number of links: between 5 and 6**

# Strength of ties



# Advent of online social networks



# Online social networks (also called social media)

- Among the most popular sites on today's Web
- Billions of users world-wide
  - Celebrities, media houses, politicians, commoners, ...
  - Spammers, cyber-bullies, hatemongers, ...
- Huge impact
  - Advertisers reach large population at minimal cost

# OSN and researchers

- Huge data readily available
  - Volume – networks of billions of users, petabytes of user-generated content every day
  - Variety – text, image, speech, video, ...
  - Velocity – thousands of posts / minute during major events
- Automated data collection rather than surveys

# Multi-disciplinary research on OSNs

- Computer networks & distributed systems
- Sociology, social psychology, linguistics, ...
- Network science, complex network theory
- Data mining, machine learning, information retrieval, natural language processing, ...

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# Two important aspects in a social network / social media

- The network structure
- The content
  
- This course
  - First part – network structure – we will consider only simple networks
  - Second part – content – we will focus on only textual content

# Social networks vs. Social media

- “What is Twitter, a Social Network or a News Media?”, Kwak et al., WWW 2010
- What is the difference between social network and social media?
  - Social network – interpersonal links, interactions in focus
  - Social media – information exchange in focus

# Research issues on OSNs

# How to model / represent OSNs?

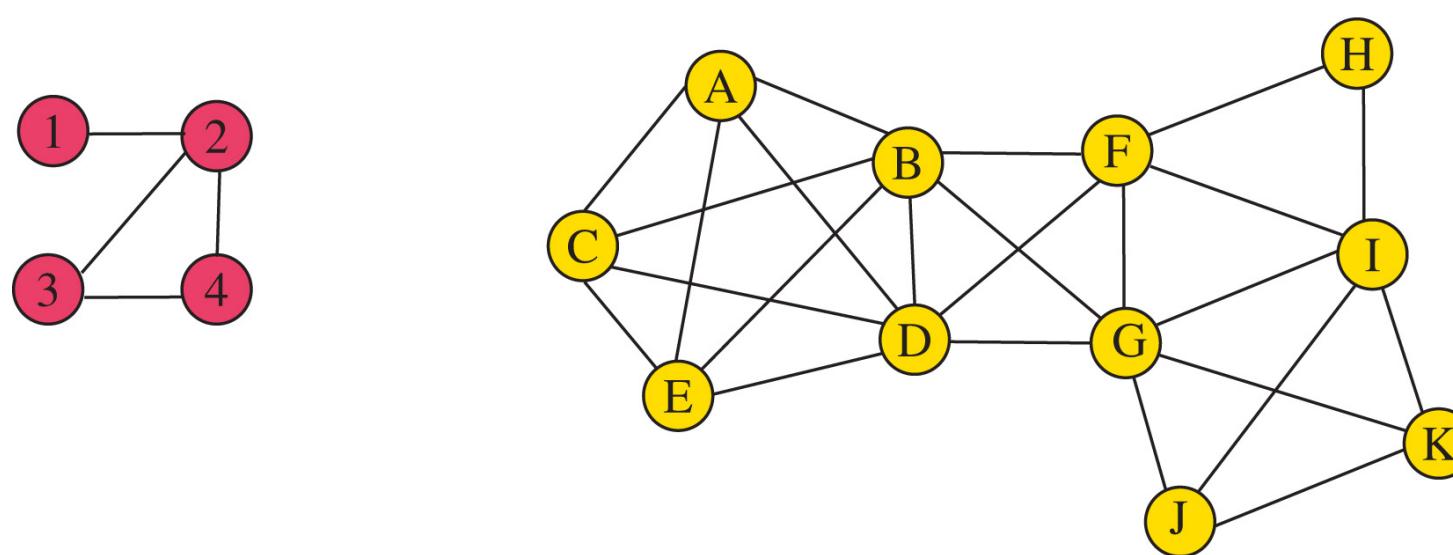
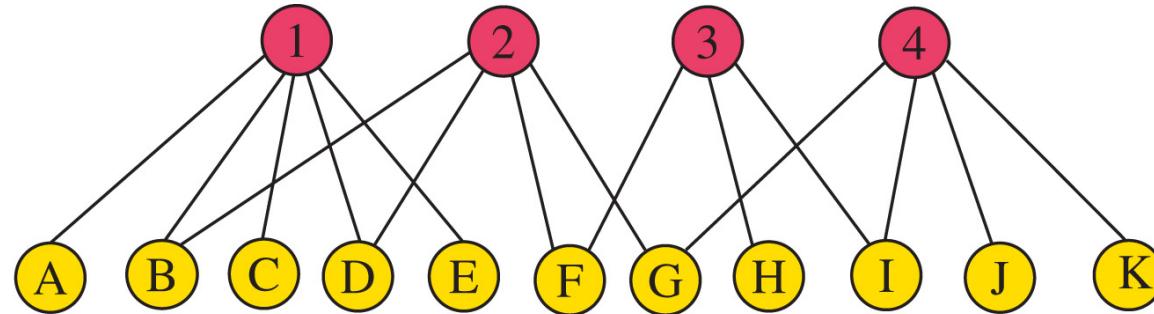
- Most common representation: a graph
  - Nodes: users, edges: social links
- Undirected networks: Facebook
- Directed networks: Twitter
- Weighted networks
  - Edge-weights usually measure “strength” of social link, e.g., number of interactions

