Do you want to connect? Recommendation strategies for building Personal Learning Networks

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Abstract: Do you want to connect? : Recommendendation strategies for building Personal Learning Networks

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Recommender systems have become widespread on social networking sites. These systems make users of these sites aware of various resources, products and people that they may have otherwise missed. As they are quite powerful and efficient, many large social networking sites have introduced these recommender systems with some success. Likewise, these systems have been used for educational purposes, to connect learners with suitable learning resources, peers and tutors (Manouselis, Drachsler, Verbert & Santos, 2012). The rise of Learning Analytics seems to indicate an even greater role for recommenders in the near future (Greller & Drachsler, 2012)

Conceptually, recommender systems broadly consist of three constructed components:

- a user profile to characterize an individual user
- a matching algorithm, to estimate the distance (in terms of similarity/difference or social networking distance) between users
- and a user interface, to introduce a user to their recommended match.

However, all three of these components become problematic when we aim to connect people in order to extend their Personal Learning Networks (PLNs). Through her PLNs, a learner connects with other learners to support her continuous non-formal learning. Previous research has established the importance of interaction and conversation in these Personal Learning Networks, and especially, the role of PLN ties play as the knowledgeable other in the learner's zone of proximal development (Rajagopal, Joosten-ten Brinke, Van Bruggen & Sloep, 2012; Tinsley & Lebak, 2009). A recommender system that aims to contribute to the creation of contacts in PLNs therefore needs to take this starting point.

In this interactive workshop, we will discuss the virtues of recommender systems for PLNs. The following questions will be discussed:

- When does somebody you connect with online, become part of your PLN? What is *connecting online*?
- Do certain types of information of the person contribute more or less to them becoming part of your PLN?
- Is recommendation in se a suitable strategy for building PLNs online?
- What other efficient and scalable strategies can be used to connect people online?

For each of these questions, we will provide some input from recent research on PLNs and recommendation.

References

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