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BlogTrackers: Combining Domain Knowledge and Novel Search Capabilities for Assessing Political Risks

Blogging as a medium for communication, sharing, and collaboration on the Web is growing in popularity. With the introduction of Web 2.0 applications, web users no longer just play the role of information consumers, but also participate in information production. The Blogosphere, home of all blogs, is a stage where virtual communities with similar interests can form. These forces can affect the external world in areas such as viral marketing, sales forecasting, political campaigns and even counter-terrorism efforts. Recent numbers indicate that the size of the Blogosphere grows by about 100% every six months, and with such an enormous amount of information out there, it is difficult to identify the influential blog posts and bloggers. In order to effectively use this wealth of available information, it is essential to be able to distinguish the active blogger from the influential one.

Researchers at Arizona State University have designed a Java based application called BlogTrackers that tracks and analyzes the blogosphere in order to help social scientists to better understand socio-behavioral patterns such as understanding reactions to social events and grasping the impact of the Blogosphere in the political arena. Blog posts can be collected over various time windows from numerous social media sites. Additionally, blogs can be analyzed for traffic patterns and tag clouds, which give a visualization of frequently mentioned words. Furthermore, bloggers can be classified by their frequency of posting as well as their influence based on a choice set of metadata provided by the blog. Also, alerts and watch-lists can be personalized so that users are notified when select words are mentioned.

Potential Applications

- Analysis of Blogosphere or other social media sites
 - Blogger Analysis
 - Real world event detection
 - Keyword Tracking and User Notification
 - Blog Search and Data Storage

Benefits and Advantages

- Crawls and performs analysis of blog data
- New crawlers can be integrated for new data sources
- Flexibility to choose data source to analyze at startup
- Personalized alerts and watch-lists to keep track of keywords
- Identifies and analyzes influential bloggers
- Distinguishes between active and influential bloggers

