

Examining the Effectiveness of Collaborative Search Engines

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Abstract

Although searching is often seen as a solitary activity, searching in collaboration with others is deemed useful or necessary in many complex situations such as: travel planning; online shopping; looking for health related information; planning birthday parties; working on a group project; or finding a house to buy. Researchers have found that complex search tasks can be executed more effectively and efficiently, achieve higher material coverage, and enable higher knowledge gains in an explicit collaborative setting than if conducted in isolation. However, even though researchers have carefully designed several Collaborative Search user studies, there is still conflicting evidence or a lack of evidence on the effectiveness of collaborative search systems. Thus, in this thesis, we focus on examining the effectiveness of collaborative search systems in two parts.

In the first part, we shed light on the effectiveness of collaborative search systems to support two group configurations, namely *group sizes* and *users' roles*.

In the second part of this thesis, we make our group configurations constant, particularly, group sizes are set to up to three people, and group members receive the same role. We then turn to a different perspective and focus on examining the effectiveness in two contexts: Search as Learning and collaborative online shopping.

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