Adapting Informal Sources of Knowledge to e-Learning

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The amount of information sources and the available data is growing dramatically fast nowadays. It is very difficult time for teachers to keep up with changes, especially in information domain, and to find new and appropriate sources of information; this problem also affects e-Learning. Contemporary e-Learning systems deliver predefined, rigid courses which usually do not take into account user specific conditions, like wishing to broaden his or her knowledge in wide range of domains at the same time. Without constant maintenance, electronic courses are also getting outdated. Moreover, all of the current solutions seem to underestimate the potential of informal learning [1].

According to researches, over eighty per cent of possessed knowledge is acquired from informal sources of information like wikis, blogs and digital libraries [1]. These Web 2.0 platforms allow community to collaborate, share knowledge and ideas; in addition, these services are continuously developed to serve the users better. Semantic description of available sources not only interconnects them but also allows machines to reason about their content. Consequently, artifacts can be easily accessed, browsed and harvested for further use.

Following the presented idea, we introduce Didaskon [2], a framework for automated composition of a learning path for a student. The selection and workflow scheduling of learning objects is based on their description, semantically annotated specification of user profiles, anticipated knowledge after course completion, and technical details of the client's platform. User profile is described with FOAFRealm Ontology [3]; it is based on FOAF metadata that provides functionality to manage identities and share resources with friends.

Having in mind statistics about acquiring knowledge, Didaskon derives both from formal and informal sources of information. It collects relevant data from wikis or blogs and processes them so that they can be used in a form of learning objects; it enriches and improves the process of learning.

References

[1] DTI 2006 - Beyond eLearning: practical insights from the USA
[2] Didaskon project home page, http://didaskon.corrib.org/
[3] FOAFRealm project home page, http://www.foafrealm.org/