

A Publication Aggregation System Using Semantic Blogging

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Abstract. Researchers need to share information about their publications. They also desire to share opinions and comments about each other's publications. The paper describes a system which demonstrates how semantic blogging can be used for the purpose. The SWRC ontology has been incorporated in the blogging system for entering the metadata of publications. The semantic blogging system provides means to annotate publications. The system is a decentralized publication aggregation system. It utilizes the RSS technology to aggregate posts. The publication metadata is embedded in the RSS to produce BuRST feed. The RSS aggregator has been extended to handle the BuRST feeds. The system uses the FOAF links of the authors and friends to explore the social network of the research community for aggregation of relevant information.

1 Introduction

In research communities there is always need of posting and sharing information about publications. The bibliographic information about publications should follow some standard metadata schema for being machine processable and interoperable. SWRC (Semantic Web for Research Communities) [1] is an ontology for modeling entities of research communities such as persons, organizations, publications (bibliographic metadata) and their relationships. Besides posting structured data about publications, there is often need of posting comments or annotations about the publications. Blogging can be a mechanism for such purposes. There is need of sharing information in the community in a decentralized way. It is not feasible for researchers worldwide to be bound to a single centralized information system. Publications from various relevant sources need to be aggregated. The researcher should be able to search required publication information from the postings of the community. The paper describes a publication aggregation system for research communities using semantic blogging.

2 Semantic Blogging

Blog, a short form for weblog, is a publicly accessible web-based publication of periodic articles, usually in reverse chronological order that often serves as a personal journal. Blogging makes publishing information on the web very easy, unlike web sites which involve much more elaborate plan and technical effort. However, filtering, organizing and navigating through the blogosphere are a challenge in traditional blogging [2].

Semantic blogging is a technology that builds upon blogging and adds semantic structure to the blog items. The blog items are enriched with metadata. Semantic blogging uses desirable features of both blogging and the Semantic Web to deal with the challenges of traditional blogging. The semantic web is well suited for incrementally publishing structured and semantically rich information. On the other hand, the easy publishing nature of blogging can boost the semantic web by publishing enough data and resources. Semantic blogging can extend blogging from simple diary browsing to informal knowledge management [2,3].

2.1 Semantic Blogging for Research Communities

Traditionally blog entries are just unstructured passages of text. However, for publishing information such as about research publications, there is need of some structure. Semantic blogging provides this. Often blog entries are written about some publication or resource on the web. Semantic blogging can provide a way to write blog entries as annotations or comments to other blog entries or publications.

Blogs provide RSS feeds which are understood by RSS readers. The metadata in semantic blogs can be embedded in the RSS feeds. If a standard vocabulary is used for the metadata, RSS readers can be extended to process the metadata as well. Ontologies such as SWRC [1] exist for the research community. Semantic blogging with RSS aggregation forms a powerful web-based decentralized system. Semantic blogging can offer an easy, lightweight and flexible mechanism for information publishing, sharing and aggregation for research communities.

Further blogs provide effective mechanisms to foster communities. Blogrolls list the friends and associates of the blog-owner and connects his/her blog to theirs. Hyperlinks, annotations, comments and trackbacks also serve to tightly link elements in the community.

3 Relevant Work

A semantics based publication management system using RSS and FOAF has been described in [4]. The application collects information in BibTex format from several locations and information about people by crawling FOAF files. The shortcoming of the system is that it is centralized. Besides, the authors still have to write the BibTex files which is harvested by the system. Bibster [5] is a peer-to-peer application for sharing bibliographic metadata among researchers. However, the system is limited to

a peer-to-peer network. Blogs make a wide community on the web instead of being restricted to a peer network. Like peer-to-peer systems blogging can also be decentralized. Moreover, blogging supports commenting. The Semantic Blogging Demonstrator¹ developed by HP labs also uses the bibliographic domain [2,3]. The system is centralized and doesn't offer cross-blog data aggregation. The semantic blogging system described in [6] is based on egocentric methods. The project extends the concept of RSS to describe metadata like inter-site relation.

BuRST. BuRST (Bibliography Management using RSS Technology) [8] is a lightweight specification for publishing bibliographic information using RSS 1.0 and bibliography-related metadata standards.