# Graph models of OSNs

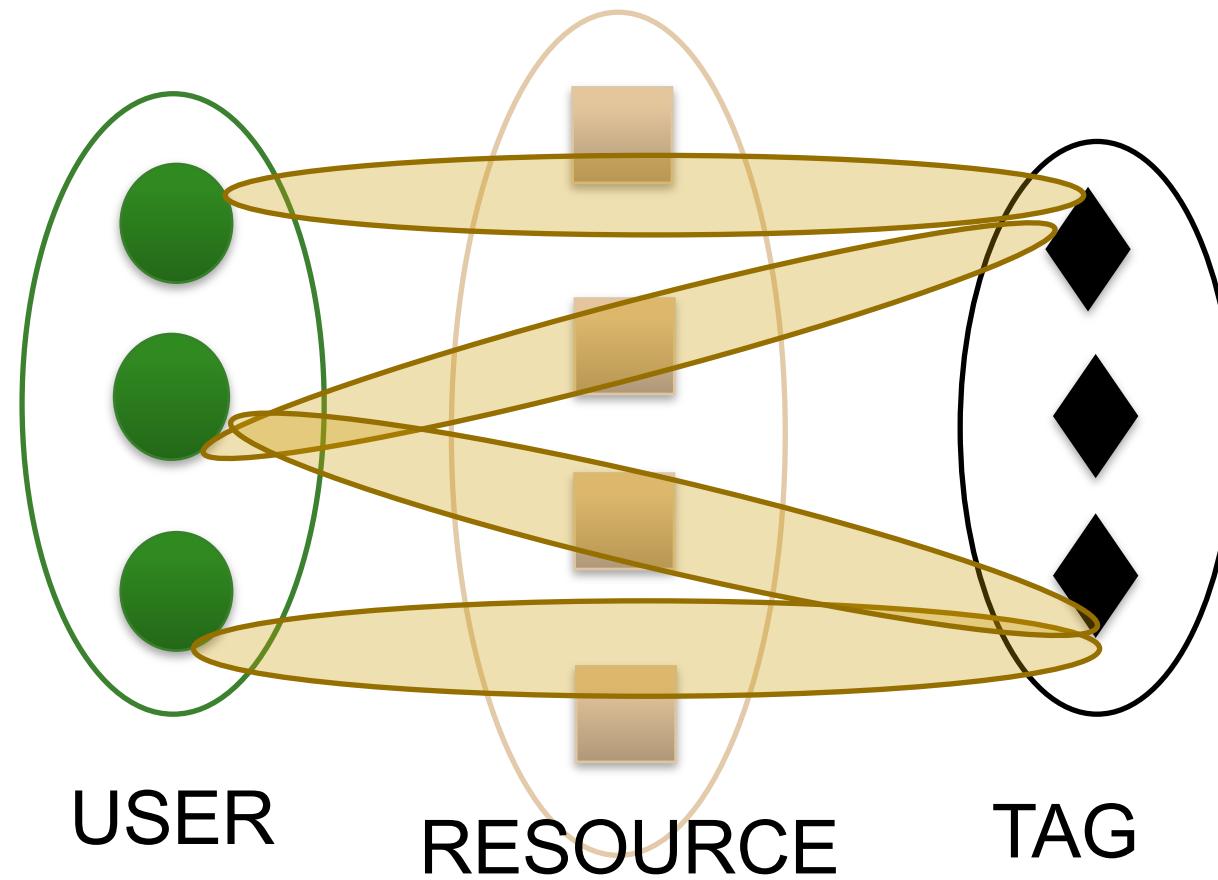
## ■ Other varieties of networks

- Networks among blogs, videos, ...
- Bipartite networks, e.g., viewer-video model of Youtube
- Folksonomy: **Users** annotate **resources** with **tags**, modeled as tri-partite hypergraphs [Cattuto, AI Communications 2007]

# Bipartite networks and projections



# Tri-partite model for folksonomies



# Sociological issues

- Sociological theories investigated on OSNs
  - Homophily, strength of weak ties [Grabowicz, Plos ONE, 2012]
  - Emergence and spread of conventions [Kooti, ICWSM 2012]
- OSNs different from offline SNs in some aspects
  - Offline social networks – an individual can maintain only a certain number of meaningful social links – Dunbar number (~130); OSNs – almost zero cost of maintaining social links - many more links can be maintained
  - Important users readily connect to many ordinary ones
  - Geographical distance does not matter

# Locality of friendship in Facebook



<http://www.techprone.com/facebook-displays-visually-its-impact-and-spread>

# Network properties of OSNs [Mislove, IMC 2007]

- Most users have few links, few have many links
  - Degree distributions: power-law, exponential, ...
- Presence of numerous triangles (transitivity)
- Small-world, e.g., 6 degrees of separation
- Assortativity, homophily

# Explaining the network properties

- What nature of link-creation dynamics explain the empirically observed properties of OSNs?
- Several evolution models proposed
  - Global rules, e.g., Preferential Attachment [[Barabasi, Science 1999](#)]
  - Local rules, e.g., triangle closure [[Kleinberg, ICWSM 2010](#)], random walk starting from a node [[Vasquez, PRE 2003](#)]
  - Biased PA, based on different types of users: inactive, linkers, inviters [[Kumar, KDD06](#)]
  - Co-evolution of social and content networks [[Singer, Making Sense of Microposts, 2012](#)]

# Dynamic network properties

- Dynamic nature: how do properties of OSNs change with time?
  - Network density varies non-monotonically [Kumar, KDD06]
  - Assortativity varies non-monotonically [Hu, Physics Letters A, 2009]
- Models to explain temporal variation of properties

