Future of Social Networking Sites

Bharti[1], Vinod Sroha[2]

[1] M. Tech. (Network Security), B.P.S.M.V. KHANPUR, SONIPAT, HARYANA
[2] Mentor & Lect. in C.S.E/IT department, B.P.S.M.V. KHANPUR, SONIPAT, HARYANA

Introduction

Social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like small rural communities or a neighbourhood subdivision, if you will. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and high schools, it is most popular online. This paper explores the origin of social networking sites and their trend as per future perspectives. Most of us have hobbies, or things that we are keenly interested in such as books, television, video games or movies. Social networks allow us to reach out to others that have the same interests. Social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become nearly inescapable facets of modern life, particularly for kids. In the knowledge society, in addition to technical skills and access to information technologies, it is becoming increasingly important for people to have diversified and supportive social connections. Although resources and opportunities may be available, one may not necessarily be aware of their existence, or even have direct access to them. In those cases, knowing people from different backgrounds, grades of expertise, and social levels turns out to be essential.

Before we talk about the future of social media we need to think of the dividing line that runs across the globe and creates two separate worlds. The uneven development of the world has left a yawning gap between metropolitan developed world and the rest of world and this reflect in the social media usage as well. To make the case stronger, it suffices to say that Orkut may be dead in the metros, but it thriving in small towns and non-metro cities. So when we talk of the future of social networking sites, we need to keep this difference in mind and preferences of both groups in mind.

Everyone on the Internet knows the buzzword social networking. Sites such as Friendster, Facebook, Orkut, LinkedIn, Bebo, and My-Space, as well as content-sharing sites that also offer social networking functionality (including YouTube, Flickr, Upcoming, del.icio.us, Last.fm, and 43 Things) have captured the attention of millions of users and millions of dollars from venture capitalists. The 10 most popular domains accounted for about 40 percent of all page views on the Web 2 and nearly half of those views were from the social networking services (SNSs) MySpace and Face book. SNSs usually offer the same basic functionalities: network of friends listings (showing a person's "inner circle"), person surfing, private messaging, discussion forums or communities, events management, blogging, commenting (sometimes as endorsements on people's profiles), and media uploading. With such features, SNSs demonstrate how the Internet continues to better connect people for various social and professional purposes. Yet, fundamental problems with today's SNSs block their potential to access the full range of available content and networked people online. A possible solution is to build semantic social networking into the fabric of the next-generation Internet itself — interconnecting both content and people in meaningful ways.

The beginning of trend of social networking

From the beginning, the Internet was a medium for connecting not only machines but people. Email, mailing lists, Usenet, and bulletin boards allowed people to connect and form online social networks, typically around specific topics. Although these groups didn't explicitly define social networks, the ways people acted and reacted did so implicitly. The early Web continued the trend. More recently, sites such as Friendster and LinkedIn have brought a different notion of online communities by explicitly facilitating connections based on information gathered and stored in user profiles. In addition to relationship management, social networks are sometimes used for viral marketing,3 although recent results indicate that this might be less effective than often assumed.

Current Trends and What Makes Present Sites Boring

Social network sites (SNSs) have the potential to fundamentally change the character of our social lives, both on an interpersonal and a community level. Changes in interaction patterns and social connections are already evident among young people, who are the heaviest users of these sites. As adoption spreads to a wider audience, we expect such changes to be amplified across all segments of society. At an interpersonal level, the identity information included in public profiles serves to lower the barriers to social interaction and thus enable connections between individuals that might not otherwise take place. On a community level, the organizing features of these sites lower the transaction costs for finding and connecting with others who may share one interest or concern but differ on other dimensions. Both of these processes have the potential to have positive effects on society at large because they encourage disparate

individuals to connect, communicate, and take action In the past few years, social network sites have become integrated into the daily practices of millions of U.S. users, most visibly those of young people, but usage is rapidly spreading to older people and other groups. SNS adoption is a global trend as well, as indicated by sites like QQ in China and CyWorld in South Korea. I believe it is important to consider the social changes that might accompany mainstream use of these sites. Like all "new" communication technologies, social network sites replicate features found in earlier communication tools. A site profile resembles a personal webpage, and the sites often incorporate established communication features like messaging and photo sharing. In addition to allowing users to engage in online self-presentation, social network sites allow users to explicitly articulate connections and to view their own social network and the networks of others. What truly distinguishes SNSs from earlier technologies is the articulated social network, which is at the heart of these systems. Social network sites allow us to digitally represent our connections with other users—meaning that we can use these sites to model our network of social relationships by requesting and accepting "friends" or "contacts."

