

Research Perspectives on Social Tagging

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Overview

Social tagging has emerged as one of the most popular social software tools available online. Originating from Del.icio.us, social tagging capabilities can now be found on a number of major music, news, video, and commercial websites, as well as on social network sites and enterprise systems. Although social tagging allows individuals to organize content utilizing user-generated vocabulary, the power of social tagging stems from the ability to view and share resources with other users of the system. Through the sharing of tags and resources, social tagging systems facilitate network connections and perhaps even the creation of communities.

In this panel, an exciting group of young researchers will present their ongoing work on social tagging. This panel will present a variety of perspectives on social tagging ranging from qualitative ethnographic work to quantitative visualizations. Additionally, the panel will cover topics such as: the definition of a tag, the role that tags play in social network sites, as well as tags in corporate and organizational settings.

The research and the varying methods presented in this panel will present viewers with an exciting array of perspectives on social tagging. Additionally, in order to further engage the audience, the panelists will also participate in a point-counterpoint discussion with the participants which will help illuminate both the advantages and disadvantages of social tagging, as well as further highlight the multiple perspectives and approaches available for continuing social tagging research.

What is a Tag?

Alla Zollers

The social software revolution is about harnessing the wisdom of crowds by aggregating the small contributions of millions of people. Social tagging is one aspect of this revolution because it allows individuals to define and classify the world in their own terms. Tags, which form the most fundamental part of a social tagging system, have mostly been understood in terms of metadata. However, this talk will demonstrate that for social tagging to be considered part of the social software movement, the tags themselves need to encompass a much broader and social definition. The definition of a tag can be extended include constructs such as: tags as informal annotations, tags as network links, and tags as representations of self, community, and values. All of these facets of tags provide the social, communal, and collaborative underpinnings of social tagging.

Opportunities and Applications of Corporate Social Tagging

Tony Moore

The organization of digital information is subject to social and organization factors such as context, come into play with all design engagements. As such, it is rational to conclude that since design [information organization and access] exist in a social context the results can

have unintended purposes. There are various approaches and techniques for integrating user input into the management and organization of digital information. With each approach comes a mixture of advantages and disadvantages. This research briefly discusses popular and varying approaches to user engagement in digital information organization. This underlying theoretical approach is based on an assumption that information and knowledge grow through dialogue and communal understanding of issues. I conclude with two varying example of tagging behavior in a consulting firm. It is the goal of this work to document existing themes in tagging behavior and support further research in this area.

Classification in Context: An Ethnography of Tagging Practices

Lilly Nguyen

This paper seeks to contextualize the current research in social classification systems through an ethnographic approach to understanding the ways in which individuals tag, classify, and the meaning of these practices. This paper argues for an understanding of online social classification systems as social practice, in contrast to previous frameworks for classification within a cognitive psychology frame that have understood classification as perception. As such, following sociological and science, technology, and society (STS), this paper explores the ways in which social classification systems represent the underlying schemes of social organization in networked digital life.

Tag Decay

Terrell Russell

Terrell Russell is a PhD Student in SILS at UNC-Chapel Hill. He is working on a social tagging method of expertise discovery in organizations. One of the most interesting aspects of this discovery is working through the problem related to out-of-date information. Studying Tag Decay may provide some answers to questions such as: Are there types of knowledge that do not go stale? Can the stability of the set of descriptors for an object be measured?

Social Annotation in Social Network Sites

Fred Stutzman

Social network sites, used by millions of individuals, support a wide range of uses across diverse populations. As these networks are largely ego-centric, one of the primary user behaviors is self-identification and identity construction. At a primary level, identity is constructed through self-description of interests, hobbies and personal preferences; these elements are realized in the interface through browsable collections of hyperlinks. Due to the representative nature of these hyperlinks, we can think of these descriptive elements as self-tags, a form of social annotation. This behavior raises many interesting questions. What sorts of self-tags are most popular? What are significant or unusual examples of self-tags? And what motivations do users have for tagging themselves in a social network site? Drawing on a large dataset collected from Facebook.com, I will explore the practice of social annotation in social network sites.