# Link analysis

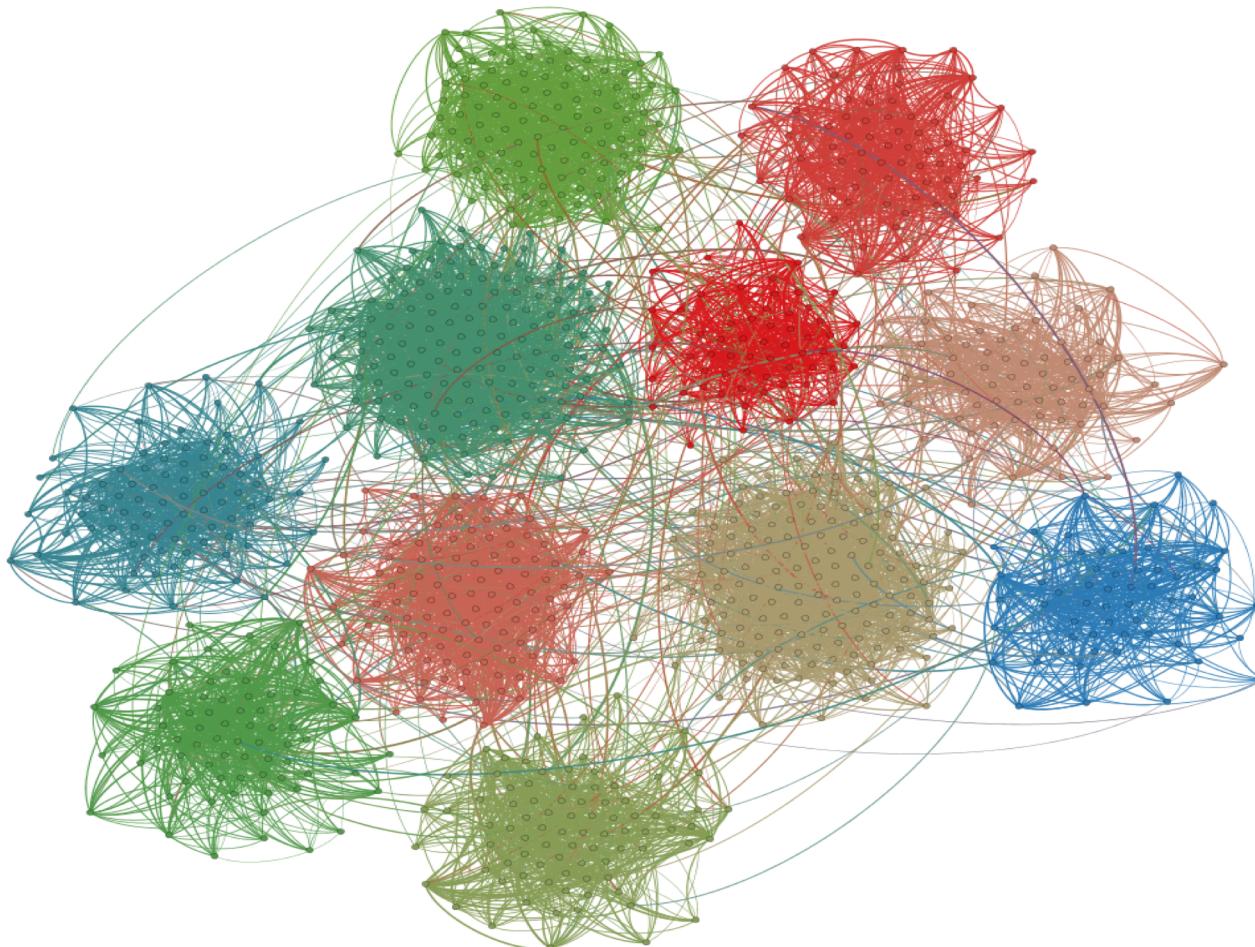
- Classification of social links
  - Strong and weak links (e.g. based on level of interaction)  
[Wilson, EuroSys09][Valafar, WOSN09] [Xiang, WWW10]
  - Some OSNs allow positive and negative links (friends and enemies)
- Variation of strength of links with time [Viswanath, WOSN09]

