

Homework Assignment 2

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Perspective on Social Search

Social search is a type of search that uses the social networks of the user in providing the search results. It could be the utilisation of the knowledge present in the person's network directly through interactions or indirectly using the environments. I would like to use social search in combination with the normal search engines to get a holistic information about the topic. The results in [1] & [2] both pointed towards the same direction. In [1], the system indexed all the websites that were in the social network of the user through Twitter or Emails(social environment) while in [2], the users were given a choice of finding information using status message question asking(SQMA) or use traditional search engines or even both(social interactions). The popularity of social searches can be gauged from the huge popularity of Quora, in which people ask questions which are answered by other people who have knowledge about the topic.

In general, we get much more unbiased and reliable information using the search engines. But it normally lacks a personal touch which could be provided by the social search. For example, if I search for a smart phone, the search engine would give me reviews from experts while some of my friends could give me information that is more customised to me(eg. Battery will last your usage for a day from his/her experience). This is due to the fact that your social network generally tends to know more about you and your choices. Another advantage of using social search is that you tend to trust your networks more than the search engines[2]. This gives the user more confidence about the information obtained from the normal search.

One of the main disadvantage in using social search is the privacy concern. The user may not be ready to provide information to his/her social networks. As pointed out in [2], users may be having a well pruned social network profile which could be hurt by the social searches. Another disadvantage with social search is the time consuming nature of the searches in nature compared to the instantaneous traditional searches. This is because the results are from the network which takes some time to process the query as noted in [2]. But these disadvantages can be overcome by using a combination of the traditional and social search. If a query is not to be made public, it can be done using traditional search engines. Also, the traditional search engine results can be coupled with the social search results to speed up the process.

Overall, I would say it is better to combine both the traditional search engines and the social search to get a complete and satisfactory result to a query.

References

- [1] Friends, Romans, Countrymen: Lend me your URLs. Using Social Chatter to Personalize Web Search by Abhinay Nagpal and Sudheendra Hangal and Rifat Reza and Joyee Monica and S. Lam
- [2] To Search or to Ask: The Routing of Information Needs Between Traditional Search Engines and Social Networks by Oeldorf-Hirsch, Anne and Hecht, Brent and Morris, Meredith Ringel and Teevan, Jaime and Gergle, Darren

Information Needs & Relevance to Social Search

Information Needs Using Social Search

1. Recommendations : Valuations of social networks are more trustworthy.
2. Opinions : Opinions of similar people in social networks match ours.
3. Favor : Preference to ask favors from known people in our networks.

Information Needs Without Using Social Search

1. Factual Knowledge : It is faster and reliable with traditional search engines.
2. Navigational Information : It is more accurate with traditional search engines.
3. Rhetorical Information: It would be better off with a bit of privacy.

Note: The information search classifications have been borrowed from the paper “To Search or to Ask: The Routing of Information Needs Between Traditional Search Engines and Social Networks” by Oeldorf-Hirsch, Anne and Hecht, Brent and Morris, Meredith Ringel and Teevan, Jaime and Gergle, Darren