

Social systems are becoming the preferred destinations to share content (whether they are generated by the user as in Flickr and YouTube, or by other means as in the case of del.icio.us), express opinions (in the form of tagging, rating, and/or reviewing), and build connection with other users (whether they are real-life friends or merely people with similar interests). Finding interesting and relevant content on those sites, however, has become increasingly difficult due to the enormous amount of high quality content available. There are three main channels for finding content in those sites: *browsing*, *searching*, and *being served with recommendations*. Search requires to be revisited in a context where the opinion of other users matters. Recommendation has been receiving growing attention lately. It is therefore not surprising that more and more sites have begun to adopt recommendation as one of the core mechanisms with which they present the user with content. The ability to understand how search and recommendation interact, in particular, in the presence of social ties, is crucial for the survival of those user-driven sites.

This issue is a call to the database community to learn about recommender systems and incorporate social aspects in database research. Social systems constitute a great opportunity for socially-inspired research and a great source of data. This issue is a good start towards the understanding of social databases. It first presents two papers which contain an overview of recommendations strategies and state-of-the-art solutions for robustness, an important quality management issue. The third paper describes a scalable and efficient recommendation infrastructure already in use at Yahoo! The “social” aspect becomes more prominent with the fourth contribution which reports on a user study of the interaction between search and recommendation, followed by an IR-inspired approach for socially-aware search, and finally, a proposal for a social SQL.

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