

Relevance Prediction in Information Extraction using Discourse and Lexical Features

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Abstract

We present on-going work on estimating the relevance of the results of an Information Extraction (IE) system. Our aim is to build a user-oriented measure of utility of the extracted factual information. We describe experiments using *discourse-level features*, with classifiers that learn from users' ratings of relevance of the results.

Traditional criteria for evaluating the performance of IE focus on correctness of the extracted information, e.g., in terms of recall, precision and F-measure. We introduce subjective criteria for evaluating the quality of the extracted information: utility of results to the end-user.

To measure utility, we use methods from text mining and linguistic analysis to identify features that are good predictors of the relevance of an event or a document to a user. We report on experiments in two real-world news domains: business activity and epidemics of infectious disease.

1 Introduction

In this paper we present on-going work aimed at finding user-oriented relevance measures for information extracted from plain-text news articles. Measure for relevance has been created in collaboration with actual end users of our system. End users view and rate the utility of extracted events using our online news surveillance service.

We aim to show that by utilizing domain-specific and domain-independent sets of features we can build and train a system that is able to predict the utility of new information obtained by an Information Extraction system. We apply the

methods on two domains in order to demonstrate that the approach is, in principle, domain independent, and easily adapted to different domains.

Our target domains are business news, with the focus on analyzing reports about corporate acquisitions and new product launches, and medical news, with the focus on outbreaks and spread of infectious diseases. These topics are actively researched in the IE community, e.g. (Grishman et al., 2003; Freifeld et al., 2008; Cvitas, 2010; Saggion et al., 2007).

The news extraction and relevance prediction works in three phases. The first phase identifies articles potentially relevant to a target domain using a broad keyword-based Web search – this is done continuously. The second phase employs IE to extract events from acquired articles, and the final phase then determines the *relevance* of the extracted events or articles for the end-user.

For the business domain the system extracts the names of the companies involved in the target activities (corporate acquisitions and product launches), date, location, value of the transaction (if any) and, for the product-launch scenario, the product type. An example of a sentence reporting a corporate acquisition event: “*Air New Zealand said Friday it has bought 14.9 percent of Australia’s Virgin Blue for \$143 million.*” A product-launch event is found, e.g., in “*An executive at T-Mobile said the company was introducing its new DriveSmart service at the request of customers.*” For the medical domain the system extracts which victims were affected by what diseases, where and when. An example sentence “*The HSE in Ireland has said that there have been a further four deaths from human swine flu in the past week*” induces an event, with attributes country, disease, number of casualties, and the time of occurrence.

In the next section, we briefly present the criteria for judging *quality* of extracted events, and present the approach taken in our system. Section 3 introduces the features we use for predicting utility. Section 4 discusses our experimental setup and gives a short system description of the relevance generation process. Section 5 presents our current experiments and results with automatic assignment of relevance scores. In the final section we discuss the results and outline next steps.

2 Quality measures

In IE research, performance has been traditionally measured in terms of *correctness*, counting how many of the fields in each record were correctly extracted by comparing the system’s answers to a set of answers pre-defined by human annotators. In the MUC and ACE initiatives, e.g., this was computed mainly in terms of recall and precision, and F-measure, (Hirschman, 1998; ACE, 2004).

We would like to distinguish *objective* vs. *subjective* measures of quality. Objective measures take the perspective of the system in evaluating the obtained IE results in terms of correctness and confidence. Confidence has been studied to estimate the probability of the correctness of the system’s answer, in e.g. (Culotta and McCallum, 2004). Our IE system, PULS, computes *confidence* using *discourse-level cues*, (Steinberger et al., 2008), such as: confidence decreases as the distance between the sentence containing the event and event attributes increases; confidence increases if a document mentions only one country.

Subjective measures reflect the end users’ perspective, that is the relevance (or utility) of the extracted information, and the reliability¹ of the information found (von Etter et al., 2010).

Utility measures how *useful* the result is to the user *irrespective* of its correctness. An event may be correctly extracted, and yet be of low utility to the user.² Conversely, an event may have many incorrectly extracted attributes, and yet be of great *value* and interest to the user.

