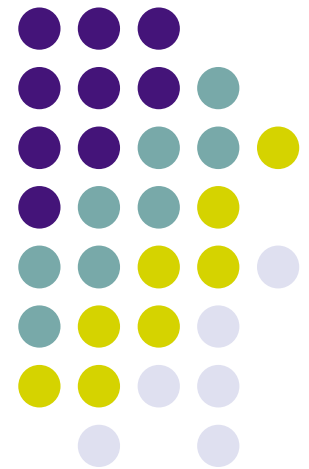


Folksonomy: Tagging

Brief Summary of the Ideas and
Solutions to Tagging

By

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Definition Review

Folk/Folks + Taxonomy = Folksonomy

- “People’s Classification Management”
- Thomas Vander Wal used the term in 2004
- Labels are commonly referred to as Tags thus making the act of tag creation Tagging

Key Folksonomy Concepts



- Composed of tags in flat namespace
 - No hierarchy and no parent child relationships
 - However, groups do form of related tags in a broader or narrower manner
 - No clearly defined relationship between terms in vocabulary
- Vocabulary directly reflects that of its users not that of the content creator



Concepts...

- “Intended to make a body of information increasingly easier to search, discover, and navigate over time. A well-developed folksonomy is ideally accessible as a shared vocabulary that is both originated by, and familiar to its primary users ” – Wikipedia
- Folksonomies are open ended and respond quickly to changes in the way that users categorize content.

Concepts...



- Peter Merholz argues that a folksonomy can be quite useful in that it reveals the digital equivalent of “desire lines” (Merholz, 2004).
 - Desire Lines: Landscaping concept used on campus for creating walk ways through the grass.
 - Wait for people to wear a path in the grass then build a brick walk way there.
 - Users eventually conform to a general subset of tags to define the content in a general sense



Benefits

- Very low content cost categorization
 - No content nomenclature to learn
- High relevance of information retrieved
 - Ideally tags are created by people that spend their time and interest on the subject content
- As mentioned before responsive to changes in categorization of content
- Communities are formed within content subject



Social Aspect of Tags

- Users can generally find who tagged content and follow other tags by that person
- Interesting phenomenon groups form for various reasons and continue to grow
- Members of various groups within a tag form social networks



Tagging Tools

- Del.icio.us
 - “a social bookmarks manager. It allows you to easily add sites you like to your personal collection of links, to categorize those sites with keywords, and to share your collection not only between your own browsers and machines, but also with others” (Schachter, 2004)
- Technorati - Blogs
- Flickr - Images
- LibraryThing – social book cataloging



Types of Folksonomies

- According to Vander Wal the tagging that occurs in del.icio.us, flickr, and Gmail are not all the same
- On Wal's blog he discusses Broad vs. Narrow Folksonomies



