

Seminar Reflection

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Learning What You Want: Understanding and Improving Rating Interfaces for Online Recommender Systems - Daniel Kluver

The main theme of this talk was improving recommender systems by improving the data you collect and feed to your recommendation algorithm. In summary, the main point was about how you can collect more accurate, effective data by changing the interface you use to collect data. Then, once you have this more effective data, you can improve the performance of your recommendation system without coding a new algorithm. The main point that I found interesting was how sometimes less data is actually more accurate and effective at predicting what a user will like than more data. The main example was how sites like Netflix and Youtube switched from a 5 star rating system, which required more bytes of data to store and use, to a simple thumbs up thumbs down system, and how this system was more accurate at predicting what users would like than the old, more data intensive system. This was in large part due to how users used the system, with a large number of 5 and 1 star ratings, but very few mid tier ratings, so it was essentially a binary rating system before switching.

As far as presentation quality, I thought that professor Kluver had a high quality presentation overall. I thought that it was well organized and explained, and that he talked through the technical details in a way that made them understandable to the average person. My only complaint would be that at times his slides were somewhat dull and hard to look at, which at times made his points slightly harder to comprehend. One question I would ask professor Kluver after this talk is which recommendation algorithms work better with which types of data inputs, as that subject seems to be the next logical step in his exploration, and was not touched on much in the talk.