PLEAD 2013: Politics, Elections and Data

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ABSTRACT

What is the role of the internet in politics general and during campaigns in particular? And what is the role of large amounts of user data in all of this? In the 2008 and 2012 U.S. presidential campaigns the Democrats were far more successful than the Republicans in utilizing online media for mobilization, co-ordination and fundraising. Year over year, social media and the Internet plays a fundamental role in political campaigns. However, technical research in this area is still limited and fragmented. The goal of this workshop is to bring together researchers working at the intersection of social network analysis, computational social science and political science, to share and discuss their ideas in a common forum; and to inspire further developments in this growing, fascinating field.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.4 [**Information Systems Applications**]: Miscellaneous; J.4 [**Social and Behavioral Sciences**]: Sociology

Keywords

politics; elections; social media; Twitter; Facebook; computational political science

1. INTRODUCTION

The web has often been regarded as a liberating, deliberative and democratizing place. Empirical research, however, has shown that while there are many new instruments for communication and participation, online politics are but a reflection of the offline political landscape [8]. Online data is increasingly recognized as a rich source of data for studies that normally fall in the domain of social sciences [13, 15, 18].

Politicians worldwide have realized the power that social media carries when it comes to campaigning. Here, Twitter and Facebook are often on the frontline as they engage many users in political virtual debates and, ultimately, mobilize them for grassroot movements. Online campaigning is generally thought to have played

an important rule during the 2008 and 2012 U.S. presidential elections [17, 16, 11, 1, 10]. For social scientists the availability of large amounts of data related to political preferences allows to study phenomena such as political polarization of users and media on a large scale and with new methods [4, 3, 2, 5, 14, 6, 19, 20].

The workshop is intended as a venue for researchers with different backgrounds but a common interest in the new area of computational political science to meet and exchange ideas. We expect participants from the areas of Computer Science, Political Science, Information Science, Media Studies and more. Topics of interest include classifying users and content according to political leaning, quantifying the effect of political campaigns through online media, studying the effects of a "Daily Me" on political content consumption and using both social media and prediction markets for election predictions.

We believe that the diversity of research backgrounds and perspectives, combined with the varied nationalities of the participants will help us define a rich set of common research goals. The workshop is meant as the second in a series of meetings for researchers in the area. The first such meeting was the PLEAD workshop at CIKM 2012.

2. WORKSHOP PROGRAM FORMAT

The workshop program will include a mix of technical paper presentations and keynote talks. The keynotes will be given by well-known experts in modern campaigning techniques, academic political science and social media:

- Rayid Ghani (former Chief Scientist at Obama For America 2012)

- Justin Grimmer (Assistant Professor, Political Science, Stanford University)

- Tarun Wadhwa (writer, researcher, entrepreneur, Forbes contributor).

The call for papers attracted submissions from researchers in different areas and from different countries, which underscores the wide appeal of computational political science. The program committee accepted three out of ten submitted papers addressing the relationship between tweets and votes in the 2009 Federal Election in Germany, political polarization online in the context of the French and US presidential elections and finally, early efforts for multi-cycle forecasting of congressional elections with social media.

3. ACCEPTED PAPERS

The following workshop papers have been accepted for publication and are presented by one of the authors.

Tweets and Votes, a Special Relationship: The 2009 Federal Election in Germany: The paper examines the relationship between tweets and votes in the context of a recent German election, with a focus on the choice of parties, individuals and time periods which should be taken into account when one attempts Twitter-based electoral predictions [12].

Partisan Alignments and Political Polarization Online: A Computational Approach to Understanding the French and US Presidential Elections: The paper compares election campaigns in France and the United States with respect to political polarization and citizen engagement [7].

Multi-cycle forecasting of Congressional elections with social media: The paper examines the feasibility of predicting elections (for the US House of Representatives) based on social media data [9].

4. WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS

Ingmar Weber is a senior scientist at Qatar Computing Research Institute, Doha. His recent work focuses on how user-generated online data can be used to answer questions about society at large and the offline world in general. Ingmar was co-organizer of the "Politics, Elections and Data" (PLEAD) workshop at CIKM 2012, contributor to a WSDM 2013 tutorial on "Data-driven Political Science" and is co-editor of a Social Science Computing Review special issue on "Quantifying Politics Using Online Data". He loves chocolate, enjoys participating in the occasional ultra-marathon/triathlon and tweets at @ingmarweber.

Ana-Maria Popescu is a research scientist consulting for early-stage social startups. Previously, she was a text mining scientist at Yahoo! Labs where she most recently worked on social media mining and user modeling; she co-led the Twitter analytics effort for the Yahoo! News Election 2012 coverage. She obtained her Ph.D. in 2007 from University of Washington with a thesis in information extraction from the Web.

Marco Pennacchiotti is an applied scientist and principal engineer at eBay, where he leads the science on social media. Before joining eBay in June 2012, he was a research scientist at Yahoo! Labs, focusing on text mining, information extraction applied to big data and social media. At Yahoo!, he wrote papers focusing on user-profiling also applied to the political domain. Marco obtained a Ph.D. in natural language processing and information extraction in 2007 from the University of Rome, Italy.

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