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Abstract:

This report summarises the SWAD-Europe Final Workshop "Friend of a Friend, Social Networking and the Semantic Web", held 1-2 September 2004 in Galway, Ireland.

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Summary

1 Introduction and Background

This report is part of the [SWAD-Europe](#) project [Work package 3: Dissemination and Implementation](#).

The final workshop of the SWAD-Europe project was on the topic of FOAF, Social Networking and the Semantic Web. It was on a larger scale than previous SWAD-Europe workshops (103 attendees), and was co-organised with DERI in Galway, Ireland. This document provides an overview of the workshop themes

and programme, summarises the post-workshop evaluation and possible future work at W3C in this area. See the [workshop website](#) for full details of the programme and other supporting materials.

The FOAF (Friend of a Friend) project explores a unique combination of themes from social networking, search engines, knowledge representation and software development. FOAF was designed as a practical experiment that would highlight the technical, social and business challenges raised by the next generation of "Semantic" Web technology. Over the past few years, the FOAF developer community has been working on standards-based techniques for publishing and harvesting machine-readable descriptions of people, the links between them, and the things they create and do. The working assumption of the project is that such techniques will underpin the deployment of the next generation of Web technology, W3C's "Semantic Web". The FOAF project was created in the expectation that these machine-readable descriptions will grow, as the Semantic Web platform matures, to cover companies, organisations, documents, groups, products, file sharing and many other aspects of life, both online and off. The time has come to evaluate these assumptions in the context of the opportunities and challenges presented by the rise of FOAF and the Semantic Web.

Social networking is a recent topic gaining much interest and publicity. Social networking sites are community sites where users can maintain an online network of friends or associates for social or business purposes: whether looking for a job, reconnecting with old friends, moving to a new area, or dating. Most of these sites are based on a centralised architecture: all users' descriptions are stored in one big database. There is, however, growing user and business interest in portability between such sites, and for sophisticated "single sign-on" mechanisms that reduce the need for data re-entry, while allowing users to manifest different aspects of themselves in different contexts. FOAF-based import/export allows such sites to address user demand for control of "their" data; however, many deployment, privacy, authentication and engineering issues have not yet been fully explored. To what extent do mechanisms such as FOAF change the environment they attempt to describe? How can the visibility of personal data be restricted to certain audiences? How can businesses make money when their customers can migrate to new services with increased ease?

2. Workshop

This workshop on FOAF, social networking and the Semantic Web provided a first chance to discuss the unusual combination of perspectives - academic and scientific, engineering, social, legal and business - drawn together by these trends. The workshop brought together for the first time researchers interested in the effects, analysis and application of social networks on the (Semantic) Web as well as practitioners building applications and infrastructure. The workshop also created, in effect, a snapshot of current developments, and was helpful in exploring a roadmap for the future of both FOAF and social networking - especially in the context of the Semantic Web and standardisation.

Topics solicited in the call for participation (and covered in the papers) included:

- Social network metadata standards
- Trust issues in social networks
- Profiles of FOAF, subsets, mapping to other vocabularies and formats
- Federated digital identity, single sign-on (decentralized identity management)
- Business models for the Semantic Web (life after banner advertisements)
- Integration with desktop and mobile applications (chat, IM, P2P, Bluetooth, address books, RSS/Atom)

- Privacy, etiquette and best practice issues for aggregators
- Infrastructure for social networking
- Applications of online social networking
- Knowledge management with social networks
- Mathematical analysis of social networks
- Exchange of social network information
- Applications of online social networks
- Shared annotations
- Use of digital signatures and encryption with RDF/XML
- RDF-based search engines, data harvesting and syndication
- GUIs (browsers, editors) for FOAF and Semantic Web data
- Formalisms that address practical problems of heterogenous changing data
- Pragmatics of sharing data schemas across subtly different datasets

3. Outcomes

The workshop was held over two days in Galway, and (see evaluation in Appendix A) was generally considered to be very successful. It brought together researchers, business people, opensource developers, and allowed for both formal academic-style presentations as well as more informal, self-determined collaborative breakout sessions.