# Centrality (importance) of nodes

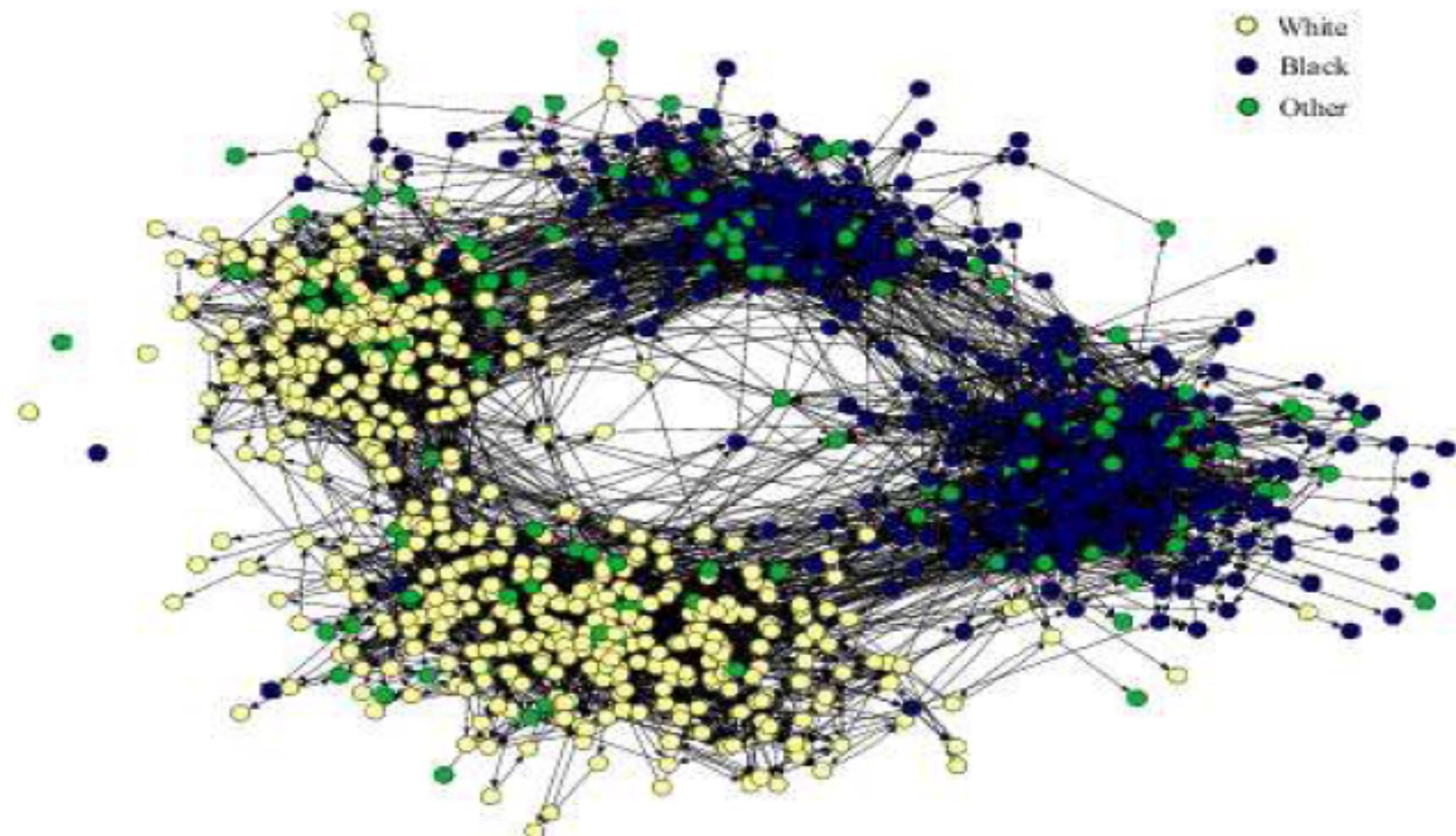
- How important is a node in a network?
  - How influential is a person in a social network?
  - How important is a website on the Web?
- Many proposed centrality metrics
  - Degree centrality
  - Closeness centrality
  - Betweenness centrality
  - Eigenvector centrality, PageRank

# Community detection / clustering

- Identifying communities of 'similar' users
  - Traditionally, only rely on network structure: several algorithms [Fortunato, Physics Reports 2010] [Leskovec, WWW10]
  - Content can also be leveraged in case of OSNs
- Dynamic communities: how do communities change with time? [Mitra, Computer Networks, 2012]