We focus specifically on relevance vs. correctness. The relevance ratings currently used in our

¹*Reliability* measures whether the reported event is “true”, or trustworthy. We include this criterion for completeness, since it is the ultimate goal of any news surveillance process. However, this requires pragmatic knowledge, including information that is obtainable by the user only through downstream verification, and is thus beyond the scope of this paper.

²Historical or hypothetical events, e.g., may not be useful for an analyst concerned with the current state of affairs.

work are listed in Table 1. Our goal is, specifically to devise methods for automatic assignment of relevance scores to extracted events, and to the documents in which they are found.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Score</i>
New information highly relevant	5
Important updates, on-going developments	4
Review of current events, hypothetical, predictions	3
Historical/non-current background information	2
Non-specific, non-factive events, secondary topics	1
Unrelated to target domain	0

Table 1: Guidelines for relevance scores

The users assign the scores as presented in the Likert-like scale, Table 1. In the work and experiments reported in this paper, these scores are reduced for simplicity, into either a three-way classification—high (4–5), low (1–3) and irrelevant (0), or a binary classification—where events with high relevance are those with a score of 4–5, and low-relevance events have a score of 0–3. The binary classification is useful because one immediate purpose of introducing the relevance score is for the system to determine whether to present the extracted event to the end user on the main page of the site—which is a binary decision.

3 Linguistic Features

In this section we describe the features that we use in our system for predicting the relevance of an event. These features were devised through a detailed analysis of the domains and user-evaluated events, and were chosen based on their potential for relevance prediction.

Many features are characterized in terms of the event *trigger* and its *attributes*. Our IE system operates by pattern matching, (Grishman et al., 2002).³ A trigger sentence is where an event pattern matches, signaling a mention of an event at that point in the document. For example, in the sentence “... *Department says there have been*

³The system has a large set of domain-specific linguistic patterns, which map from surface-syntactic representation of the facts in the sentence to the semantic representation in the database records.

eight confirmed cases of measles, after an outbreak at Royal Perth Hospital.” a pattern is triggered by the phrase “cases of *disease*”. The attributes of the event correspond to the fills in the database record, in this example, the name of the disease, the location, date, the number of cases, etc. Several events may appear in a news article.

We distinguish *discourse features* and *lexical features*. Discourse features are based on properties of the article text and of the events extracted from it. Lexical features are simpler low-level features based on bags of words, discussed in section 3.2. In essence, lexical features capture local information, while discourse features capture longer-range relationships within the document.

3.1 Discourse Features

Discourse features include information about the number of events, positioning of the event in the document, the compactness of the placement of the event’s attributes (Bagga and Biermann, 1997; Huttunen et al., 2002), and the recency of event occurrence.

3.1.1 Layout and positioning

We introduce a set of features describing the position of the trigger sentence within the document. These help to quantify the assumption that important details of news topics are placed in the beginning of an article whereas less important details are stated later.⁴ Layout features include the length of the document and the position of the trigger sentence in the document.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the relative location of the event in the text, given that the event has a high relevance score (4-5), low relevance (1-3), or is completely irrelevant (score 0).

Figure 2 shows that high-relevance events favor the placement of the trigger sentence in the document *header*, i.e., in the headline or the first two sentences of the news article.

3.1.2 Event compactness

In a compact event, all the event attributes are situated close to the trigger in the text. The *compactness features* track the distance of mentions of event attributes from the event trigger. We model the effect of compactness on relevance of an event by, e.g., measuring the distance between the trigger and the disease name (for epidemics domain) or a company name (for business domain).

⁴The so-called “Inverted Pyramid” principle, (Bell, 1991)

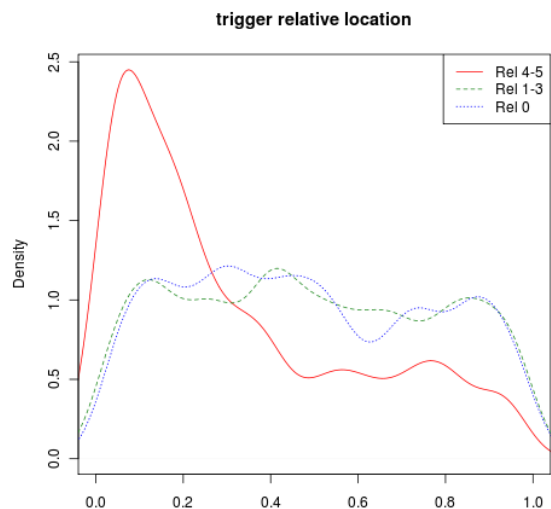


Figure 1: Distributions of relative trigger position in medical domain, given relevance class (high/low/zero)

