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Comments for week 6
Generic User Modeling Systems, User Modeling and User-Adapted Interaction

I think the paper describes a broad range of user modeling systems and points out the differences between commercial servers and academic shells. However, it seems not to have mentioned why these systems are needed in the first place. And also what the optimal situations of using them are. It ascertains the advantages of bring these systems into our daily but does not state the problem of false predictions. For example, personalization or collaborative filtering works well for more defined things like CDs or movies, but might not work well for less defined or vague items, like news. False predictions would irritate users and cause misunderstandings.

The privacy issue, which I think is an urge to user modeling systems, is lightly talked about in the paper. Personal or navigational data collected by recommendation systems or shells are most preferably to be shared by as many applications as possible - because generality is one of the requirements of such systems. It is likely to foresee the misuse of personal data for advertising and marketing. People in real life have many roles and facets of identity; my online behavior does not necessarily reflect our real interests in a different context. Assumptions made by the system should aware of this to prevent recommending unwanted results. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to have a perfect system that can achieve 100% accuracy of predicting user preferences, so I think the main point is to find the right situation where any recommendation is needed.

Finally, according to the paper, the future of generic user modeling systems is actually along the same line as the vision of ambient intelligence: ubiquitous computing + software agent. By bringing user modeling systems into the mobile computing and ultimately, the physical world, more issues about privacy and appropriateness of use have to be solved.