Users2Story - On the Importance of Understanding Searchers' Information Needs

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Abstract

Uncovering the storyline of events can be of interest for numerous reasons. For example, looking at it through information retrieval glasses (with a touch of personalisation), one might want to string together the various search requests and browsing patterns of an individual user to understand what this user might be after, what information needs are actually hidden behind those queries with the aim of offering better information access support. We all know what interesting stories can actually be derived like this as illustrated by the analysis of the AOL query logs, and the "AOL search data leak" also demonstrates the problems with privacy when analysing user's Web search logs.

If however we move from a Web search scenario to a professional search scenario such as search within an organisation, then we note that privacy issues turn out to be much less of a problem. At the same time, it becomes even more desirable to capture the search and browsing patterns of users because finding information in this context can be very difficult and without understanding the user it can become a very frustrating exercise for the searcher trying to find the document(s) relevant for the task at hand.

The talk will explore this use case in some detail and in the best case will be seen as a different take on the main theme of the workshop (and in the worst case will be judged as "off topic" with no chance of re-invitation).

Short Bio

Udo Kruschwitz is a Professor in the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering at the University of Essex. His main research interest is the interface between information retrieval (IR) and natural language processing (NLP). Professor Kruschwitz has successfully led research projects developing algorithms to turn unstructured and partially structured textual data into structured knowledge and user/cohort models that have been applied in a variety of applications including search, navigation and summarisation. He has furthermore been involved as PI and Co-I in successful joint university/industry projects that turned NLP and IR research into practical commercial applications, for example as PI on a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project with Signal Media. The collaboration won the Best Knowledge Transfer Partnership Project of the Year Award at InnovateUK's 'Best of the Best 2015' event, and another KTP project with Signal Media has just started.