Informatics Colloquium

The Spread of Information and Misinformation in Social Networks

Filippo Menczer, Professor
Indiana University
School of Informatics & Computing
Director of the Center for Complex Networks & System Research
May 1, 2014, 2:30-3:30 p.m.
Room 335 Iowa Memorial Union

Immediately following the talk students will have a one hour discussion time with Prof. Menczer.
All students are welcome.

This talk presents ongoing work on the study of information diffusion in social media, focusing in particular on political information in the Twitter microblogging network. Social media play an important role in shaping political discourse in the U.S. and around the world. Our infrastructure allows us to mine a large stream of social media data related to political themes. Our analyses address polarization, partisan asymmetries, and coordination of social movements. We will discuss machine learning efforts that leverage the structure of meme diffusion networks to detect orchestrated misinformation campaigns, infer the political affiliation of active users, and predict which memes will go viral. The massively heterogeneous popularity and longevity of memes can surprisingly be explained as deriving from a combination between the competition for our limited attention and the structure of our social network, without the need to assume different intrinsic values among competing ideas. Nevertheless, the community structure of our social circles provides essential cues for virality prediction.

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