In our everyday lives, we frequently encounter people with whom we may want to reconnect at some point in the future, but the social or logistical barriers to do so are insurmountable. It may feel creepy to ask for a phone number; there may be no easy way to share contact information; email addresses may be misplaced. When we meet these potential acquaintances at parties or parks or post offices, each step of the process is fraught with potential pitfalls that can prevent individuals from reconnecting in the future. The potential benefits of keeping in touch—a play date for a child, a chance to discuss a shared hobby—seem inconsequential compared to the costs of coordination, and thus the effort required to set up a future interaction seems unjustified. In other cases, the benefit of keeping in touch becomes apparent only later, after the opportunity has passed. Social network sites can help eliminate these barriers. With minimal effort and the thinnest of information, a profile can be located and a connection created. Social network sites facilitate interaction, both at that moment and in the future. The latent connection can be digitally reconstituted at any time, should the need or desire arise.

Before social network sites were popular, people used communication strategies like gossip and the holiday newsletter to maintain awareness of distant friends, old co-workers, and far-flung relatives. Through status updates and feeds, SNSs enable individuals to broadcast both major life changes and ephemeral activities to their broad network, allowing others to engage in lightweight social surveillance. The coordination costs are lower because these tools enable both active (e.g., messaging) and passive (e.g., updates) communication with little effort. This awareness is especially useful for keeping tabs on those in one's extended networks. A distant cousin got a new puppy, an old colleague has a new job, a former student is getting married: Knowing about these events won't change one's life, but the knowledge accumulates into a powerful awareness of one's social network and provides continuous linkage to one's weak ties. This ephemeral information can also strengthen offline connections, easing conversation with vague acquaintances or providing a new reason to reconnect with an old friend.

Benefits

Social Networks join people with common interests under one roof and makes the communication much easier especially for those who have difficulties in interacting with people face to face. However you should always remember that once you enter the world of Social Networking it will become rather difficult for you to get out of it. So be so prudent in order not to be caught in the net of Social networking.

[1]. No one can deny that despite all those negative opinions about Social Networks they do have a strong impact on us and taking into consideration how fast their popularity is growing, it is not difficult to predict that this influence will become even more perceivable in the nearest future.

[2]. So once we can do nothing but watch the development of Social Networks we had better look for and find the advantages they possess rather than point out their negative sides all the time (don't be so sceptical, they do have positive sides).

[3]. In general the main vocation of a Social Network is to be a virtual platform where people can communicate and share information with their friends.

[4]. As you can see there is no danger in this mission, the vice versa.

[5]. Nevertheless, nowadays such kind of websites has gone far from their initial destination and that is the main reason why people are ambiguous about their usefulness.

[6]. In any case Social websites have fulfilled humans' long – standing dream that is the opportunity for quick and reliable information.

[7]. In addition they enable people to create and strengthen relationships.

Emerging Trends in Social Networking

As the increase in popularity of social networking is on a constant rise, new uses for the technology are constantly being observed. At the forefront of emerging trends in social networking sites is the concept of "real-time web" and "location based." Real time allows users to contribute content, which is then broadcasted as it is being uploaded - the concept is analogous to live radio and television broadcasts. Twitter set the trend for "real time" services, where users can broadcast to the world what they are doing, or what is on their minds within a 140 character limit. Face book followed suit with their "Live Feed" where users' activities are streamed as soon as it happens. While Twitter focuses on words, Clixtr another real time service focuses on group photo sharing where users can update their photo streams with photos while at an event. Facebook, however, remains easily the greatest photo sharing site - Facebook application and photo aggregator Pixable estimates that Facebook will have 100 billion photos by summer 2011. Companies have begun to merge business technologies and solutions, such as cloud computing, with social networking concepts.

Instead of connecting individuals based on social interest, companies are developing interactive communities that connect individuals based off shared business needs or experiences. Many provide specialized networking tools and applications that can be accessed via their websites, such as LinkedIn Others companies, such as Monster.com, have been steadily developing a more "socialized" feel to their career centre sites to harness some of the power of social networking sites. These more business related sites have their own nomenclature for the most part but the most common naming conventions are "Vocational Networking Sites" or "Vocational Media Networks", with the former more closely tied to individual networking relationships based on social networking principles. One popular use for this new technology is social networking between businesses. Companies have found that social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are great ways to build their brand image. There are five major uses for businesses and social media: **to create brand awareness, as an online reputation management tool, for recruiting, to learn about new technologies and competitors**, and as a lead generation tool to intercept potential prospects.

Social networks and science

One other use that is being discussed is the use of social networks in the science communities. By sharing information and knowledge with one another, they are able to "increase both their learning and their flexibility in ways that would not be possible within a self-contained hierarchical organization." Social networking is allowing scientific groups to expand their knowledge base and share ideas, and without these new means of communicating their theories might become "isolated and irrelevant".

