

Make-your-case.net user manual

Make-your-case.net aims at channeling debates towards clarity of thought and expression. It does that in a number of ways:

1. The layout forces you to make short statements
2. There is a separation between a statement entered and beliefs in the truth of that statement. In other words, when you enter a statement, it doesn't mean you believe it's true. You can concentrate on the clarity of the statement and defer to convince other people about its truth or falsehood.
3. You can use one short statement as support or attack for another statement. You have to explicitly indicate what you consider the link between the two statements to be.
4. You can compare your opinion with other people's opinion, and zooming in on the premises should help you narrow down the domain of disagreement with other participants.

Underlying concepts

User:

Users log in using their email and are identified on screen by their 'screen name'. You can change your screen name by using the command bar at the top of the screen:

'Go to' > 'Control panel' > 'My Account'

Don't change your screen name and email at the same time, or the system will get confused.

Statement (=Thesis):

Users can enter statements, which makes them owners of those statements. You can in theory enter any text you want for a statement, but intended use is to enter text that you can debate about, i.e. claims, i.e. sentences that can be true or false. The application calls them theses.

Opinion:

Users can enter opinions about statements. They range from 0% meaning "I believe this statement is false" to 100% meaning "I believe this statement is true". 50% would mean something like "I don't know / I have no opinion (yet)".

Perspective:

Opinions are associated to a (Statement, Perspective) pair, rather than a (Statement, User) pair. Users own perspectives. When a user logs in for the first time, the system creates a default perspective for that user, and all opinions entered will be under that perspective. A user can however create extra perspectives to record and group opinions that are not necessarily his / hers.

Example

So for example in the table below, we have users mary, oliver and john.

John has entered a statement: “Darwin was a eugenicist”

Oliver has entered two statements: “9/11 was an inside job” and “Free Trade agreements are good”

John believes his own statement to be true: This is indicated by the TRUE entry under “John's main perspective”.

Oliver believes one of his own statements: “9/11 is an inside job”, but doesn't believe in his other statement, “Free trade agreements are good”. In addition, Oliver doesn't believe in John's statement.

Mary agrees with Oliver on Darwin.

Now Oliver is in the process of dissecting the world bank's story. To that end he has created a new perspective: “Worldbank” and entered what he thinks is their opinion. Oliver is doing the same thing with 911 debunker literature.

	-----Statement owners ---->	oliver	john	oliver
√ Perspective √ owners √ √	-----Statements -----> √ Perspectives √	9/11 inside job	Darwin was a eugenicist	Free trade is good
mary	Mary's main perspective		FALSE	
oliver	Oliver's main perspective	TRUE	FALSE	FALSE
john	John's main perspective		TRUE	
oliver	Worldbank(oliver)			TRUE
oliver	911 debunker(oliver)	FALSE		

Implication:

In order to explain your beliefs, you can enter implications in the system that link one statement to another. Say for example that Mary doesn't believe that “Darwin was a eugenicist” because she believes that “Darwin never uttered the phrase 'Survival of the fittest’”, and she considers that to be a good argument. Then she can enter the utterance statement into the system as a premise to the

eugenicist statement, and indicate what she thinks is the logical link between the two. On the other hand John has an argument for his position, namely “Some of Charles Darwin's relatives were eugenicists”. In turn he doesn't believe that Darwin never said “survival of the fittest”. We will see below how that works with the system in practice:

Practical usage of the application

Views:

The application has two views to look at the data, and a number of entry forms. The two views are the “Focus view” where you focus on one statement and its linked statements, and the other view is the “List” view which lists all currently entered statements with opinions.

For example in the situation where only John has entered two statements, and Mary has given her opinions about them, the focus view can look as follows:

Below the orange menu, you see two selected perspectives, which you can add by clicking one of the links in the 'Different perspectives' table at the bottom.

The opinions of these selected perspectives will be shown on the left of every thesis.

