

Chapman & Hall/CRC
Machine Learning & Pattern Recognition Series

Computational Trust Models and Machine Learning



Edited by
Xin Liu, Anwitaman Datta,
and Ee-Peng Lim



CRC Press
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Chapman & Hall/CRC
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CRC Press

Taylor & Francis Group

Boca Raton London New York

CRC Press is an imprint of the
Taylor & Francis Group, an **informa** business
A CHAPMAN & HALL BOOK

CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group
6000 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Suite 300
Boca Raton, FL 33487-2742

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CRC Press is an imprint of Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa business

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Printed on acid-free paper
Version Date: 20140728

International Standard Book Number-13: 978-1-4822-2666-9 (Hardback)

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Computational trust models and machine learning / editors, Xin Liu, Anwitaman Datta, Ee-Peng Lim.

pages cm -- (Chapman & Hall/CRC machine learning & pattern recognition series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4822-2666-9 (hardback)

1. Computational intelligence. 2. Machine learning. 3. Truthfulness and falsehood--Mathematical models. I. Liu, Xin (Mathematician) II. Datta, Anwitaman. III. Lim, Ee-Peng.

Q342.C675 2014

006.3'1--dc23

2014028238

Visit the Taylor & Francis Web site at
<http://www.taylorandfrancis.com>

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Computational Trust Models and Machine Learning

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To my parents and my wife
— *Xin Liu*

Preface

Trust has implicitly played a vital role in human societies for eons. With the advent of the digital age, and the bulk of our day-to-day activities and interactions shifting online, there is a natural need to devise mechanisms to infer trust in the brave new cyberworld. Unlike a physical interaction, online interactions have many distinctive aspects, some of these hinder the decision-making process, while others may be harnessed to improve it. For instance, for e-commerce, our physical senses to inspect the goods are not applicable, nor are mechanisms to redress problems in a face-to-face interaction feasible, since the interactions may happen among geographically dispersed people. At the same time, digital footprints (say, of people's activities) may provide access to insight that has hitherto been unavailable in the physical world.

Trust is also inherently multifaceted. One may be trustworthy for certain aspects, and yet not be trustworthy in other aspects. This brings about the need to be able to discern the aspect on which trust is being determined, or the ability to translate or project trust from one aspect into another.

There is also an interesting duality between the trust one can build, guided by credible information, and ascertaining the credibility and trustworthiness of information one may find in an open system.

Trust has long been a subject of qualitative study among sociologists, and the insights from social science are relevant even in the digital domain. However, such studies fall short in several ways. Foremost, often, such a study is not directly useful in decision making. Secondly, the traditional approach for determining the necessary evidence to carry out the study and draw conclusions is both ineffective and arguably unnecessary. A plethora of data is readily captured for all sorts of electronic activities. There are arguably many challenges and few concrete answers yet, and this is natural — we are at the infancy of the digital age.

Nevertheless, the digital age has forced us to think of trust in a quantitative manner and to do so by pursuing a data-driven methodology. That is the underpinning of computational trust. And even though the techniques are arguably in their nascence, we have come a long way from the point where trust could be talked about only qualitatively. Machine learning and data mining techniques are natural tools which are shaping the study of computational trust, and in this book, we have tried to capture a representative set of such studies from several groups worldwide. Each chapter is an independent contribution from distinct research groups. We have aimed to cover several

ideas, but this book is definitely not an exhaustive survey. This treatment of the topic is thus more suitable as companion reading material for established researchers and novice graduate students getting introduced to the field, who wish to get a quick flavor of several disparate ideas under a broad umbrella. It should not be used as a reference textbook which has synthesized all the ideas and structured them systematically. Accordingly, barring the introductory chapter, the material can be read more or less in any order, since each chapter is reasonably self-contained.

Xin Liu from École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland, has provided an introductory survey of the traditional treatment of computational trust which does not apply machine learning techniques. This chapter also provides a critical summary of some of the drawbacks with those approaches, thus paving the way for the use of more sophisticated but robust machine learning techniques. The chapter also introduces some very basic ideas from machine learning.

In Chapter 2, Athirai Aravazhi Irissappane and Jie Zhang, both from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, provide a broad overview of how reputation-based systems are used to determine trust in diverse kinds of online communities, and how machine learning techniques are employed to build robust reputation systems.

