

Addressing Scientific Challenges with Facebook Platform: Social Media Applications for Analyzing the US Election 2008

(Vienna, 16 July 2008). With more than 80 million active users, Facebook Platform bears significant potential for scientific projects. A team of Austrian researchers has recognized this potential and launched two innovative social applications: Users can cast votes for their preferred candidates in the upcoming US Presidential Election, and participate in a related sentiment quiz in the tradition of "games with a purpose".

www.ecoresearch.net/election2008/facebook

The Sentiment Quiz invites Facebook users and their network of online friends to evaluate whether sentences from an archive of election-related documents express positive or negative sentiment. Participants earn points for matching answers, but can also lose them if their opinions differ from their opponent. The built-in notification system and real-time statistics on the users' progress help engage Facebook users and leverage the *wisdom of the crowds* for scientific purposes.

Besides improving existing algorithms for automated sentiment detection, it is possible to analyze information diffusion in social networks. In combination with the users' votes, the researchers also hope to gain new insights into the phenomenon of *hostile media effects* (the different perception and interpretation of content depending on the reader's political orientation).

Both applications belong to the US Election 2008 Web Monitor, a Web portal of the IDIOM project that analyzes more than 800,000 Web documents in weekly intervals. The system measures attention and sentiment towards the candidates and extracts the most important topics associated with them. IDIOM (www.idiom.at) is a two-year research project funded by the Austrian FIT-IT Semantic Systems Program (www.fit-it.at), jointly pursued by MODUL University Vienna, Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Graz University of Technology and several industry partners (Gentics, Austria.info and PRISMA Solutions). Facebook is a registered trademark of Facebook Inc., which provides a development system that allows building social applications and interacting with its more than 80 million active users.

Web Site: www.ecoresearch.net/election2008/facebook
 Press Material: www.ecoresearch.net/election2008/download

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