4 Requirements and Design

The requirements of the system are based on the needs of research community as pointed out in the introduction. These can be summarized as below.

- Users should be able to post blog entries and metadata about publications easily from anywhere on the web.
- It should be possible to post blog entries as comments or annotations to other publications or entries.
- The system should be fully decentralized as ordinary blogging systems.
- The system should be able to aggregate relevant information from multiple blogs in the community.

To meet the above requirements we have the following design policies.

- Integration of RDF metadata store with blogs
- Use of trackbacks and annotations
- Extended RSS
- Powerful aggregation

5 System Architecture

Fig. 1 shows the architecture of the developed system.

The *publication system* facilitates the user to publish blog entries and metadata about publications. The blogs are enriched semantically by using the SWRC ontology for metadata about publications. The metadata is stored in an RDF metadata store connected to the semantic blog. BuRST feeds publish the blog contents in interoperable and machine processable form. The publication system also helps to publish FOAF profiles of the blog-owners.

The decentralized *aggregation system* uses RSS technology to aggregate publication data from multiple blogs. FOAF profiles and crawled FOAF links are

¹ <http://www.semanticblogging.org/semblog/blog/default/>

used to determine appropriate feeds to be aggregated. The aggregated output is shown on the blog interface itself. The aggregate search allows the user to search for publications and posts by various criteria.

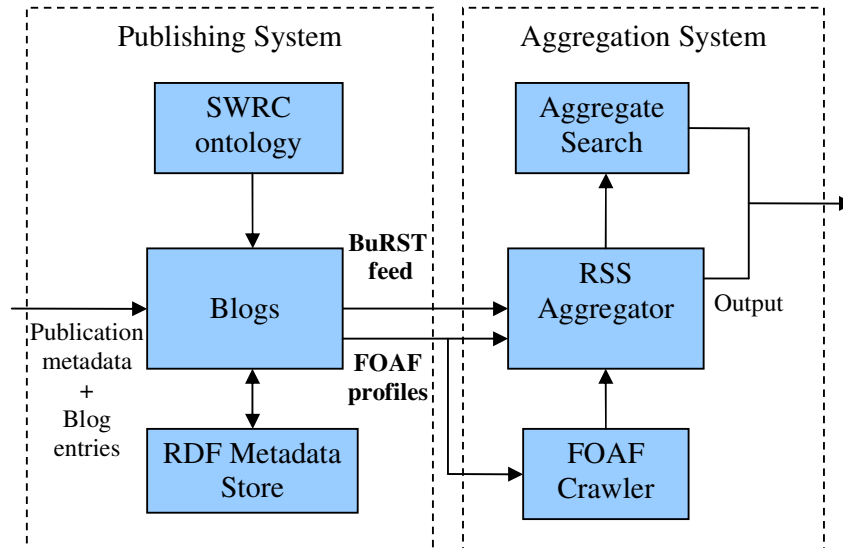


Fig. 1. System architecture of Semantic Blogging Publication Aggregation System

5.1 Publication Metadata and Blog Entry

The publication metadata follows the SWRC ontology. The semantic blog developed provides the entry forms for metadata of different SWRC publications. Fig. 2 shows both a normal blog entry and a publication.

Bloggging has been made convenient by employing javascript bookmarklets. The bookmarklet captures the title, URL, and trackback ping URL of the current blog entry which is being annotated. The trackback ping URL is discovered if the blog embeds the information about the trackback ping URL in an RDF snippet as specified in the trackback technical specification by Six Apart [9].

The bookmarklet also captures the URL of the current page so that the user can annotate the URL. The blog entry would be about the URL, possibly a publication. A trackback ping is also sent to the annotated blog entry if desired. Traditionally, blogs support trackbacks only and they just act as one way links. If user A writes a blog entry about a post by B, B receives a trackback from A. B and the readers of B's blog know that A has written something related. However, readers of A's blog do not know that it is related to B's blog. An annotates element has been introduced in the RDF metadata to model this action of annotation.

