

When Personalization Becomes Too Personal

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Abstract

With the advent of the Web thousands of users interact with search engines daily seeking information on a wide variety of topics. The problem is that search engines cannot discriminate the different cognitive and search skills of individual users who query the Web for multiple topics often using similar queries. Web personalization is a promising approach to provide users with the information they expect by customizing the results to each specific user. One way to achieve personalized search results is to ask users about their preferences and information needs. However, users are not willing to reveal private information and often they are concerned about their privacy breach. In this article, we give an overview of the privacy issues in web search that have been previously addressed so as to apprise users on how to achieve a balance between effective personalization and simultaneously achieve a high level of privacy protection.