

2015

FemFinder

Ellen Louie

Overview

FemFinder is an RSS reader that displays only news related to women and women's issues. The application and user interface are intuitive and easy to use featuring an input box at the top where users can enter the RSS feed of their choice. Under the input box will be a button to filter the news feed with a section below where the actual articles will be displayed. Additionally, there will be a donation feature to present to the user nonprofit organizations that will be related to the content of a particular article. Therefore, if users feels strongly enough about a cause they have read about in an article, they can easily take action by donating to an organization that deals with the article's particular issue area.

To a user, FemFinder appears to be a fairly simple application, but on the backend it is far more complex than most other RSS readers. In order to output only articles related to women in a stream of news that can contain any topic imaginable, every article goes through a two-step process. The first step in this process is to extract the plain text of an article from the HTML of the webpage it came from. Then, the plain text can be analyzed by a machine-learning algorithm to determine whether it is related to women and should be displayed to the user.

Once the articles that are not related to women are filtered out, the same two-step process occurs for the analysis of an article's theme and issue areas, which will then be used to match an article with a couple of nonprofits. The nonprofits that are displayed to users will at first come from a diverse, curated list. For example, if an article discusses abortion or reproductive health, Planned Parenthood or the Guttmacher Institute might be two suggested nonprofits. The name of an organization will link to their specific donation webpage so that a user can proceed from there.

Business Proposal

While more and more news providers are recognizing the importance of articles relating specifically to women, some still lack clear sections on their main pages dedicated to such content. This oversight makes it difficult to search for articles that deal with women's issues such as reproductive rights, economic justice, and ending violence against women. Therefore, it is unnecessarily complicated for anyone interested in women's issues to keep up with relevant news when they have to sift through many unrelated articles. FemFinder aims to solve this problem by automating this search process for the user. The application will accept a link to an RSS feed as input, analyze the articles, and then output only those news items related to women so that users

do not have to scour a website to find the content that interests them. This product has an initial market of around half the population based on the fact that roughly 50% of people in the world are female. The market will likely grow, however, when more men realize that FemFinder could aid them in their everyday lives as well. Some noteworthy examples of men who could use FemFinder are those who work in fields where they deal primarily with women, such as social work or physicians who deal with women's health, or men who need to speak intelligently on women's issues, such as politicians.

There is a simple model for profiting from this new technology. Currently there is a proof-of-concept prototype being written as a Java desktop application, which is and will remain open source. Once the project is fully funded, there will be enough money to hire specialists, most notably iOS and Android developers, to implement the end vision of a mobile application that will be available on Google Play and the Apple Store for a fee. Machine learning experts will also be hired to write algorithms to relieve any external dependency on open source libraries that are currently being used. In addition to the money generated by having FemFinder in two major marketplaces, there is another opportunity to increase revenue by requiring nonprofits to apply for inclusion in FemFinder and agree to cede a small portion of their donations acquired through the application to the company. Furthermore, a portion of the funding will be used to take out advertisements on popular platforms, such as Hulu and Spotify, so that the company can reach our wide target market.

No real direct competition to FemFinder exists, primarily because the only other prominent all women's news outlet, HuffPost Women, has a slightly different focus than FemFinder. The goal of FemFinder is to display only news pertinent to women from traditional news sources that do not provide clear sections for this content. Although some categories of news in HuffPost Women would be topics a user could expect to encounter when filtering for women's news in FemFinder, such as Girls in STEM, Women's Health, and Powerful Women, the overwhelming majority are think pieces and other categories, such as Weddings and Style, that do not necessarily qualify as hard news. Other competitors could potentially emerge in the future, but seeing that no existing news organization, company, or independent developer have created anything like FemFinder yet, it is likely that FemFinder will quickly fill this niche in the market.

Social Impact

With proper funding, FemFinder could affect the lives of people all over the world. For users of the application, it could save them precious time in their daily lives. FemFinder enables users to access the news in which they are most interested in nearly instantaneously instead of having to scour news websites for articles relating to women's issues. A specific subset of users, those who work in fields where there is a significant focus on women, such as social workers, women's health professionals, or politicians, can benefit from using FemFinder because they will be more informed as to their clients' struggles and needs. Therefore, they will be able to better serve their clients, which could result in increased income and recognition in the workplace and better service and overall quality of life for their clients.

However, FemFinder does not simply aim to improve the lives of its users and those who interact with them, but also women around the world who may never even hear of the application. Through its donations feature, FemFinder will connect users to nonprofit organizations that deal with issues areas, such as violence against women, reproductive rights, and economic justice, which a user may read about in an article. Then, if a user is so compelled, they can select an organization and be redirected to a webpage so they can donate. This feature will improve services for women and therefore provide a better quality of life for women everywhere.

While it is still a prototype, FemFinder will be using a predefined list of some of the most well-known nonprofit organizations that deal with women's issues. Using a predefined list could be considered unethical because it does not represent the full range of organizations, both big and small. As soon as the project is funded, however, FemFinder will switch to a system that will allow all nonprofits to apply to be included in the application. Therefore, all organizations, no matter how well known or obscure, will have a fair chance at representation in the application limited only by their desire to apply.

Naturally, FemFinder cannot be held responsible for the content of articles that a news organization's RSS feed produces. For example, if there are an unusually high number of articles on abortion and very few on domestic violence, then more nonprofits that deal with women's health services will be displayed. However, to ensure the highest level of fairness, an algorithm will be developed to make sure that no one nonprofit is getting suggested more than any other organization of its type.