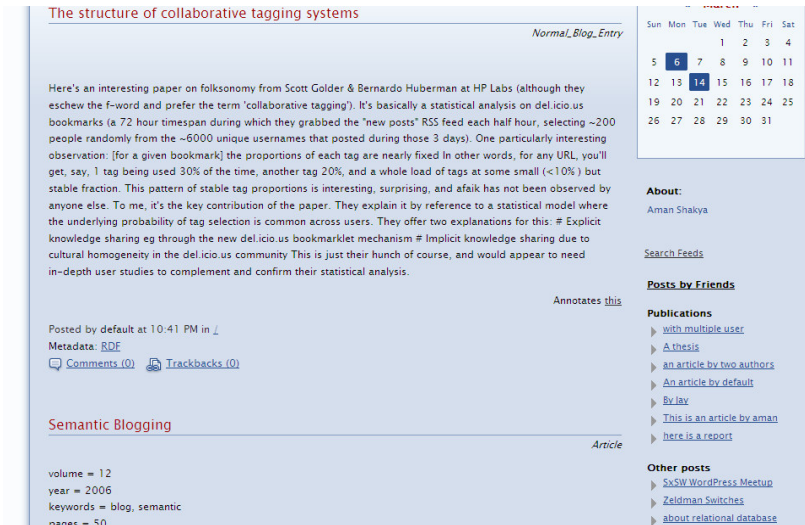


Fig. 2. The blog interface

5.2 Blogs

Blojsom² has been used as the blogging platform. It is a Java based open source software which can host multiple blogs for different users. However, the blogs in the community may be based on any system provided that they produce BuRST feeds [8].

5.3 RDF Metadata Store

The metadata about the publications are stored in RDF format in a MySQL database with the help of Jena³. The use of database for RDF storage can address the problem of scalability which may occur in systems using a single text file to store all RDF metadata as in [2,3]. The data is stored in the form of RDF triplets. The RDF metadata points to the concerned blog entry using the permalink of the entry.

5.4 FOAF Profiles

A web-based interface to maintain the FOAF profile of the blog-owner has been provided in the blog itself. The information about the blog-owner and his friends is maintained in a simple readable text file which can be easily understood and updated by the user. Values from the XFN⁴ profile are used to define the relation of the blog-

² <http://blojsom.sourceforge.net>

³ <http://www.hpl.hp.com/semweb/jena.htm>

⁴ <http://gmpg.org/xfn/>

owner with the persons listed. These relations are mapped into FOAF vocabulary one-to-one. The profile includes the FOAF links of the friends of the blog owner and optionally their RSS feed URLs. The system publishes the profile on the web in FOAF syntax. The entries in the FOAF profile are utilized to aggregate RSS feeds as described later in section 5.6. On the other hand, the list of friends maintained in the profile also serves as a blogroll for the blog.

5.5 FOAF Crawler

The Elmo scutter⁵ has been used as a FOAF crawler to find out the FOAF link of authors of publications in the research community. The crawler starts crawling from the FOAF profile of the blog owner and traces the `rdfs:seeAlso` links for FOAF links. The scutter creates a database of FOAF links of the interlinked community. While uploading information about publications, the user enters the FOAF links of the authors also. To support the user for data entry, the crawled FOAF database may be searched to find out FOAF links of authors in the community. A person is identified by his email address or the `mbxsha1sum` (hash of the email address) along with the FOAF link.

5.6 RSS Aggregator

The blogs generate RSS feeds according to the BuRST specification [8]. Metadata about publications are expressed as SWRC publication elements in the feed. The latest publications and posts by friends of the blog-owner are downloaded through the feeds and displayed alongside in the blog as shown in fig. 2. Further, when a blog entry for a publication is opened, the RSS feeds of the authors of the publication are downloaded and shown alongside. Thus, relevant posts by the authors are shown alongside each publication entry. For publications, the description is generally the abstract.

The RSS aggregator makes subscriptions for RSS feeds from the friends' list of the blog. The FOAF profile, as mentioned in section 5.4, includes FOAF links and RSS feed URLs of the friends. When a single publication entry is opened, the RSS feeds of the authors are only aggregated. The RSS feed of the author is determined through the FOAF link of the author.