The distance is measured as the number of bytes, words, or sentences. The “active” participating attributes of an event are here called *actors*.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the distance in sentences (horizontal axis) between disease name and trigger (or absence of disease name in document) given high, low and zero relevance. The name of a disease is more likely to occur in a trigger sentence of a high-relevance event than in the trigger sentence of low-relevance event. For events that contain no actor at all, the feature receives a special value *NA*.

Content-repetition features test whether an important fill, such as an actor, is repeated in the document (likely affecting relevance positively). Conversely, features that count the number *distinct* actors mentioned in text may be good indicators of lower relevance—such as an article mentioning many different diseases or companies is less likely to be of high relevance.

3.1.3 Time and recency

Time features relate to the recency of an event, comparing the time attributes of an event with the publication date of the news article, i.e., the difference between publication date and the reported event date. The system may extract different kinds of events, including hypothetical events, and events with the event date in the future. Highly rel-

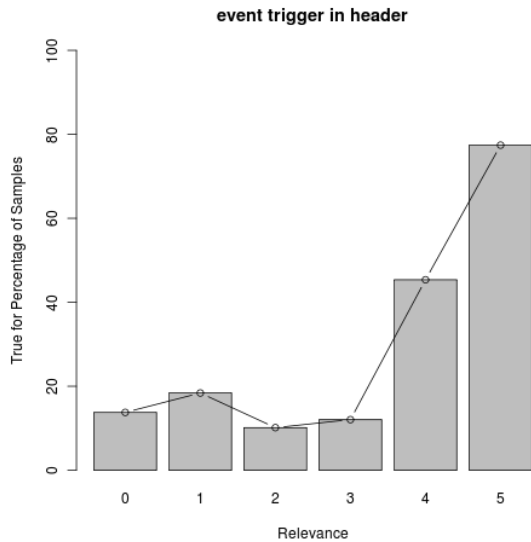


Figure 2: Probability that the trigger of the current event is in the header for medical domain, given the different relevance scores.

event articles, usually describe more recent events. Recency is a good indicator for relevance, as can be seen in Figure 4.

3.1.4 Indicators of irrelevant domains

For each domain, we devise a set of *blacklist features* that signal low relevance in respect to a given domain. Negative indicators for epidemic surveillance, may be, e.g., “vaccination campaign” and “obituary”. The latter is a common source of false positives when the deceased suffered from illnesses during his/her lifetime, and the IE patterns fail to distinguish those from epidemics cases, on *local* cues alone.

In the business domain, an indicator of low relevance is, e.g., “President”, possibly followed by a proper name, and a country. This mostly refers to a head of state, rather than head of a company.

The PULS system extracts “negative events”, (called here *harm events*), as well, to catch events that frequently interfere with events of interest. For example, in the business domain, satellite/rocket launches may trigger patterns for finding product launches, since they are syntactically similar; natural disasters (flooding, earthquake, etc.) with casualties often interfere with patterns in for medical domain. The number of found harm events in a document is a discourse feature.

A missing attribute may also be an indication

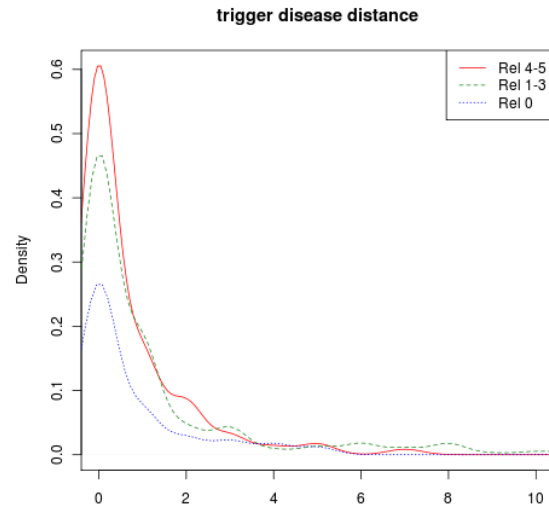


Figure 3: Distribution of distance from trigger to name of the disease. Instances with no disease, or with distance > 10 are mapped to the point distance = 20 (not shown in the figure).

