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Computer-Mediated Social Networking

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Revised Selected Papers

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Preface

Although the use of HTML and early Web browsers expanded the Internet experience from mostly one-to-one interactions to that of one-to-many (massive publishing), this development still did not afford the sophisticated kinds of social interactions undertaken by people in the real world. Recently, however, new technologies (such as Weblogs, Web services, Web syndication, tagging with folksonomies, and Wikis), sometimes collectively called Web 2.0 technologies, have appeared that offer more socially oriented network interactions. This has led to the new system development mode of (a) employing lightweight scripting languages to bundle various Web 2.0 elements, or plugins, and then (b) deploying them on network servers, thereby establishing social network systems (SNS).

The physical nature of the new network architectures is increasingly heterogeneous, comprising more lightweight portable devices (cell phones and PDAs) interacting with ever-more powerful multi-core network servers that host SNS. Emerging from these developments are popular services such as Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, LiveJournal, Flickr, and YouTube. These sites employ tagging so that people can find others with similar tastes and share media files stored on the servers. However, analysts and observers predict that SNS have much greater potential than merely exchanging media files; they are expected to afford opportunities to meet and engage in extended, creative, and more meaningful (in fact, unforeseeable) interactions that will greatly enhance the end-user experiences. The question is, therefore, how can this vision be achieved?

An important new platform technology in which all these developments come together and one that has inspired many expert observers is that of the new virtual environments, such as Second Life and There. These platforms enable people to meet and engage in virtual, three-dimensional social interactions; the future of SNS will certainly be played out on these platforms, and their scalability can only be tested presently on high-speed networks such as KAREN (the Kiwi Advanced Research and Education Network).

In all societies and social networks, whether real, virtual, or computer mediated, there is a fundamental tension between freedom and rules. If the interaction rules of behavior are too rigid, people feel constrained and leave the society. Conversely, if interaction rules are too lax, aimless inhabitants become bored, and there is potential for the society to be overrun by vandals and free-riders. Those who want to ensure that the SNS is a success must find a way to establish a balanced set of interaction protocols that enable life in the society to be spontaneous and interesting.

In June 2008, the International Conference on Computer-Mediated Social Networking was held in Dunedin, New Zealand. The aim of this conference was to explore these current issues surrounding computer-mediated social networks. There were 34 paper submissions, which were peer reviewed by at least three

members of the international Program Committee, and 19 were accepted for presentation. The conference program was made up of 26 events spanning 3 days. The events included paper presentations, keynote speeches and panel discussions.

The revised papers of this conference have been organized into four categories: (a) Virtual Environments and Second Life, (b) Knowledge Networks and Learning in Social Networks, (c) Applications and Integration of Social Networking Systems and, (d) Social Concepts Associated with Social Networking. An executive report of the conference and the future research issues that need to be addressed is presented in a paper that appears at the end of this book.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the Program Committee members and the additional reviewers. We thank all the authors for their contributions and the further revisions that they undertook. We thank REANNZ, New Zealand for supporting this conference through a KAREN travel grant. We would like to thank Heather Harris and Gail Maxwell for their support in organizing this conference. We express our gratitude to the staff members of the Department of Information Science for their support. We also acknowledge the support offered to us by Springer in publishing this volume.

March 2009

Maryam Purvis
Bastin Tony Roy Savarimuthu

Organization

ICCMSN 2008 was organized by the department of Information Science, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

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