Chapter 3 is contributed by Jeff Pasternack from Facebook, Inc., and Dan Roth from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Chapter 4 is contributed by researchers from the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technology, namely, Adam Wierzbicki, Andrzej Kostański, Bartłomiej Balcerzak, Dominik Deja, Grzegorz Kowalik, Katarzyna Gniadzik, Maria Rafalak, Marta Jużwin, Michał Kąkol and Wiesław Kopeć, in collaboration with Xin Liu from École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland. Both of these chapters explore ways to determine the credibility of resources, typically articles, but do so following two distinctive approaches. The former studies an automated, iterative learning process where human role is implicit, while the latter leverages human input explicitly by embracing crowd-sourcing to determine content credibility.

Chapter 5 by Mohammad Ali Abbasi, Jiliang Tang and Huan Liu from Arizona State University demonstrates how decision support can be facilitated by computational trust models. To that end, they elaborate collaborative filtering-based trust-aware recommendation systems.

Arguably, all the trust models essentially incorporate explicit and/or implicit human feedback to carry out and quantify the resulting trust value(s). However, human inputs are an artifact of their personal biases. Thus, there is a need to filter out outlying opinions, even while making sure critical red flags are not ignored. We conclude the book with Chapter 6, where Hady Wirawan Lauw from Singapore Management University brings us back full circle and investigates the objectivity of this feedback itself, so that the trust model manages to leverage credible feedback, and yet filter out the noise therein.

This rich coverage made compiling this book an enjoyable enterprise for the editors. We hope it also makes a compelling read for the audience.

About the Editors

Xin Liu is a postdoctoral researcher at the Distributed Information Systems Laboratory (LSIR) of École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). He earned his BSc from the College of Computer Science and Technology, Jilin University, China, and his PhD from the School of Computer Engineering, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. In April 2012, he joined EPFL and works on the project *ReONCILE: Robust Online Credibility Evaluation of Web Content*. He also collaborates on other European projects such as PlanetData and Wattalyst. His research interests include recommender systems, trust and reputation and social computing. His papers have been accepted at high quality conferences and journals including the International World Wide Web Conference (WWW), AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI), International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (CIKM), International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems (AAMAS), Electronic Commerce Research and Applications (ECRA), Computational Intelligence, etc.

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Contents

List of Figures	xiii
List of Tables	xv
Preface	xvii
About the Editors	xxi
Contributors	xxiii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 What Is Trust?	2
1.3 Computational Trust	4
1.3.1 Computational Trust Modeling: A Review	4
1.3.1.1 Summation and Average	6
1.3.1.2 Bayesian Inference	7
1.3.1.3 Web of Trust	8
1.3.1.4 Iterative Methods	10
1.3.2 Machine Learning for Trust Modeling	11
1.3.2.1 A Little Bit about Machine Learning	11
1.3.2.2 Machine Learning for Trust	12
1.4 Structure of the Book	17
2 Trust in Online Communities	19
2.1 Introduction	19
2.2 Trust in E-Commerce Environments	20
2.3 Trust in Search Engines	25
2.4 Trust in P2P Information Sharing Networks	27
2.5 Trust in Service-Oriented Environments	31
2.6 Trust in Social Networks	33
2.7 Discussion	36

3	Judging the Veracity of Claims and Reliability of Sources	39
3.1	Introduction	40
3.2	Related Work	43
3.2.1	Foundations of Trust	43
3.2.2	Consistency in Information Extraction	44
3.2.2.1	Local Consistency	44
3.2.2.2	Global Consistency	44
3.2.3	Source Dependence	45
3.2.3.1	Comparison to Credibility Analysis	45
3.2.4	Comparison to Other Trust Mechanisms	46
3.3	Fact-Finding	46
3.3.1	Priors	47
3.3.2	Fact-Finding Algorithms	48
3.3.2.1	Sums (Hubs and Authorities)	48
3.3.2.2	Average-Log	48
3.3.2.3	Investment	48
3.3.2.4	PooledInvestment	49
3.3.2.5	TruthFinder	49
3.3.2.6	3-Estimates	49
3.4	Generalized Constrained Fact-Finding	50
3.5	Generalized Fact-Finding	50
3.5.1	Rewriting Fact-Finders for Assertion Weights	51
3.5.1.1	Generalized Sums (Hubs and Authorities)	51
3.5.1.2	Generalized Average-Log	51
3.5.1.3	Generalized Investment	52
3.5.1.4	Generalized PooledInvestment	52
3.5.1.5	Generalized TruthFinder	52
3.5.1.6	Generalized 3-Estimates	52
3.5.2	Encoding Information in Weighted Assertions	53
3.5.2.1	Uncertainty in Information Extraction	53
3.5.2.2	Uncertainty of the Source	53
3.5.2.3	Similarity between Claims	54
3.5.2.4	Group Membership via Weighted Assertions	54
3.5.3	Encoding Groups and Attributes as Layers of Graph Nodes	55
3.5.3.1	Source Domain Expertise	56
3.5.3.2	Additional Layers versus Weighted Edges	58
3.6	Constrained Fact-Finding	58
3.6.1	Propositional Linear Programming	58
3.6.2	Cost Function	59
3.6.3	Values $\rightarrow$ Votes $\rightarrow$ Belief	60
3.6.4	LP Decomposition	60
3.6.5	Tie Breaking	61
3.6.6	“Unknown” Augmentation	61

