

When do you want to go “where everybody knows your name¹” (and mailing address, and preferences, and last 50 web pages visited)?: A framework for personalization

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Abstract

Over the years, I have been involved in developing several information personalization prototypes (e.g., content-based filtering, collaborative filtering, implicit queries and visualization). Sometimes personalization works pretty well, and other times it never catches on or participation falls off after an initial spurt of interest. I think it is instructive to reflect on an even wider range of personalization efforts to begin to develop a framework (or at least articulate a set of considerations) for better understanding and developing personalized digital library services.

As a working definition, I consider a personalized system to be one that responds differently to two people who issue the same proximal request, depending on their previous history of interaction with the system. Examples of such systems include content-based and collaborative filtering as well as caching, history lists, dynamic menus, automatic completion, customized content selection, and implicit queries. These systems vary in many respects – e.g., the characteristics that are used for personalization (e.g., demographic information, query or command history, preferences); how preferences are specified; the stability of those preferences over time; and how the system uses the preferences to personalize information presentation. A cost-benefit analysis of these variables provides the beginnings of a framework for understanding when personalization will be most successful.

¹ Theme Song from NBC TV program *Cheers*, "Where Everybody Knows Your Name" by Judy Hart Angelo and Gary Portnoy.