# Friendship network among students in a US school

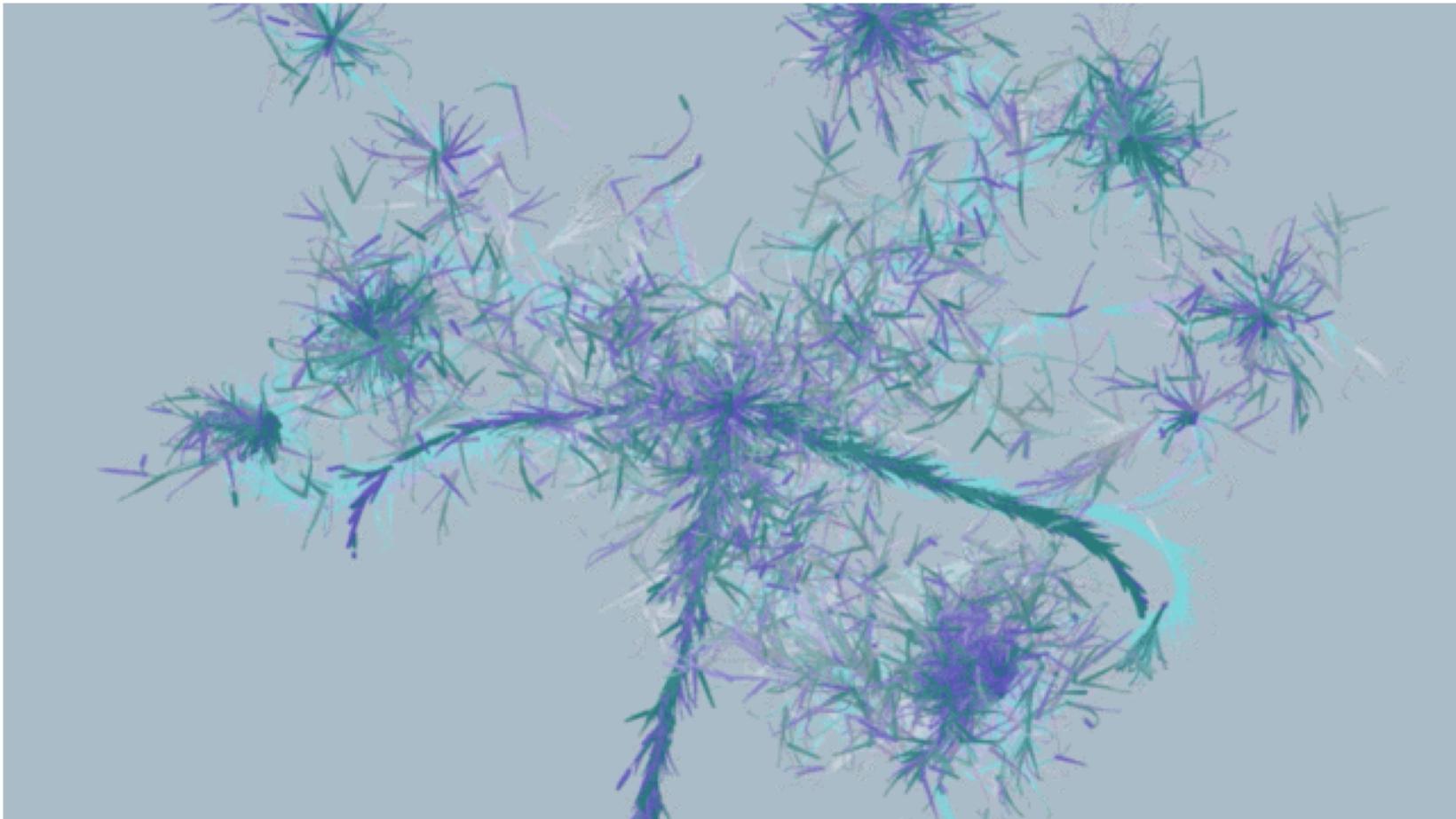


# Information spread / diffusion

## ■ Understanding information spread / diffusion in OSNs [Cha, WWW 2009] [Lerman, ICWSM 2010] [Bakshy, WWW 2012]

- To what extent does information (news) spread?
- How fast? Along which links?
- Who are the most influential in spreading information?
- How does a topic / video become viral?

