

Week 6 Critique

Alfred Kobsa, Generic User Modeling Systems, User Modeling and User-Adapted Interaction, v.11 n.1-2, p.49-63, 2001

I suppose since the paper was a review I should talk more about the ideas of user modeling/collaborative filtering. The paper was only 30% informative, as things like how to design a proper networked system with a database is a general problem that was not special in this case. I wish I had learned more about the successes of previous systems. That was a bit unclear, seemed to be that they weren't all that useful. Perhaps people were too confined in Prolog (with discreet logic) or their approach wasn't correct for the data they wanted to represent. Coming from a connectionist background, I'm not surprised. The paper suggests the big shift was purely looking at incoming data and less on its relationship to assumptions. In a way I think this is quite obvious. Assumptions should only be used in testing hypotheses, but not for extrapolating the data ideally.

The main success story out of it--collaborative filtering, I think is quite hot. It seems to actually work whenever properly done. And the motivation in the ideas behind it are usually simple enough (although the exact algorithm might be complicated) that we can sanely estimate its success in a particular domain. I would be interested to see more where apply it to less obvious and clique domains such as commerce. Two quick examples. Perhaps public places and systems like the bus could have group agents. That is, agent interfaces that are less tailored towards exactly one person but rather what the local community as a whole would want. This preserves anonymity but can still provide useful functions. Maybe even a modification to Friendster that recommends people with some correlation to reality.