In this case: Mary and John both believe that relatives of Darwin were Eugenicists, but Mary doesn't believe Charles himself was.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Make Your Case". The address bar shows "http://www.myc.nc". The browser has a menu bar with File, Edit, View, Go, Bookmarks, Tools, Settings, Window, and Help. Below the browser window, the application interface is visible. It has a title bar "Make Your Case" and a sub-header "Argument Focus". Below this is an "Argumentation" section with an orange button bar containing "NEW THESIS", "GOTO", "ALL THESES", "NEW PERSPECTIVE", and "HELP". Below the button bar is a list of perspectives: "Perspective 1: john's perspective remove from view" and "Perspective 2: mary's perspective remove from view". Below this is a "Focus thesis:" section with a progress bar showing "100%" in green and "0%" in red, followed by the text "664 -- Charles Darwin was a eugenicist". Below the progress bar is a link "edit, add premise, set your opinion". Below this is a "Reasons for this to be true or not:" section with a table. Below the table is a "Possible consequences:" section with a table. Below this is a "Tree view:" section with a list of statements. Below this is a "Different perspectives:" section with a table. At the bottom of the application window are buttons for "Settings" and "Online Friends (1)".

Argumentation

NEW THESIS GOTO ALL THESES NEW PERSPECTIVE HELP

- Perspective 1: john's perspective [remove from view](#)
- Perspective 2: mary's perspective [remove from view](#)

Focus thesis:

100% 0% 664 -- Charles Darwin was a eugenicist

[edit, add premise, set your opinion](#)

Reasons for this to be true or not:

Operations	P1	P2	Premise	Relevance of premise for focus	Owner
focus, relink	100%	100%	669 -- Some of Charles Darwin's relatives were Eugenicists.	If True: Supports(30%), If False: Irrelevant(0%), Implied Believe(65%)	john

Possible consequences:

Operations	P1	P2	Consequence	Relevance of focus for consequence	Owner
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Tree view:

- Charles Darwin was a eugenicist
 - Some of Charles Darwin's relatives were Eugenicists.

Different perspectives:

Perspective	Opinion
mary's perspective	Dont Believe(0%)
thesis_owner	Neutral
john's perspective	Believe(100%)

Settings Online Friends (1)

If you click 'all theses' at the top of the focus view, you get to see a table with all statements entered up to now:

The screenshot shows a web application interface. At the top is a menu bar with items: File, Edit, View, Go, Bookmarks, Tools, Settings, Window, Help. Below the menu bar is a navigation bar with buttons: NEW, FOCUS THESIS, HELP. Below the navigation bar is a list of perspectives:

- Perspective 1: john's perspective [remove from view](#)
- Perspective 2: mary's perspective [remove from view](#)

Below the list is a section titled "All theses". Under this title is a table:

Operations	P1	P2	Thesis	Owner
focus	100%	0%	664 -- Charles Darwin was a eugenicist	john
focus	100%	100%	669 -- Some of Charles Darwin's relatives were Eugenicists.	john

Below the table is a bar with buttons: Settings, Online Friends (1).

By clicking 'focus thesis' on the menu, you go back to the thesis you last focussed on, or alternatively you can focus on a new thesis by clicking on the focus link to the left of every statement listed.

The columns P1 and P2 are shorthand for the two perspectives currently selected and listed under the menu.

Entry forms:

Let's suppose Mary wants to enter her argument for not believing that Charles was a eugenicist. She heard somewhere that Charles never uttered the phrase 'survival of the fittest' and that it was other people that were talking like that. She considers that to be a relevant rebuttal of John's thesis, and so she clicks the 'add premise' link below the focus thesis. (Note that you currently need to have one and only one owned perspective selected to do that) She gets to the following form, and enters here 'premise' (which is actually a rebuttal):

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

Argument Focus - Make Your P...

www.myc.net:8080/focus?p_p_id: Google

Go to Mary Poppins (Sign Out)

Make Your Case

Argument Focus

Argumentation

Add premise for: Charles Darwin was a eugenicist

Premise text

Charles Darwin never said "Survival of the fittest"

Thesis opinion:

- 0 = I believe this is not true,
- 50 = I don't know,
- 100 = I believe this thesis is true.

100

premise if true relevance:

- 100 = The premise, if true, would WEAKEN my belief in the conclusion,
- 0 = I consider the premise, if true, to be IRRELEVANT for the conclusion
- +100 = The premise, if true, would STRENGTHEN my belief in the conclusion.