Flock⁶ RSS aggregator, a java based open source, has been used as the RSS aggregator. Flock uses subscriptions represented in OPML⁷ syntax. The Flock aggregator has been extended to handle BuRST feeds. If the RSS feeds are in BuRST format, publications can be distinguished from other posts and SWRC metadata can be extracted. The system separates the list of publications and non-publications. Besides BuRST, the system also supports RSS 1.0, RSS 0.91 and RSS 2.0.

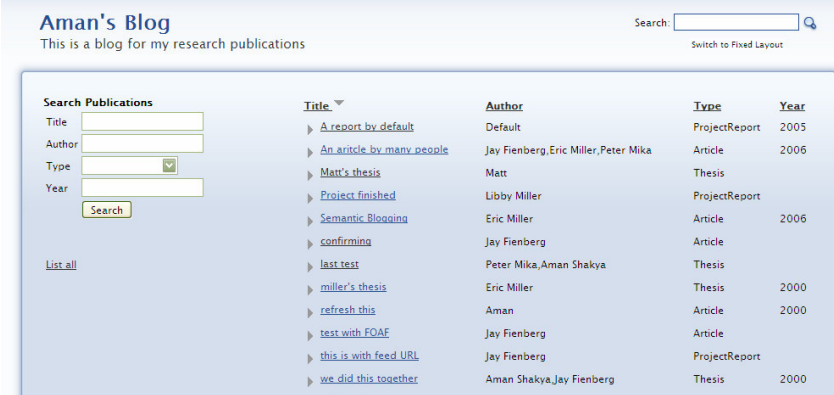
⁵ <http://www.openrdf.org/doc/elmo/users/index.html>

⁶ <http://flock.sourceforge.net>

⁷ <http://www.opml.org/>

5.7 Aggregate Search

The aggregated BuRST feeds can be searched and sorted by SWRC fields like title, author, type, etc as shown in fig. 3. A web based interface has been provided for the search. The user can specify the search criteria by entering values in different metadata fields. The search results can be sorted by clicking on the headers of different fields. Search is done by filtering the aggregated RSS feeds according to the search criteria provided through the web-based form. The feature would be useful to search out desired publications from a large aggregated collection of RSS feeds.



The screenshot shows a web interface for 'Aman's Blog' with a search bar and a table of search results. The search form includes fields for Title, Author, Type, and Year, along with a Search button. The table displays results with columns for Title, Author, Type, and Year. The results are as follows:

Title	Author	Type	Year
A report by default	Default	ProjectReport	2005
An article by many people	Jay Fienberg, Eric Miller, Peter Mika	Article	2006
Matt's thesis	Matt	Thesis	
Project finished	Libby Miller	ProjectReport	
Semantic Blogging	Eric Miller	Article	2006
confirming	Jay Fienberg	Article	
last test	Peter Mika, Aman Shakya	Thesis	
miller's thesis	Eric Miller	Thesis	2000
refresh this	Aman	Article	2000
test with FOAF	Jay Fienberg	Article	
this is with feed URL	Jay Fienberg	ProjectReport	
we did this together	Aman Shakya, Jay Fienberg	Thesis	2000

Fig. 3. Aggregate search of publications

6 Discussion

The work serves the need of research communities to share information about publications and comment on these. Current systems like the publication management system [4] and the semantic blogging demonstrator [2,3] are centralized. Peer-to-peer systems like Bibster [5] are limited to a peer network and moreover don't provide the facility of commenting. The presented work tries to combine the functionalities of publication management systems and semantic blogging systems. Semantic blogging is suitable for the need of posting both structured bibliographic metadata and unstructured comments or annotations. Further, RSS aggregation mechanism helps to pool information from relevant sources and present them on the blog. The presented work is an attempt to develop a decentralized aggregation system based on semantic blogging. The system tries to aggregate relevant posts and publications from the social network by tracing the FOAF links of co-authors and friends of researchers. Thus, the system also strengthens the sense of community.

7 Future work

The domain ontology, such as a topic hierarchy, could be incorporated in the blogging system as a future work. The ontology would help to categorize the blog entries and publications. Basically, only the publication class has been used from the SWRC. The full features of the ontology could be utilized in the future. Further, inference could be employed based on the ontology to deduce useful semantic relations. Another future work could be collecting information by harvesting of widely existing BibTex files.

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