of an irrelevant event. Events rejected or marked irrelevant by the user are more likely to be missing the name of a disease. The system also extracts victim names where possible, since obituaries, stories about public figures, and other items irrelevant from the epidemiological perspective, tend to name the victims.⁵

The number of unique actors preceding the trigger sentences is potentially correlated with irrelevance.⁶ For example, if no disease names exist before the trigger sentence, then the document is likely to be irrelevant. On the other hand, important news events often mention only a single disease or company. The discourse features used in the experiments are listed in Table 2.

3.2 Lexical Features

Lexical features for an event consists of bags of words in the trigger sentence, and in the sentences immediately preceding and following the trigger sentence. The surrounding sentences provide additional context for disambiguation. For example,

⁵On the other hand, some news articles about genuine epidemic outbreaks may name the victims as well—to personalize them for the reader. All these features only capture tendencies and probabilities, and are not deterministic.

⁶PULS system normalizes and unifies variants of disease names and organization names, e.g., Swine Flu with H1N1; company full-names and acronyms.

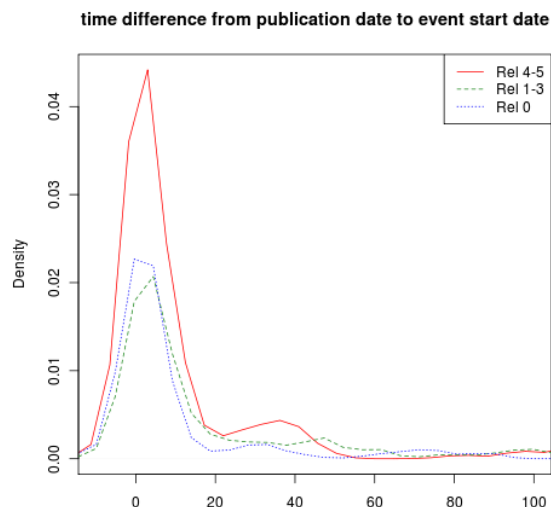


Figure 4: Distribution of the difference days from publication to event date in medical domain. Negative values indicate events in the future.

the trigger sentence may include deaths and injuries, but in principle the article could be about any kind of casualties.

3.3 Domain specificity

Some features are applicable directly to different domains. An example of such features are the recency features, which compare the event date to the publication date of the document. Other features are domain-specific, and make use of the domain-specific attributes. For example, we may check the position of an actor attribute, and see whether it appears in the headline. In the medical domain, such an attribute would be the disease name, in the business domain, we use the company name in an analogous fashion.

4 Experimental Setup and System Description

Next, we briefly describe how the relevance classifiers are built. We have an online news surveillance system that allows users to review, rate and correct events extracted from news articles. The work-flow for finding relevant events is as follows:

The system’s information retrieval (IR) component continuously polls news sites, (Yangarber et al., 2007). News filtering is done using Boolean keyword-based queries. The result is a continuous

<p><i>Layout features</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> event-trigger-is-in-header/headline any-event-trigger-found-in-header/headline trigger’s-relative-location actor-in-trigger/header/headline country-in-trigger/header/headline document-length
<p><i>Compactness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trigger-actor-distance Is-actor-found-before-trigger-sentence-end Num-uniq-countries/actors-in-trigger-sentence Num-uniq-countries/actors-until-trigger-end Num-uniq-countries/actors-in-document-events Contains-valid-country/actor Content-repeated-in-header/document Num-of-events-in-document
<p><i>Time</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event-has-time-of-occurrence Distance-trigger-sentence-to-date-span Time-diff-pubdate-event-start/end
<p><i>Low relevance indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is-blacklisted-data-in-header/ Headline/document Num-of-harm-events-in-document
<p><i>Domain-specific (epidemic domain)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim-count Is-named-victim Is-unspecified-illness

Table 2: Examples of discourse features

stream of potentially relevant documents, that is forwarded to the information extraction system.

Our IE system then extracts events of potential relevance from this stream of articles. The extracted information, i.e., the structured events with their attributes, is stored into a database. The IE component uses a large set of linguistic patterns, which in turn utilize general and domain-specific concepts, such as diseases, locations and organizations.

