SOCM'14 Chairs' Welcome

Mission Continuing from last year's 'Theory and Practice of Social Machines' at WWW2013, the proposed 2014 edition of the **SOCM** workshop will look deeply at social machines that have, or may yet soon have, a profound impact on the lives of individuals, businesses, governments, and the society as a whole in significant ways. Our goal is to study both extant and yet unrealized social machines, to identify factors that govern the growth or impede these systems to develop, and to identify unmet potential needs (both human and technical) for the kinds of loosely-coordinated distributed social systems the Web enables. We also intend to discuss methods to analyze and explore social machines, as essential mechanisms for deriving the guidelines and best practices that will inform the design the next generation of these systems.

Background and goals This workshop will discuss the latest theoretical frameworks and empirical insights around 'social machines', an emerging interdisciplinary field of research investigating Web-enabled systems governed by combinations of computational and social processes. As introduced in last year's workshop, we use the term 'social machines' to refer to socio-technical systems which leverage the Web as a medium for communication, socialization, decentralized coordination, and peer production. This theme derives from concepts introduced by Tim Berners-Lee in his influential 'Weaving the Web' book,[1] in which he describes the Web as an engine to 'create abstract social machines - new forms of social processes that would be given to the world at large', and serves as the focus of an ongoing Research Programme Grant funded by the UK's EPSRC.[2] Unlike conventional Turing machines, their social counterparts are comprised of loose collectives of people connected by computational communication substrates at their core. By being accessible to any individual with a Web browser, such social machines have demonstrated the ability to allow groups of individuals to accomplish major goals using methods of distributed coordination and crowdsourcing at unprecedented scales. However, studying and designing such systems also requires a new and fundamentally different set of instruments, which, though inspired by the mind set of Computer Science and Engineering, naturally embraces theories, findings, and scientific methodology from a variety of other disciplines in order to understand how human and machine intelligence could be best brought together to help individuals, businesses, governments and the society as a whole in significant ways. This includes languages and models to describe their function and operation; methods that can be applied to study and predict their behavior; as well as qualitative and quantitative studies of the ways in which these systems have evolved and grown to support community appropriation and the development of the social practice.

Topics and program The workshop proposes a multidisciplinary discussion focused on the following three themes: (i) Studies: analytical and empirical studies of social machines that have changed the world; (ii) Design: insights on the design of effective (extant and future) social machines; and (iii) Methodology: approaches and methods studying social machines. The objective of the workshop is to bring together experts of various kinds of social machines, including crowd-powered systems, social networks, and online communities, to discuss the scope of this new scientific and engineering apparatus and to present specific tools that they have designed and applied to analyze social machines and their impact. The program will span a full day, commencing with a keynote introduction and

[1] http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/Weaving/
[2] SOCIAM - Theory and Practice of Social Machines EPSRC Programme
http://gow.epsrc.ac.uk/NGBOViewGrant.aspx?\\GrantRef=EP/J017728/1

closing with focused discussion session. We accepted eleven papers, including three short papers and eight full papers. The accepted submissions cover a diverse mix of topics from system design principles to technology and application areas. A more up-to-date version of the program is available on the workshop home page.[3]

Workshop organization Putting together an interdisciplinary workshop such as \textbf{SOCM} is above all a team effort. We would like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the program committee for ensuring that the program meets the established standards of scholarly publishing and for their insightful and constructive reviews, as well as our colleagues from the SOCIAM project for many hours of academic debate which have inspired the profile of the workshop. We would also want to thank Laura Dragan from the University of Southampton for her support with the organization of many key parts of the workshop, as well as the WWW organization team for offering us a platform to host this second edition of the event. We hope everyone will find it interesting and thought-provoking.

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SOCM'14 Organization

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[3] http://sociam.org/socm2014/