Social networks and education

Social networks are also being used by teachers and students as a communication tool. Because many students are already using a wide-range of social networking sites, teachers have begun to familiarize themselves with this trend and are now using it to their advantage. Teachers and professors are doing everything from creating chat-room forums and groups to extend classroom discussion to posting assignments, tests and quizzes, to assisting with homework outside of the classroom setting. Social networks are also being used to foster teacher-parent communication. These sites make it possible and more convenient for parents to ask questions and voice concerns without having to meet face-to-face. The advent of social networking platforms may also be impacting the way(s) in which learners engage with technology in general. The use of online social networks by libraries is also an increasingly prevalent and growing tool that is being used to communicate with more potential library users, as well as extending the services provided by individual libraries.

Social networks and employment

A final rise in social network use is being driven by college students using the services to network with professionals for internship and job opportunities. Many studies have been done on the effectiveness of networking online in a college setting.

Social network hosting service

A social network hosting service is a web hosting service that specifically hosts the user creation of web-based social networking services, alongside related applications. Such services are also known as vertical social networks due to the creation of SNSes which cater to specific user interests and niches; like larger, interest-agnostic SNSes, such niche networking services may also possess the ability to create increasingly niche groups of users. An example for this would be Ning.

Business model

Few social networks currently charge money for membership. In part, this may be because social networking is a relatively new service, and the value of using them has not been firmly established in customers' minds. Companies such as MySpace and Face book sell online advertising on their site. Their business model is based upon large membership count, and charging for membership would be counterproductive. Some believe that the deeper information that the sites have on each user will allow much better targeted advertising than any other site can currently provide. Social networks operate under an autonomous business model, in which a social network's members serve dual roles as both the suppliers and the consumers of content. This is in contrast to a traditional business model, where the suppliers and consumers are distinct agents. Revenue is typically gained in the autonomous business model via advertisements, but subscription-based revenue is possible when membership and content levels are sufficiently high.

Providing Meaning to Social Networks

Engestom has argued that social networking sites' longevity is proportional to their object-centred sociality4 — that is, the degree to which people are connecting via items of interest related to their jobs, workplaces, hobbies, and so on. Similarly, Ken Jordan and colleagues advocate augmented social networks, in which citizens form relationships and self-organize into communities around shared interests. One way to develop object-centred sociality on the Web is via people's actions around the content they create together, comment on, link to, or for which they use similar annotations. Adding annotations to items in social networks (using topic tags, geographical pinpointing, and so on) is particularly useful for browsing and locating interesting items and people with similar interests. Content items such as blog entries, videos, and bookmarks serve as the lodestones for social networks, drawing people back to check for new items and for updates from others in their network. As online connections between people become increasingly intertwined with real-world interests, social networking methods are moving toward simulating real-life social interactions: rather than randomly approaching each other, people meet through things they have in common.

Semantics and Social Networks

Although object-centred social networks can fix one problem (that of sites becoming boring), the remaining challenge is how to achieve interoperability among SNSs and, ultimately, Content-creation facilities on the Web. As more social networks form around connections between people and their objects of interest, and as these object centred social networks grow bigger and more diverse, more intuitive methods are needed for representing and navigating the information in these networks — within and across social networking sites. Also, to better enable navigation across sites, interoperability among SNSs is required in terms of both the content objects and the person- to-person networks expressed on each site. This requires representation mechanisms to interconnect people and objects on the Web in an interoperable, extensible way.

The Semantic Web provides such representation mechanisms: it links people and objects to record and represent the heterogeneous ties that bind us to each other. By using agreed-upon Semantic Web formats to describe people, content objects, and the connections that bind them together, SNSs can interoperate by appealing to common semantics. Developers are already using Semantic Web technologies to augment the ways in which they create, reuse, and link content on social networking and media sites. These efforts include the Friend-of-a-Friend (FOAF; www.foaf-project.org) project, the Nepomuk social semantic desktop (http://nepomuk.semanticdesktop.org),7 the Semantically-Interlinked Online Communities initiative (SIOC; www. sioc-project.org), and ontology-enhanced wikis such as the Semantic Media- Wiki (http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/ Semantic_MediaWiki). Some SNSs, such as Facebook, are also starting to provide query interfaces to their data, which others can reuse and link to via the Semantic Web (www.openlinksw. com/blog/~kidehen/?id=1237).

The Semantic Web is a useful platform for linking and for performing operations on diverse person- and object-related data gathered from heterogeneous social networking sites.8 In the other direction, object-centred networks can serve as rich data sources for Semantic Web applications. This linked data can provide an enhanced view of individual or community activity in localized or distributed object-centred social networks. The SIOC initiative is particularly aimed at linking related online discussions taking place on platforms such as blogs, message boards, and mailing lists. In combination with the FOAF vocabulary for describing people and their friends, and the Simple Knowledge Organization Systems (SKOS) model for organizing knowledge, SIOC lets developers link discussion posts to other related discussions, people (via their associated user accounts), and topics (using specific "tags" or hierarchical categories). As discussions begin to move beyond simple text-based conversations to include audio and video content, SIOC is evolving to describe not only conventional discussion platforms but also new Web-based communication and content-sharing mechanisms.