Once the attributes of an event have been extracted, the relevance classifier is invoked. Each event is converted to a feature vector, to which a classifier assigns a relevance score.

After the event receives a relevance score, it appears on the on-line server. Relevance predictions are highlighted with different colors, which enhances the user experience and allows easy notification of high relevance events.

The system’s user interface (UI) provides a sim-

ple editing facility for the extracted events. In case of errors in the automatic extraction, the UI allows the user to correct erroneous fills, e.g., if a company name, country, or a disease name was extracted incorrectly. In addition to editing the event fills, the users can also assign or edit the relevance labels to the extracted events. The set of events that have been corrected and/or relevance-labeled manually by human users are used for training and testing the relevance classifiers.

In the business domain, we use a set of hand-labeled data, in which currently roughly 45% of the events are high-relevance, and 55% are low-relevance. In the medical domain, about 80% of examples are labeled with lower relevance. We experimented with building balanced and unbalanced classifiers for the medical domain; we took a sample from the complete labeled set, so that the class distribution in the sample is about even—i.e., the randomly sampled training subset is balanced so it contains about the same amount of low- and high-relevance events.

Since parts of the labeled data are actually corrected by the user, we obtain *two* parallel sets of events with relevance labels: the “raw” events, as extracted by the system, and corresponding “cleaned” events, i.e., the same events with corrections. The raw set is more noisy, since it contains the errors that were introduced by the system.

The relevance classifiers are built using the cleaned labeled data. For evaluation, we test the classifier performance against both the cleaned and the raw events. We focus on classification performance on the raw events, because ultimately the goal is to build a classifier that can be applied to the extracted event stream, which are not validated or corrected by the end-user. In any case, the IE system must assign the relevance score to each event, before a user examines it, and possibly validates it. Therefore, the “raw” scores in the evaluation give us an indication of what performance we can expect in the real-world setting.⁷

5 Evaluation Methodology and Results

The predictive power of our features is evaluated by using three different classifiers: Naive Bayes (John and Langley, 1995), SVM (Platt, 1999) and BayesNet (Bouckaert, 2004). We used

⁷Note that, on the other hand, it makes less sense to train the classifier on raw data, since it is inherently more noisy, degrades the classifier performance.

the implementations from the WEKA toolkit (Hall et al., 2009), which provides a collection of machine learning algorithms.

Evaluations are done using a 10-fold cross-validation. We evaluated the results using precision, recall, F-measure and accuracy for high/low-relevance classification. It is important to note that when we split the corpus into 10 parts, we make sure that for any given document, *all* events found in that document fall within the same split—to assure that a document never contributes events to both the training and the testing set.

5.1 Business domain

In the business domain, we use about 213 user-labeled events, in 127 documents. Table 3 shows classification performance achieved on discourse, lexical and combined features. Discourse feature construction is as described in section 3. We currently utilize roughly 40 discourse-level features.

In the table, we report the system’s performance on *all* events in our labeled corpus, as well as only on events that appear *first* within a document (which may contain more than one event). The first-event evaluation is interesting since we can view it as an additional document-level *text-filtering* task, where the relevance of the first event is used to define the relevance of the entire document.

We train two types of binary classifiers: the high-vs-low classifiers separate between events labeled 4–5 and 0–3. The zero-vs-rest classifiers separate the zero-relevance (i.e., completely useless) events from the rest. In each case, the F-measure is calculated for predicting the higher-relevance class.

For each classifier, we show the performance using discourse features only, lexical features only, and the combined set of features. The classifiers are trained with feature selection using information gain. In the table, the bold score indicates the best score achieved for the given column.

5.2 Medical domain

Table 4 shows the classification results using the same strategy as in business domain. In most cases, discourse features perform better than lexical features, and combining the discourse and lexical features improves the predictive performance over both discourse and lexical features alone. These classifications were obtained on approximately 900 events, in 530 documents.

