Title: Collaboration in Action: Enabling Innovative Scholarship with Social and Crowdsourcing Services

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Abstract:

With an exponentially growing set of e-services and social networks that allow people to be not only consumers, but also producers of information, information seeking and sharing behaviors are rapidly changing. Innovations in areas such as information exchange and knowledge management are coming from scholarship in data sciences, and the "wisdom of the crowd" has become more than a passing trend. We believe it is the right time (now) and the right place (iConference) for faculty in iSchools and scholars in the information field to bring their ideas and questions to start paving a path that takes scholarship to stewardship. This is especially urgent given the emerging landscape of social and crowd-based information. We propose a unique event that combines facilitation of expert discussions and creation of shared understandings on the part of participants in an interactive experience.

The focus of this event would be to discuss the latest developments in the field of social media and crowdsourcing specific to information seeking, knowledge management, and innovative methods for collaborative question-answering. Specifically, the event will facilitate discussions about and engage the audience in topics such as social search, community-based question-answering, and hybrid models for information seeking. These discussions will be guided by the organizers who come from a variety of backgrounds, institutions, and research areas. Particularly, the discussions will be approached from different angles - How community participation affects information seeking behaviors? What happens when search goes social? What could social search and virtual reference services learn from each other to better serve users?

Purpose and Intended Audience:

This event is designed for an audience of researchers, faculty, Ph.D. students, practitioners, and members of the information industry. It will bring researchers in the fields of social and collaborative information seeking, crowdsourcing, social media, as well as virtual reference (VR) and Social Question & Answer (SQA) services together to discuss their recent research findings and to set a course and agenda for future work. Thus, primary objectives are to:

- Share our expertise and research findings
- Discuss limitations and possibilities for future synergies
- Identify ways to share data and other resources
- Suggest and plan possible collaborations

Proposed activities including agenda, ramp-up (development), and follow-through:

Unlike many traditional panels, this event is intended to be highly interactive, with a clear emphasis on audience participation. For instance, after making a few short presentations (30-45 minutes), the organizers will present specific topics and/or research questions to initiate conversations with the attendees. Examples include:

- How are information-seeking and sharing behaviors changing and shaping the new landscape of information sciences and practices? Think about examples and narratives.
- What is social search? How does it inform "traditional" searching behaviors and models, and what challenges and opportunities lie ahead?
- How do we compare expert-based (e.g., virtual reference) with crowd-based (e.g., SQA) services? What ideas, components and practices can each learn from one another?

Finally, the organizers will encourage discussions that lead to planning for future research and potential collaborations.

Before the event (and the conference), we will set up a website to facilitate organization of themes and research questions among the organizers. This website also will be open to others, serving as an important tool to ramp-up the pre-event discussions.

During and after the proposed event, we will setup a blog and/or a wiki to facilitate discussion and planning. The organizers also will create a hash-tag on Twitter for participants (both on and off site) to share their comments and engage in discussions easily.

After the event, the blog and/or the wiki pages will be kept alive, allowing researchers to share their data and findings, and continue connecting with each other for discussions and collaborations.

Relevance to the Conference/Significance to the Field:

The focus of this event fits nicely with the conference's theme "Scholarship in Action: Data, Innovation, Wisdom." Given both the vast research opportunities and the nontrivial challenges the large-scale social data presents to the iSchool community, we believe that it is critical for researchers and practitioners with shared interests to learn from one another, share innovative approaches, and eventually develop collective wisdom. This event will serve as an initial step towards the goal. The research findings and discussions shared through the event and the post-event activities will encourage exploration for the creation of new technological and conceptual configurations, such as possibilities for collaboration and data exchange of social, crowdsourcing, and one-on-one virtual reference services. As the majority of the audience conducts research or practice on information sciences or services, they will find the focus relevant and informative to their academic interests and responsibilities.

The format of this event is highly social and interactive. It provides first-hand experience for both the organizers and audience to work on social data, on information sharing, and hopefully on community building and collaboration.

Length: 90 minutes.

Preferred number of participants: 25-50

Special requests/equipment needs: Computer projector for short presentations by the panelists, poster-board and markers for sketching/writing during the discussion period.