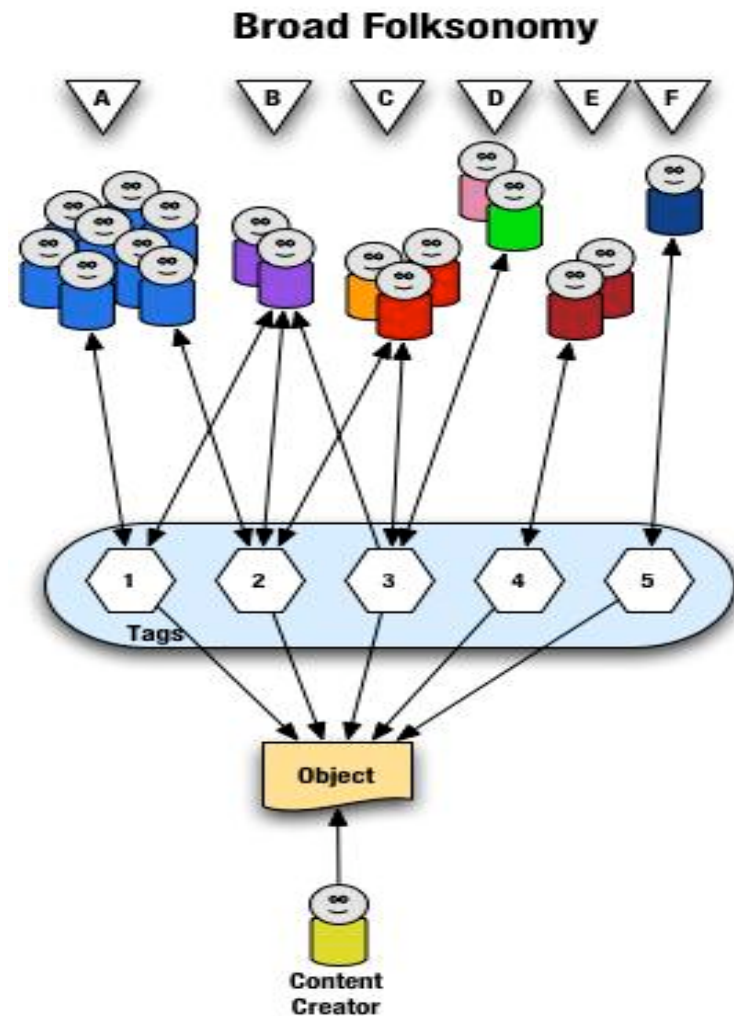
Broad Folksonomy

- Many people tag the same object and every person can tag with their own vocabulary
- Multiple people can tag the page with the same tag
- Example del.icio.us



Progression of Tags in Broad

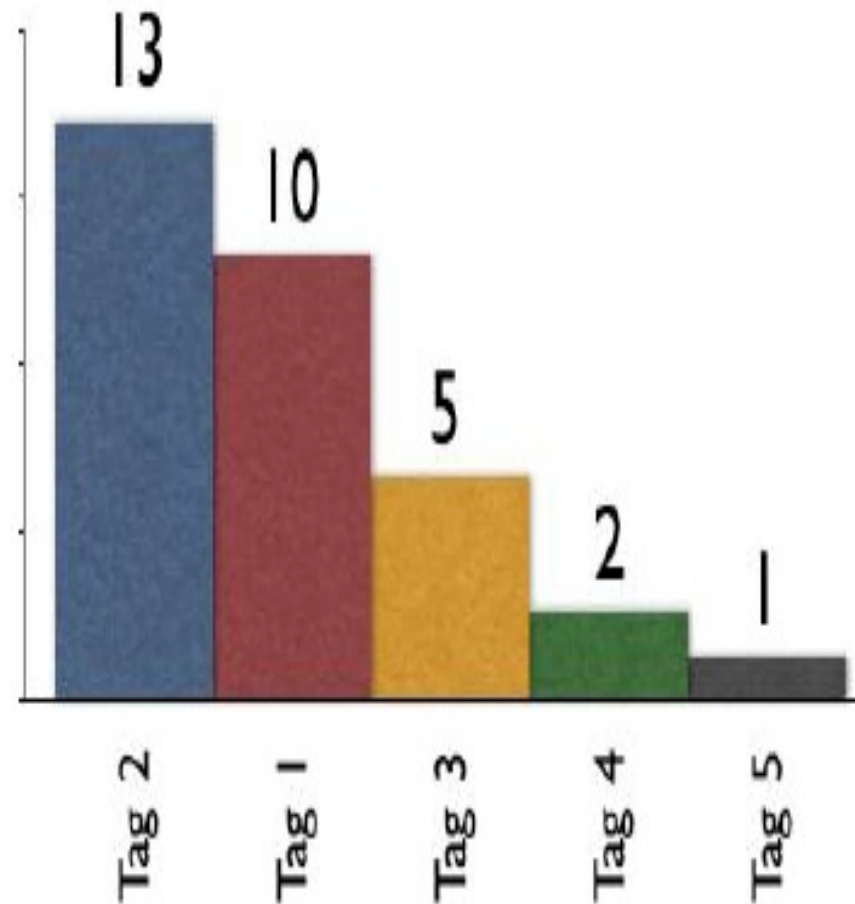
- Arrows to the tag indicate that Group applies that tag to content
- Arrows from tag to Group indicate that Tag is used to find the content





Vocabulary Trends

- Tags 1 and 2 are the popular terms used to describe the content
- A Long Tail exists with tags 5, 2, and 1 are created by people of similar vocabulary mindsets
 - I see the Long Tail as a benefit to tagging for more specific searches