16 Full Papers and 27 Position Papers were accepted for the workshop, and are [available](#) from the workshop web site.

Full Papers -

- [Bootstrapping the FOAF-Web: An Experiment in Social Network Mining](#) Peter Mika
- [Descriptions of Social Relations](#) Peter Mika, Aldo Gangemi
- [FOAF-Realm - control your friends' access to resources](#) Sebastian Ryszard Kruk
- [Keyword Extraction from the Web for FOAF Metadata](#) Junichiro Mori, Yutaka Matsuo, Mitsuru Ishizuka, Boi Faltings
- [Linking Semantically-Enabled Online Community Sites](#) Andreas Harth, John G. Breslin, Ina O'Murchu, Stefan Decker
- [Using RDF + FOAF to create a local business review and search network](#) Chris Schmidt
- [Moleskiing: a Trust-aware Decentralized Recommender System](#) Paolo Avesani, Paolo Massa, Roberto Tiella
- [A model of trust and anonymity in a content rating system for e-learning systems.](#) Tom Croucher
- [Open Rating Systems](#) R.V Guha
- [Ontological Consideration on Human Relationship Vocabulary for FOAF](#) Yutaka Matsuo, Masahiro Hamasaki, Junichiro Mori, Hideaki Takeda, Koiti Hasida
- [The People's Portal: Ontology Management on Community Portals](#) Anna V. Zhdanova
- [Redefining Web-of-Trust: reputation, recommendations, responsibility and trust among peers](#) Viktor S. Grishchenko
- [rss4you: Web-Based Syndication Enhanced with Social Navigation](#) Nicolas Nova, Roberto Ortelli
- [The Semantic Web as a Semantic Soup](#) Harith Alani, Simon Cox, Hugh Glaser, Steve Harris
- [Technical and Privacy Challenges for Integrating FOAF into Existing](#)

Applications Joseph Smarr

- — The Challenges of FOAF Characterization John C. Paolillo and Elijah Wright

Position Papers -

- — Creating a Social Network from an Existing Bulletin Board Community John G. Breslin
- — Exploiting Familiar Strangers: creating a community content distribution network by co-located individuals Jamie Lawrence and Terry Payne
- — Extending FOAF with Resume Information Uldis Bojars
- — Fentwine: A navigational RDF browser and editor Benja Fallenstein
- — FOAF driven development Dave Beckett
- — On the Use of FOAF in Semantic Web Portals Knud Moller, Livia Predoiu
- — FoafNet Marc Canter
- — FoafScape Mark Giereth
- — Ghosts in the Semantic Web Machine? mc schraefel, Alun Preece, Nick Gibbins, Steve Harris, Ian Millard
- — Knowledge sharing using Semantic Web technologies, Nick Kings
- — Learning new things about your friends A FOAF Position Paper Gunnar Aastrand Grimnes, Alun Preece, Pete Edwards
- — The LJ Viewlet Troy Gardner
- — The REL Project: Mobile-based Reliable Relations Jean-Marc Seigneur, Patroklos Argyroudis, David O'Callaghan, Joerg Abendroth,
- — Estimating whether partial FOAF descriptions describe the same individual Simon Price, Simon Rawles and Peter Flach
- — Personal Digital Identity Management Dick Hardt
- — Rhizome Position Paper Adam Souzis
- — Semantic Campus - A FOAF Extension Benjamin Nowack
- — Semantic Interaction with Music Content using FOAF Oscar Celma, Miquel Ramrez, and Perfecto Herrera
- — Semantic Planet Position Paper Ian Davis, James Carlyle
- — Semblog: Personal Publishing Platform with RSS and FOAF, Ikki Ohmukai, Hideaki Takeda
- — SemIndex: Preliminary results from semantic web indexing Stephen Harris, Nicholas Gibbins and Terry Payne
- — Social Networking Portals: an Overview and Evaluation Ina O'Murchu, John G. Breslin, Stefan Decker
- — Statement of Interest Klaus Schild
- — WhatILike Hugh Glaser, Steve Harris, Kevin Page, Daniel Smith
- — Validating RDF with TreeHugger and Schematron Damian Steer, Libby Miller
- — FOAF to the People Timothy Falconer
- — Token Based Authentication -- Implementation Demonstration Chris Schmidt

The — workshop programme included 11 of these papers, in 30 and 15 minute time slots, as well as three breakout sessions and a panel on the theme of "I want my data back", which drew together some of the business and technical concerns associated with FOAF-like technology.

