school of computing, informatics, & decision systems engineering

Hosted by Huan Liu

"Charting Collections of Connections in Social Media: Creating Maps and Measures with NodeXL"

INVITED TALK FEATURING

Marc A. Smith, Chief Social Scientist
Connected Action Consulting Group

Thursday, October 24th - 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM
BYENG 510

Abstract:

Networks are a data structure commonly found across all social media services that allow populations to author collections of connections. The Social Media Research Foundation's NodeXL project makes analysis of social media networks accessible to most users of the Excel spreadsheet application. With NodeXL, Networks become as easy to create as pie charts. Applying the tool to a range of social media networks has already revealed the variations present in online social spaces. A review of the tool and images of Twitter, flickr, YouTube, and email networks will be presented.

BIO: Marc Smith is a sociologist specializing in the social organization of online communities and computer mediated interaction. Smith leads the Connected Action consulting group and lives and works in Silicon Valley, California. Smith co-founded the Social Media Research Foundation (http://www.smrfoundation.org/), a non-profit devoted to open tools, data, and scholarship related to social media research.

Smith is the co-editor with Peter Kollock of Communities in Cyberspace (Routledge), a collection of essays exploring the ways identity; interaction and social order develop in online groups. Along with Derek Hansen and Ben Shneiderman, he is the co-author and editor of Analyzing Social Media Networks with NodeXL: Insights from a connected world, from Morgan-Kaufmann which is a guide to mapping connections created through computer-mediated interactions.

Smith's research focuses on computer-mediated collective action: the ways group dynamics change when they take place in and through social cyberspaces. Many "groups" in cyberspace produce public goods and organize themselves in the form of a commons (for related papers see: http://www.connectedaction.net/marc-smith/). Smith's goal is to visualize these social cyberspaces, mapping and measuring their structure, dynamics and life cycles. While at Microsoft Research, he founded the Community Technologies Group and led the development of the "Netscan" web application and data mining engine that allowed researchers studying Usenet newsgroups and related repositories of threaded conversations to get reports on the rates of posting, posters, crossposting, thread length and frequency distributions of activity. He contributes to the open and free NodeXL project (http://www.codeplex.com/nodexl) that adds social network analysis features to the familiar Excel spreadsheet. NodeXL enables social network analysis of email, Twitter, Flickr, WWW, Facebook and other network data sets.

The Connected Action consulting group (http://www.connectedaction.net) applies social science methods in general and social network analysis techniques in particular to enterprise and internet social media usage. SNA analysis of data from message boards, blogs, wikis, friend networks, and shared file systems can reveal insights into organizations and processes. Community managers can gain actionable insights into the volumes of community content created in their social media repositories. Mobile social software applications can visualize patterns of association that are otherwise invisible.

Smith received a B.S. in International Area Studies from Drexel University in Philadelphia in 1988, an M.Phil. in social theory from Cambridge University in 1990, and a Ph.D. in Sociology from UCLA in 2001. He is an adjunct lecturer at the College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland. Smith is also a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the Media-X Program at Stanford University.

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