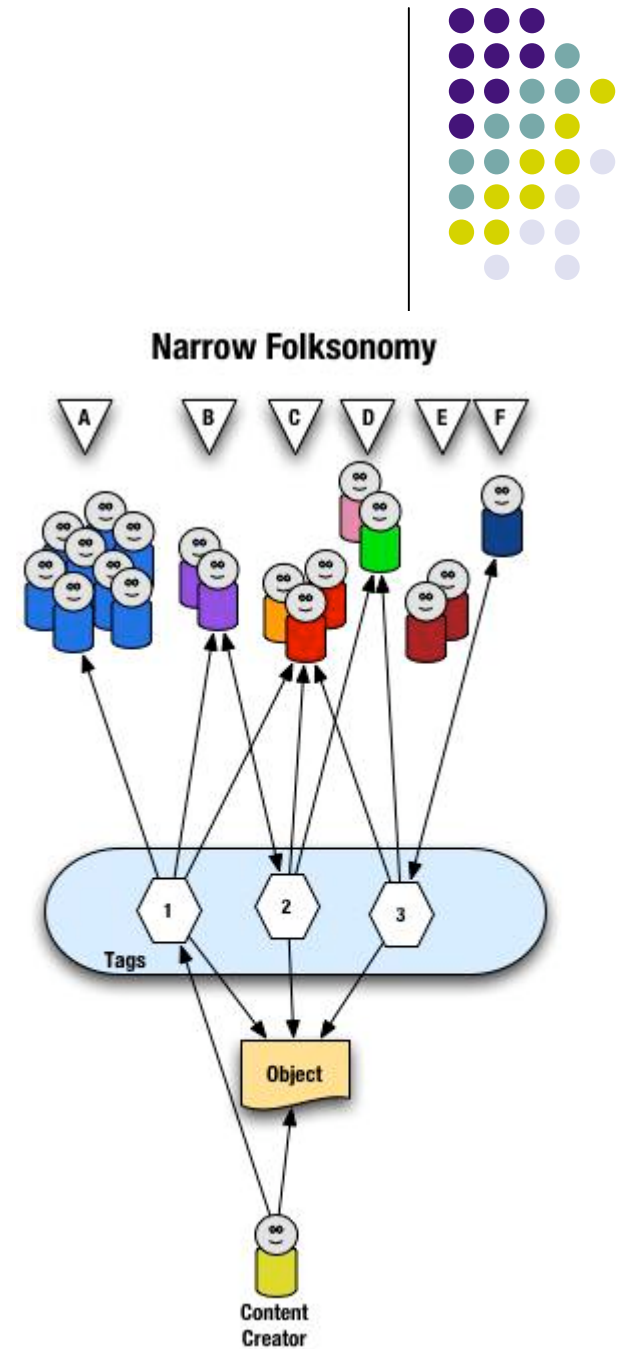


Narrow Folksonomy

- One or Few people providing tags that the person uses to get back information.
- Tags are singular in nature only one tag per term
- Exist with tagging with tools like flickr
 - An object is created and tagged by the creator for reasons unknown to the other users
 - Tags in Flickr can be for organization of ones photos or they can contain relevant tags to the content

Narrow Folksonomies

- Narrow Folksonomies are still helpful
- They still provide content relevant tags
- Still provides effective searching





Criticisms

- Uncontrolled vocabulary leads to ambiguity
 - Words have more than one meaning
 - Multiple words have the same meaning
- Lack of precision with one word Tags
- Nonhierarchical

Aside: Browsing vs. Finding



- Idea in paper by Adam Mathes University of Illinois
- States there is a fundamental difference between browsing to find interesting content, compared to directly searching to find a relevant document.
- Folksonomies bring about many more serendipitous encounters of information you would most likely not be exposed to, due to uncontrolled vocabulary



Controlled Vocabulary

- There are groups that believe the tagging vocabulary should be controlled
 - Easy way into this would be to use predefined tags that have converged as controlled terms
 - This may reduce ambiguity but is it at the cost of the long tail?
- Controlled vocabulary ideas are not too different from the semantic web ideas



Tags and Semantic Web

- Administered controlled vocabulary has its benefits however it does not seem to be the current direction of Folksonomies
- It is believed that due to the low cost and growing popularity of the current distributed folksonomy of tagging a version of the semantic web could be started soon if tags were built into the web protocols



Conclusion

- Tagging is becoming a popular way to search and categorize internet content
- It is an area of interest for social interaction as well as information scientists
- Could lead to formations in the semantic web



References

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- http://www.personalinfocloud.com/2005/02/explaining_and_.html
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