Business Domain												
High-vs-low	All events			First events only								
	Lexical		Discourse	Combined		Lexical		Discourse		Combined		
SVM	72.2	(0.696)	84.6	(0.83)	85.3	(0.833)	70.4	(0.738)	81.8	(0.826)	81.4	(0.818)
Naive Bayes	74.3	(0.73)	75.7	(0.753)	82.5	(0.814)	70.3	(0.731)	81.7	(0.823)	82.2	(0.825)
Bayes Net	75.3	(0.73)	84.2	(0.823)	84.5	(0.823)	71.6	(0.718)	81.5	(0.822)	82.8	(0.834)
Zero-vs-rest												
SVM	81.0	(0.894)	84.8	(0.916)	82.6	(0.904)	84.0	(0.912)	84.4	(0.914)	84.7	(0.916)
Naive Bayes	84.8	(0.915)	83.0	(0.906)	85.5	(0.92)	89.2	(0.94)	83.6	(0.91)	86.2	(0.924)
Bayes Net	83.0	(0.908)	82.4	(0.903)	81.7	(0.899)	84.2	(0.915)	84.2	(0.915)	84.1	(0.914)

Table 3: Relevance classification results on business domain: accuracy and F-measure (in parentheses) for discourse features, lexical features, and combined features.

Medical Domain												
High-vs-low	All events			First events only								
	Lexical		Discourse	Combined		Lexical		Discourse		Combined		
SVM	82.2	(0.537)	85.1	(0.618)	84.2	(0.613)	87.2	(0.625)	88.5	(0.664)	89.6	(0.71)
Naive Bayes	79.7	(0.64)	80.7	(0.598)	84.6	(0.702)	85.8	(0.679)	85.0	(0.639)	89.2	(0.728)
Bayes Net	80.6	(0.558)	79.1	(0.615)	79.5	(0.64)	82.6	(0.529)	82.0	(0.612)	82.5	(0.619)
Zero-vs-rest												
SVM	83.9	(0.907)	84.8	(0.913)	85.9	(0.917)	80.6	(0.888)	81.6	(0.895)	83.0	(0.897)
Naive Bayes	85.3	(0.915)	84.1	(0.908)	85.7	(0.918)	82.7	(0.898)	82.5	(0.895)	83.8	(0.902)
Bayes Net	82.4	(0.903)	81.7	(0.891)	82.1	(0.893)	78.3	(0.876)	78.8	(0.868)	78.2	(0.864)

Table 4: Initial relevance classification results on Medical domain. Accuracy and F-measure (in parentheses) for discourse features, lexical features, and combined features.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

As the quantity of information available from different news services increases rapidly, the capability to extract and highlight relevant news items becomes important. For intelligence officers such as business analysts and epidemiologists, it is important that they can limit the amount of time used to monitor extracted facts.

The relevance classifiers form a component of the on-line news monitoring, to predict the relevance of extracted events to the users. In the experiments in the business domain, the discourse features alone perform better than lexical features. In most cases for the business domain, combining discourse and lexical features helps the classifier. The nature of product launch and corporate acquisition news is typically such that most of the information is available in the first few sentences.

In medical domain, combining discourse and lexical features also generally helps classification performance. Information such as disease type, adjectives related to the event and other subtle hints (e.g. female victims are often described through their family relations) are missing from the discourse features, but have an effect on the classifier performance.

In certain knowledge-intensive domains—such

as the ones studied here—missing a relevant news item carries a higher cost to the end-user. In our future work, we will also test classification with different precision-recall-ratio, by adjusting the classification threshold, to model the utility of the results to the users with a preference for high- or low-relevance news items.

To summarize the points addressed in the paper:

- We present prediction of relevance in the task of event extraction in the domains of public health and business intelligence, that we believe to be generalizable to different domains.
- We emphasize the importance of the user’s perspective when estimating quality, not just the system’s performance. *Relevance* to the user is at least as important as (if not more important than) correctness.
- For the present, we assume that users have the same notion of relevance of an event in a given domain. We do not model differences between individual users (as with collaborative filtering), and treat them as a single group with a shared perspective.
- We have presented experiments and an initial evaluation of assignment of relevance scores.

- Our experiments indicate that relevance is a *tractable* measure of quality, at least in the studied domains.

Our on-going work includes refining the classification approaches, especially exploring feature dependencies using Bayesian networks, extending the system to cover multiple languages, and exploring collaborative filtering to address users' and user-groups differing interests. We are currently working on applying our approach to other domains as well.

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