

Social Information Discovery

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The world of web search is usually viewed as a solitary place. Although millions of searchers use services like Google and Yahoo everyday, their individual searches take place in isolation, leaving each searcher to fend for themselves when it comes to finding the right information at the right time. Recently, researchers have begun to question the solitary nature of web search, proposing a more collaborative search model in which groups or users can cooperate to search more effectively.

For example, students will often collaborate as part of class projects, bringing together relevant information that they have found during the course of their individual searches. Indeed, despite the absence of explicit collaboration features from mainstream search engines, there is clear evidence that users implicitly engage in many different forms of collaboration as they search, although, these collaboration "work-arounds" are far from ideal. Naturally, this has motivated researchers to consider how future web search engines might better support different types of collaboration to take advantage of this latent need; for example, how might students collaborate as they search rather than defer the sharing of information as a post-search activity.

In this talk we focus on some of the ways in which web search may become a more social and collaborative experience. This will include lessons learned from both the theory and practice of a more collaborative approach to web search and we will describe recent attempts to bring collaboration support to mainstream search engines. We will consider a number of educational use-cases during the course of this talk to describe how instructors and learners can take full advantage of this more social perspective on web search.