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Social, Cultural, and Behavioral Modeling

11th International Conference, SBP-BRiMS 2018
Washington, DC, USA, July 10–13, 2018
Proceedings

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ISSN 0302-9743

ISSN 1611-3349 (electronic)

Lecture Notes in Computer Science

ISBN 978-3-319-93371-9

ISBN 978-3-319-93372-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93372-6>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018944433

LNCS Sublibrary: SL3 – Information Systems and Applications, incl. Internet/Web, and HCI

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Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG
part of Springer Nature

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

Improving the human condition requires understanding, forecasting, and impacting sociocultural behavior both in the digital and nondigital world. Increasing amounts of digital data, embedded sensors collecting human information, rapidly changing communication media, changes in legislation concerning digital rights and privacy, spread of 4G technology to third-world countries and so on are creating a new cyber-mediated world where the very precepts of why, when, and how people interact and make decisions are being called into question. For example, Uber took a deep understanding of human behavior vis-à-vis commuting, developed software to support this behavior, ended up saving human time (and so capital) and reducing stress, and thus indirectly created the opportunity for humans with more time and less stress to evolve new behaviors. Scientific and industrial pioneers in this area are relying on both social science and computer science to help make sense of and impact this new frontier. To be successful, a true merger of social science and computer science is needed. Solutions that rely only on the social science or only on the computer science are doomed to failure. For example, Anonymous developed an approach for identifying members of terror groups such as ISIS on the Twitter social media platform using state-of-the-art computational techniques. These accounts were then suspended. This was a purely technical solution. The response was that those individuals with suspended accounts just moved to new platforms, and resurfaced on Twitter under new IDs. In this case, failure to understand basic social behavior resulted in an ineffective solution.

The goal of this conference is to build this new community of social cyber scholars by bringing together and fostering interaction between members of the scientific, corporate, government, and military communities interested in understanding, forecasting, and impacting human sociocultural behavior. It is the charge of this community to build this new science, its theories, methods, and its scientific culture in a way that does not give priority to either social science or computer science, and to embrace change as the cornerstone of the community. Despite decades of work in this area, this new scientific field is still in its infancy. To meet this charge, to move this science to the next level, this community must meet the following three challenges: deep understanding, sociocognitive reasoning, and re-usable computational technology. Fortunately, as the papers in this volume illustrate, this community is poised to answer these challenges. But what does meeting these challenges entail?

Deep understanding refers to the ability to make operational decisions and theoretical arguments on the basis of an empirical-based deep and broad understanding of the complex sociocultural phenomena of interest. Today, although more data are available digitally than ever before, we are still plagued by anecdotal-based arguments. For example, in social media, despite the wealth of information available, most analysts focus on small samples, which are typically biased and cover only a small time period, and use that to explain all events and make future predictions. The analyst finds the magic tweet or the unusual tweeter and uses that to prove their point. Tools that can

help the analyst to reason using more data or less biased data are not widely used, are often more complex than the average analyst wants to use or they take more time than the analyst wants to spend to generate results. Not only are more scalable technologies needed, but so too is a better understanding of the biases in the data and ways to overcome them, and a cultural change to not accept anecdotes as evidence.

Sociocognitive reasoning refers to the ability of individuals to make sense of the world and to interact with it in terms of groups and not just individuals. Today most social-behavioral models either focus on (1) strong cognitive models of individuals engaged in tasks and so model a small number of agents with high levels of cognitive accuracy but with little if any social context, or (2) light cognitive models and strong interaction models and so model massive numbers of agents with high levels of social realism and little cognitive realism. In both cases, as realism is increased in the other dimension the scalability of the models fail, and their predictive accuracy on one of the two dimensions remains low. By contrast, as agent models are built where the agents are not just cognitive but socially cognitive, we find that the scalability increases and the predictive accuracy increases. Not only are agent models with sociocognitive reasoning capabilities needed, but so too is a better understanding of how individuals form and use these social cognitions.

More software solutions that support behavioral representation, modeling, data collection, bias identification, analysis, and visualization support human sociocultural behavioral modeling and prediction than ever before. However, this software is generally just piling up in giant black holes on the Web. Part of the problem is the fallacy of open source; the idea that if you just make code open source others will use it. By contrast, most of the tools and methods available in Git or R are only used by the developer, if that. Reasons for lack of use include lack of documentation, lack of interfaces, lack of interoperability with other tools, difficulty of linking to data, and increased demands on the analyst's time due to a lack of tool-chain and workflow optimization. Part of the problem is the "not-invented here" syndrome. For social scientists and computer scientists alike, it is simply more fun to build a quick and dirty tool for your own use than to study and learn tools built by others. And, part of the problem is the insensitivity of people from one scientific or corporate culture to the reward and demand structures of the other cultures that impact what information can or should be shared and when. A related problem is double standards in sharing, where universities are expected to share and companies are not, but increasingly universities are relying on that intellectual property as a source of funding just like other companies. While common standards and representations would help, a cultural shift from a focus on sharing to a focus on re-use is as or more critical for moving this area to the next scientific level.

In this volume, and in all the work presented at the SBP-BRiMS 2018 conference, you will see suggestions of how to address the challenges just described. SBP-BRiMS 2018 carried on the scholarly tradition of the past conferences out of which it has emerged like a phoenix: the Social Computing, Behavioral-Cultural Modeling, and Prediction (SBP) Conference and the Behavioral Representation in Modeling and Simulation (BRiMS) Society's conference. A total of 85 papers were submitted as regular track submissions. Of these, 18 were accepted as full papers for an acceptance rate of 21.2% and 27 were accepted as short papers for an acceptance rate of 52.9%.

Additionally, there were a large number of papers describing emergent ideas, late-breaking results. This is an international group with papers submitted with authors from many countries.

The conference has a strong multidisciplinary heritage. As the papers in this volume show, people, theories, methods, and data from a wide number of disciplines are represented including computer science, psychology, sociology, communication science, public health, bioinformatics, political science, and organizational science. Numerous types of computational methods are used that include, but not limited to, machine learning, language technology, social network analysis and visualization, agent-based simulation, and statistics.

This exciting program could not have been put together without the hard work of a number of dedicated and forward-thinking researchers serving as the Organizing Committee, listed on the following pages. Members of the Program Committee, the Scholarship Committee, publication, advertising and local arrangements chairs worked tirelessly to put together this event. They were supported by the government sponsors, the area chairs, and the reviewers. We thank them for their efforts on behalf of the community. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the support of our sponsors – the Army Research Office (W911NF-17-1-0138), the Office of Naval Research (N00014-17-1-2461), and the National Science Foundation (IIS-1523458). Enjoy the proceedings and welcome to the community.

April 2018

Kathleen M. Carley
Nitin Agarwal

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