-50

premise if false relevance:

- 100 = The premise, if false, would WEAKEN my belief in the conclusion,
- 0 = I consider the premise, if false, to be IRRELEVANT for the conclusion
- +100 = The premise, if false, would STRENGTHEN my belief in the conclusion.

50

Save

[- Back](#)

Settings Online Friends (1)

Mary enters the text for her new thesis, and declares to believe it to be true. She then, through the negative number, indicates that she considers this statement to be a rebuttal of 'Charles Darwin was a eugenicist' thesis. In case she ever changes her mind about the truth of her statement, she also needs to enter the implicative value of the premise in case it would be false. Pressing the 'Save' button brings her back to the focus screen:

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

Argument Focus - Make Your P...

www.myc.net:8080/focus?p_auth=bXD98UBZ&p_p_id=argumentation_WAR

Go to Mary Poppins (Sign Out)

Make Your Case

Argument Focus

Argumentation

NEW THESIS GOTO ALL THESES NEW PERSPECTIVE HELP

• Perspective 1: mary's perspective

Focus thesis:

0%

664 -- Charles Darwin was a eugenicist

Owner: john, [add premise](#), [set your opinion](#)

Reasons for this to be true or not:

Operations	P1	Premise	Relevance of premise for focus	Owner
focus , relink	100%	670 — Charles Darwin never said "Survival of the fittest"	IfTrue:Weakens(50%), IfFalse:Supports(50%), Implied:DontBelieve(25%)	mary
focus , relink	100%	669 — Some of Charles Darwin's relatives were Eugenists.	IfTrue:Supports(30%), IfFalse:Irrelevant(0%), Implied:Believe(65%)	john

Possible consequences:

Operations	P1	Consequence	Relevance of focus for consequence	Owner
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Tree view:

Settings

Online Friends (1)

Mary's premise received a new thesis id: 670.

John believes that Mary's statement is actually not true. He focusses on statement 670, presses 'set your opinion' and enters 0%, declaring that he doesn't believe it. To make his point he adds a premise to 670, giving a reference to Darwin using that soundbite:



File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help
Argument Focus - Make Your P...
www.myc.net:8080/focus?addPerspectiveId=676
Google

Make Your Case

Argument Focus

Argumentation

NEW THESIS
GOTO
ALL THESES
NEW PERSPECTIVE
HELP

- Perspective 1: mary's perspective [remove from view](#)
- Perspective 2: john's perspective [remove from view](#)

Focus thesis:

0%
100%

664 -- Charles Darwin was a eugenicist

Owner: john, [add premise](#), [set your opinion](#)

Reasons for this to be true or not:

Operations	P1	P2	Premise	Relevance of premise for focus	Owner
focus , relink	100%	100%	669 -- Some of Charles Darwin's relatives were Eugenacists.	IfTrue:Supports(30%), IfFalse:Irrelevant(0%), Implied:Believe(65%)	john
focus , relink	0%	0%	670 -- Charles Darwin never said "Survival of the fittest"	IfTrue:Weakens(50%), IfFalse:Supports(50%), Implied:Believe(75%)	mary

Possible consequences:

Operations	P1	P2	Consequence	Relevance of focus for consequence	Owner
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Tree view:

Settings Online Friends (1)

Both John and Mary agree about the premises, but don't agree on the conclusion.

The disagreement seems to be about the relevance of the premises for the conclusion.

This reason for disagreement (different views on relevance) can currently not be visualized with the application: The relevance is currently not linked to a perspective, so that the system cannot show two different perceived relevances. It's feature that is on the todo list.

If you want to enter opinion's from a different perspective, click 'new perspective' in the orange menu, and enter your desired name for the new perspective. That new perspective then gets listed at the bottom of the focus page, from where you can add it to the view.

This is a prototype application

The system has a number of limitations, among others:

- You can't delete statements / perspectives yet.
- You can't link pre-existing statements yet.
- If you put up an opinion about a statement, then the owner of the statement can edit the statement afterwards, and it will look as if you have an opinion about the edited version, which you possibly don't.
- Implications are not perspective dependent.
- No notification email sent.
- Etc.

The source code will be put up on github under gpl for interested programmers to join in the fun.

Bye, Olivier