

Paper Summary

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Date: 21st April, 2011

I. PAPER CITATION INFORMATION

- Where did the researchers go?: supporting social navigation at a large academic [1]
- Authors: Rosta Farzan and Peter Brusilovsky
- Publication details: HT 08: Proceedings of the nineteenth ACM conference on Hypertext and hypermedia. New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2008, pp. 203, 212

II. SUMMARY

A. Problem Statement

The paper tries to deal with the problem of information overload. A common approach taken when there is problem of information overload, is to follow some other user who we trust and who has gone through the information path. The problem that paper deals with is similar to this. It tries to understand the role played by social navigation and social search technologies in the context of conference attendance planning. Academic conference generally have a multiple parallel sessions with large number of papers in each session. Hence, deciding which paper to see is a difficult decision. The paper tries to use to collective knowledge of the community and social navigation techniques to solve this problem. They develop an application called Conference Navigator using these techniques to solve the problem of information overload in conferences.

B. Proposed Solution

Traditionally there have been some problems observed with collecting feedback from users. The application depends on collecting information from the user. Hence, it deals with these problems as well. The first problem is the amount of time users have to spend giving the actual feedback. This action must be explicitly performed and hence effects with the natural order of their activities. To solve this problem the application tries to introduce activities for users that provide reliable indication of users interest. The second problem faced by this process in the issue of privacy of feedback given by the users. This issue is resolved by tracking the feedback at a community level rather than at the individual level.

To access the system the user first has to select a community. If he doesn't find a suitable community he can create another new community. The application has 2 modules. A schedule browser, that any user can use. It provides a listing of all the tracks and papers. A user can browse through the conference and decide on the conference he wants to attend. Another module is the Personal schedule planner module. This can be used by only registered users. This can be used to schedule the papers one is interested in attending. While browsing a user can perform 3 functions. (i). Simple visiting: In this the user just browses through all the tracks and the papers. (ii). Annotating: In this function a user can annotate the papers he is interested in with tags. (iii). Scheduling: In this function a user can add a paper to his schedule. The application uses scheduling and annotating to build the "wisdom" of the communities. This can then be used to make decisions about which conferences to attend.

Social navigation support is provided by augmenting links to papers presented to user during searching and browsing. The returned articles are marked with icons that show the popularity of the article within the community. It uses information like, the number of people from your community that are going to attend the paper, their annotations etc.

C. Results

The application was evaluated in the E-Learn 2007 conference series organized by AACE. They evaluated the system on a limited number of users and noticed that the users who used the system, took decisions to attend a particular paper or not depending on the annotations that were returned next to the article. The conference was divided into 15 parallel tracks with a total of 150 papers. The users were asked to use the system by distributing flyers. They were also give a questionnaire to obtain feedback on the utility of the system. They then performed application log analysis to test its performance. Based on their investigation they determined that using the application the users were able to identify useful papers based on the recommendations provided by the system.

III. CRITIQUE

A. Strenghts

The problem of solving the information overload at conferences is interesting. The problem is important because, such a solution can be used in solving other information overload scenarios. The paper does a good work of identifying, potential problem such a solution may face and gives satisfactory solutions to overcome those problems. The paper is organized well. They first identify the problems, give solutions to these problems and then give details about the implementations.

B. Weakness

One of the problems with the paper is that it is too specific to the problem of information overload in conferences and not general to the problem of information overload. It also does not tell us if their approach can be used in any other scenario other that this. Also no details about the scalability and performance of the application is given.

IV. FUTURE WORK

The paper could be useful if they can suggest ways in which their current work can be used in other general cases of information overload. They also can imporve the paper by providing the more details of their implementation. They don't explain the details of their implementation, like the tools they used, the architecture of the solution etc. Giving those details would have made their solution much more clear.

REFERENCES

- [1] R. Farzan and P. Brusilovsky, "Where did the researchers go?: supporting social navigation at a large academic," in *Proceedings of the nineteenth ACM conference on Hypertext and hypermedia*, ser. HT '08. New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2008, pp. 203–212. [Online]. Available: <http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/1379092.1379131>