3.7	Experimental Results	62
3.7.1	Data	62
3.7.1.1	Population	62
3.7.1.2	Books	63
3.7.1.3	Biography	63
3.7.1.4	American vs. British Spelling	63
3.7.2	Experimental Setup	63
3.7.3	Generalized Fact-Finding	64
3.7.3.1	Tuned Assertion Certainty	64
3.7.3.2	Uncertainty in Information Extraction	65
3.7.3.3	Groups as Weighted Assertions	65
3.7.3.4	Groups as Additional Layers	66
3.7.4	Constrained Fact-Finding	67
3.7.4.1	IBT vs. L+I	67
3.7.4.2	City Population	67
3.7.4.3	Synthetic City Population	68
3.7.4.4	Basic Biographies	69
3.7.4.5	American vs. British Spelling	69
3.7.5	The Joint Generalized Constrained Fact-Finding Framework	70
3.8	Conclusion	70
4	Web Credibility Assessment	73
4.1	Introduction	74
4.2	Web Credibility Overview	75
4.2.1	What Is Web Credibility?	75
4.2.2	Introduction to Research on Credibility	76
4.2.3	Current Research	77
4.2.4	Definitions Used in This Chapter	79
4.2.4.1	Information Credibility	79
4.2.4.2	Information Controversy	79
4.2.4.3	Credibility Support for Various Types of Information	80
4.3	Data Collection	81
4.3.1	Collection Means	81
4.3.1.1	Existing Datasets	81
4.3.1.2	Data from Tools Supporting Credibility Evaluation	82
4.3.1.3	Data from Labelers	82
4.3.2	Supporting Web Credibility Evaluation	83
4.3.2.1	Support User's Expertise	84
4.3.2.2	Crowdsourcing Systems	84
4.3.2.3	Databases, Search Engines, Antiviruses and Lists of Pre-Scanned Sites	85

4.3.2.4	Certification, Signatures and Seals	85
4.3.3	Reconcile – A Case Study	86
4.4	Analysis of Content Credibility Evaluations	90
4.4.1	Subjectivity	90
4.4.2	Consensus and Controversy	93
4.4.3	Cognitive Bias	97
4.4.3.1	Omnipresent Negative Skew – Shift Towards Positive	97
4.4.3.2	Users Characteristics Affecting Credibility Evaluation – Selected Personality Traits . . .	99
4.4.3.3	Users Characteristics Affecting Credibility Evaluation – Cognitive Heuristics	100
4.5	Aggregation Methods – What Is The Overall Credibility? . .	102
4.5.1	How to Measure Credibility	102
4.5.2	Standard Aggregates	103
4.5.3	Combating Bias – Whose Vote Should Count More? .	107
4.6	Classifying Credibility Evaluations Using External Web Con- tent Features	109
4.6.1	How We Get Values of Outcome Variable	109
4.6.2	Motivation for Building a Feature-Based Classifier of Webpages Credibility	110
4.6.3	Classification of Web Pages Credibility – Related Work	110
4.6.4	Dealing with Controversy Problem	111
4.6.5	Aggregation of Evaluations	112
4.6.6	Features	113
4.6.7	Results of Experiments with Building of Classifier De- termining whether a Webpage Is Highly Credible (HC), Neutral (N) or Highly Not Credible (HNC).	115
4.6.8	Results of Experiments with Build of Binary Classifier Determining whether Webpage Is Credible or Not . .	118
4.6.9	Results of Experiments with Build of Binary Classifier of Controversy	120
4.6.10	Summary and Improvement Suggestions	120

5 Trust-Aware Recommender Systems 123

5.1	Recommender Systems	124
5.1.1	Content-Based Recommendation	126
5.1.2	Collaborative Filtering (CF)	127
5.1.2.1	Memory-Based Collaborative Filtering	128
5.1.2.2	Model-Based Collaborative Filtering	130
5.1.3	Hybrid Recommendation	130
5.1.4	Evaluating Recommender Systems	131
5.1.5	Challenges of Recommender Systems	133
5.1.5.1	Cold Start	133