4. Conclusions

The workshop exceeded our expectations in many ways. It was generally considered by attendees to have been enjoyable, educational and productive. Within the SWAD-Europe project, discussions at the workshop have helped us tie together some themes from different workpackages. In a W3C context, practical discussions at the workshop have fed into the Semantic Web Best Practices WG, in particular the new Task Force on RDF/SW Vocabulary Management. The success of the workshop has also prompted some discussions within W3C about the possibility for beginning standards-track work in the areas covered by the workshop. At the time of writing, this is under active investigation. Themes from the workshop have also been followed up in the context of the W3C Semantic Web Interest Group (SWIG), and in the FOAF project itself. In this way, the SWAD-Europe final workshop measures up well against the original goals of the project, which sought to establish and support grassroots communities whose efforts could feed into more formal standardisation efforts.

Appendix A: Evaluation

We used the ILRT's BOS [BOS] system to gather information from the workshop participants. The participants were asked eight questions:

- their sector (industry education content provider Open Source developer)
- their country
- their rating of the workshop overall, and overall comments
- ratings of the usefulness of short talks, long talks, panel and breakout session
- their rating of introductions, breakout sessions (by session) and panel
- how improvements could be made
- other comments

44 people responded out of a possible total of 103. The majority of the attendees who responded self-described as 'education' (60.5%) with the largest other group being "Industry" (27.9%), and 9.3% as "Open Source Developers". There were no "Content providers" and one person described themselves as being in "standardisation"

Of the respondents, attendees were based in 14 countries: Ireland (14), UK (10), USA (6), Japan (2), Austria (2), Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Russia, Spain (all 1)

Overall the workshop was rated very highly with 46.5% rating it reasonably useful and 48.8% very useful, 41 people in total.

There were some practical suggestions for improvement, in particular the usefulness of the breakout sessions seemed quite varied. Most people found them useful, but comments also included:

- Make the breakouts longer (more workshop?)
- Workshops should be programmed in advance.
- Re. breakout sessions overall - I suggest a part of the breakout sessions to have a pre-set subjects. If the subjects are assigned on-the-spot, then there is a probability that some of the subjects important for FOAF are missing - one way could be to have 50% of session titles to be determined by the community before. on a suggesting / voting basis or something similar.

However the opportunity to meet and talk fairly informally and in small groups was appreciated:

- I found the most informative and productive times for me were the breakout sessions and small groups discussing niche issues after the workshop officially ended for the day (e.g. at the pub afterwards). Encouraging more of these informal settings (seen with great success elsewhere at events such as FOO/FOAF Camp) would be a benefit to all.
- add more excuses for people to get together and talk (like dinner, but without having to shout). better planned breakout sessions (happened too quick, and in some ways was merely self-serving (people's own projects)

There were varied responses to the papers; comments included

- Maybe it would be wise to select some more theoretical papers - but you should also keep some practical papers as it was this time.
- There needs to be a better mix of people, not just academic vs industry but sociologists vs comp sci. FOAF is, or should be, as much about the social aspects as the semantic web representational issues. It was all beer guts and beards this time - a typical geek fest.
- Some more papers on building rdf ontologies: things to do and not to do, things to watch out for.
- Better talks (more entertaining) and maybe a bit more focus.

A selection of 'other' comments:

- Timing is everything and this was a very timely event. Thanks!
- Fantastic job - thanks very much
- I enjoyed the workshop a lot.
- The workshop was very well organized, well run, and useful. I have no complaints at all.
- Choice of location was excellent: it felt different and cool, but it was very practical. Thanks!
- I really appreciate the work that went into organising this - it means a great deal to be able to meet face to face and it will certainly spur renewed enthusiasm in SemWeb development and easier cooperation in the coming year.
- thanks for all your hard work! it was really a blast!
- All in all the workshop was very useful.
- I really enjoyed the workshop. It was great work ! :-)

References

[CPF]

[↖ SWAD-Europe Final Workshop Call for Papers](#)

[PAPERS]

[↖ SWAD-Europe Final Workshop list of accepted papers](#)

[PROGRAMME]

[↖ SWAD-Europe Final Workshop Programme](#)

[BOS]

[↖ Bristol Online Surveys \(BOS\)](#)