# Spread of viral images in Facebook



<http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2012/10/how-viral-images-spread-on-facebook-visualised/>

# Utilizing information content in OSNs

- Recommendation and search
- Information diffusion
- Misinformation detection
- Authority identification
- Identifying news on recent events

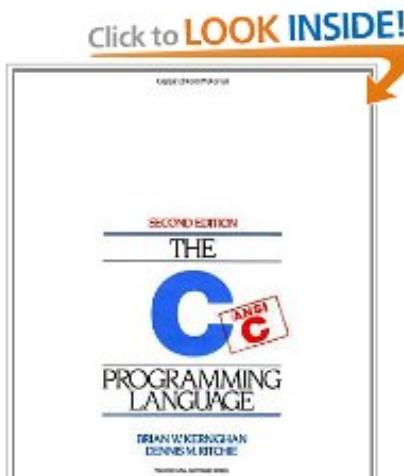
# Search and Recommendation

- Help users discover interesting content, friends, groups
- Motivation: The amount of information has become so large that it is impossible for an individual user to find out on her own interesting content / friends / groups
- Recommend friends, groups to join [Chen, www09], resources [Konstas, SIGIR09], tags [Sen, WWW09][Song, SIGIR08]
- Personalized answers to queries [Xu, SIGIR08] [Bao, WWW07] [Mislove, HotNets06]

# Recommendation

- Two broad ways
  - Content-based, e.g., based on your profile information (e.g., you study in IITKGP), or some keywords given by you while creating account
  - Collaborative filtering – identify “similar” users or items – how to find “similar” users or items?

# Recommendation of books in Amazon



## C Programming Language (2nd Ed)

Brian W. Kernighan (Author), Dennis M. Ritchie (Author)

(367 customer reviews)

### Buy New

\$52.49 & FREE Shipping. [Details](#)

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Ships from and sold by [Amazon.com](#). Gift-wrap available.

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Programmer's ...  
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Programming in C (3rd  
Edition)  
Stephen G. Kochan  
 (70)

# Social recommendations

Basis: friends likely to have similar tastes



# Identify influential users / experts

- Several metric of influence: #followers or #friends, PageRank, number of times retweeted [**Cha, ICWSM10**]
- Identifying topical experts [**Weng, WSDM10**] [**Pal, WSDM11**] [**Ghosh, SIGIR12**]
- How to measure topic-specific expertise / interests of users?

# Emotion / opinion mining

- Identify user's emotion / opinion from posts
  - Identify opinion on movies / political issues [Fang, WSDM12]
  - Comparison among different methods [Goncalves, COSN13]
  - Summarization of opinions [Ganesan, WWW12]
  - Twitter used to predict election results [Tumasjan, ICWSM10]

# Various types misinformation on social media

- Spam, phishing, ...
- Hate speech (against a particular social / religious / ethnic group), cyberbullying, ...
- Fake news, rumors, ...