As Tim Berners-Lee said in a 2005 podcast, Semantic Web technologies can support online communities even as "online communities support Semantic Web data by being the sources of people voluntarily connecting things together" (http://esw.w3.org/topic/ IswcPodcast). Social networking site users are already creating extensive vocabularies and annotations through "folksonomies" (collections of free-text keywords used to tag content items). Because a consensus of community users is defining the meaning, these terms are serving as the objects around which those users form more tightly connected social networks.

Thinking Beyond Ego Surfing

So far, SNSs use explicit representations of social networks primarily for visualization and browsing purposes. Yet, some research prototypes show that social networks are actually useful for more than just ego surfing to discover unexpected links in networks of friends. For example, some efforts are under way to examine email filtering and ranking based on social networks. 9,10 Explicitly represented social networking information can also provide a means for assessing a piece of information's importance and relevance for many other kinds of information filtering (for example, in semantic attention management11) and routing, in general. Rather than building a separate social networking layer into tools (with all the created maintenance problems), information space and application architects need to fold it into the technology stacks. Nepomuk does this for the desktop, but given the evolution toward ubiquitous computing and the so-called "Internet of things," which will deliver much more information, the Internet infrastructure itself might need to be augmented to include social networking infrastructure to keep users from drowning in an ocean of unconnected and meaningless information. Just as the social semantic desktop Nepomuk provides an operating system layer for representing and exchanging information on the desktop, information creation on the Web and the Internet should take existing connections between content objects and people into account to provide meaning for this information. For example, SNSs might include mechanisms to automate the creation of connections among information items or to route information based on existing relationships between people and content items.

A social networking stack needs to take into account people's relevant objects of interest and provide some limited data portability — at the very least, for their most highly used or rated items. New social networking sites or applications could thus use a person's actions and interactions with other users and objects (exhibiting relevant properties) in existing systems to create new user or group connections when they register. To enable the sharing of existing contacts and to aid in creating new ones, the cross-application social networking stack would require several layers:

1. The personal authentication and authorization layer would use Open-ID, Sxip, or some other single-sign on mechanism to authenticate that individuals are who they claim to be
and that they're authorized to use their social network connections (layer 2) and leverage previously created content items (layer 3).

2. The social network access layer would utilize an individual's social networking contacts across various platforms — by collecting FOAF **knows** relationships from multiple sites, for instance. Access control is required because social connections aren't always bidirectional. This layer would ensure that the required directional links exist for various interactions, and it would also verify that the source of the social network information was valid.

3. The content object access layer would collect users' relevant content objects and verify that they were allowed to reuse the associated data and metadata in the current application. One way to achieve this would be to use the Semantically Interlinked Online Communities ontology as a representation format, aggregating users' created items (through their accounts) from various site containers. For reputation purposes, this layer would also verify that the authenticated individuals had, in fact, created the items on the sites they referenced

Various architectural alternatives exist for implementing a social networking stack. The existing DNS system offers one possible architecture, but it creates a central point of control. A P2P approach is another worthwhile possibility to explore. The availability of a social networking stack would also affect existing networking layers because social routing algorithms would be able to deliver information directly to people for whom the information was relevant — simple examples including email filtering and routing with social networks. Although their meteoric rise might be past, social networks will remain an important part of the Internet. Yet, we believe that form and deployment will evolve toward object-centred networks and — driven by the need to exploit information assessment methods — direct integration into the technology stack of clients (the desktop) and the Internet itself.

Conclusion

Social Networking is a nice form of entertainment, great for meeting people with similar interests, and can be a very effective business technique for entrepreneurs, writers, actors, musicians or artists. Most of us have hobbies, or things that we are keenly interested in such as books, television, video games or movies. Social networks allow us to reach out

to others that have the same interests. Social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, have become nearly inescapable facets of modern life, particularly for kids. A new report suggests they can have real benefits and risks for children. These sites, and virtual gaming worlds, allow users to interact with each other and they are where children and adolescents are spending a lot, if not most, of their free time, according to a report on the impact of social media just released by the American Academy of Paediatrics. The report says that more than half of adolescents log on to a social media website at least once a day, and nearly one quarter of teens say they log on to their favourite social media sites 10 or more times each day. In the knowledge society, in addition to technical skills and access to information technologies, it is becoming increasingly important for people to have diversified and supportive social connections. Although resources and opportunities may be available, one may not necessarily be aware of their existence, or even have direct access to them. In those cases, knowing people from different backgrounds, grades of expertise, and social levels turns out to be essential.

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