

Binowski (2006), on the other hand, found that social proof having an effect on tag selection in social bookmarking based on a study conducted at an academic institution. The focus of such studies seems on how to tag effectively with social bookmarking applications like Del.icio.us and Flickr.

With increasing participation of users in tagging activities, researchers also started examining other aspects of tagging such as analysis of tags and tagging behaviors. For instance, Kipp (2006; Kipp & Campbell 2006; 2007a; 2007b) did several studies on some popular social tagging sites (e.g., Del.icio.us, Citeulike). The findings of those studies include tagging behaviors, the role of non-subject tags in the tagging process, and the context of tagging from the perspectives of users, authors and intermediaries. Farooq and colleagues (2007) even proposed a metric for evaluating a tagging system. The authors also suggested some design heuristics for implementing a social bookmarking system. Muller (2007), targeting a different group, did a comparative study of four enterprise tag-based services.

As seen, little research has been done so far on tagging systems from different countries, letting alone to explore implications of such practices in different cultures. The current study is therefore carried out to examine two tagging sites, one in China and one in the USA, in order to find out the practices and implications of tagging in these two distinctive countries.

Data Collection and Analysis

Del.icio.us is one of the most popular social bookmarking sites in the USA while 365Key, being the first of its kind in China, enjoys a similar status in tagging as its USA counterpart - Del.icio.us. These two sites were thus chosen for the present study to explore and contrast their features, tags created at each site, and other aspects of tagging.

Python was used in writing a program for extracting tags from both sites in the News category. The News category was chosen because it is perhaps the most comprehensive as well as representative category at both sites given the fact that China and the USA are different from each other in many other dimensions. Tags considered in this study were extracted at both sites from 6:53pm on January 4, 2008 to 11:03am on January 5, 2008, by taking into account of the time difference in China and the USA. As a result, a total of 5064 tags were obtained from Del.icio.us and 13006 tags from 365Key. In consideration of feasibility, only tags with a usage frequency of 10 or more were selected and analyzed, which yields 89 tags for del.icio.us and 59 for 365Key.[†]

Tags collected from each site were then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to answer the research questions posed earlier. Besides, both tagging sites were carefully inspected as well from various perspectives to discern their functionalities and characteristics.

Results and Discussion

In this section, we will first compare the features of Del.icio.us and 365Key, followed by a content analysis of the tags chosen for this study. Similarities and differences between those two sites will be presented and discussed toward the end of this section.

[†] AntConc (<http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>), a free software program, was used for calculating tag frequencies and their corresponding ranks.