# Spam detection

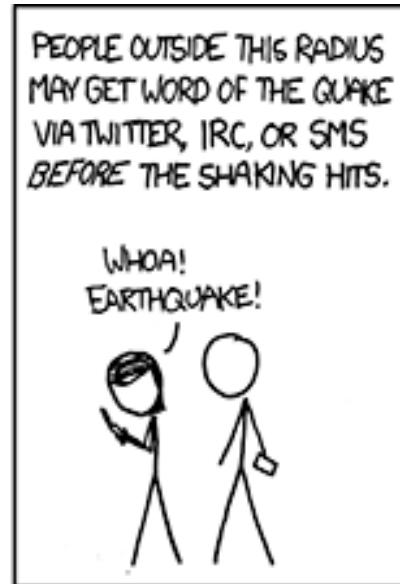
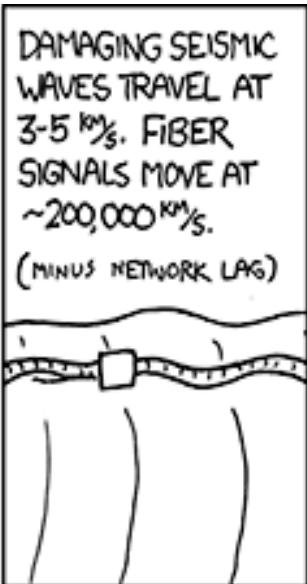
- Identify spam / users with malicious intentions  
[Heymann, IEEE Internet Computing 2007]
  - Identify spam in Facebook [Gao, IMC10], Twitter [Lee, SIGIR10], Youtube [Benevenuto, SIGIR09], blogs [Shin, Infocom11], ...
  - Sybil detection [Yu, SIGCOMM 2006][Viswanath, SIGCOMM10]
- Identifying trustworthy entities, e.g., reviews, ratings [Chandra, Trustcom 2012]

# Fake news – some ideas

- First step – identify claims / factual statements that need to be verified – NLP features used
- Second step – verify the claims
- How to verify?
  - From trustworthy information sources, e.g., claims about COVID19 can be verified from medical research papers
  - Crowdsourcing from trusted people, e.g., relief workers present in the region of a disaster

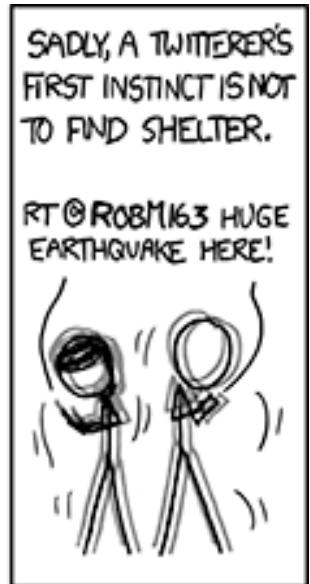
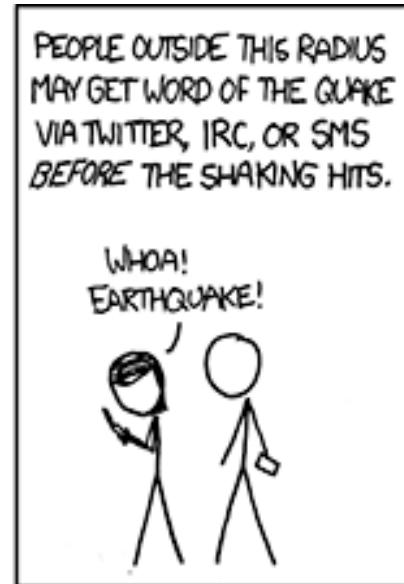
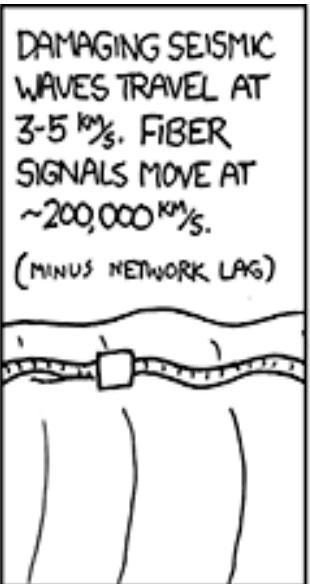
# Mining information on recent events

- OSNs are valuable sources of information on events happening 'now'



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Sakaki et. al., “Earthquake shakes Twitter users: real-time event detection by social sensors”, WWW 2010

# Mining information on recent events

- OSNs are valuable sources of information on events happening 'now'
  - Disasters (floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, terror attacks)
  - Socio-political events
- Research challenges
  - Identify / extract / classify important information
  - Identify sub-events
  - Summarize information streams
  - Identify event-specific influential users (community leaders)
  - Rumor detection

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# Thank You

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<http://cse.iitkgp.ac.in/~saptarshi/>