Social Networks have become a large part of the everyday lives of many people. Social Networks specialize in a wide variety of subject matter, however, their common theme is that they allow people who may not usually meet to converse and share ideas. Our lab studied two science based social networks in order to examine how trust relationships were created between members.

My job in the lab this summer had several different components. For the first several weeks I used a piece of existing web-scraping software known as Web-Harvest to extract data from social networking sites and exporting it to a database to allow other members of the lab to study it. For the second part I built upon Web-Harvest’s open source code in order to create a scraping tool with significantly more functionality including the ability to run concurrent scrapes, repeat scrapes, set a start date for scrapes, limit the speed of scrapes and update running scrapes. Finally we developed two visualization tools using the Google Earth API that can be found on the social network innovation lab website. The first tool plots all of the twitter “tweets” regarding cancer from our database to a map of where they were written from in the world. The other plots all of the posts posted to a science based social networking site. The map can then be overlaid with state census data to look for correlations in the site.

This summer I also contributed to several papers that were written from this lab. These papers were regarding both the computer science of the project as well as the sociology and economics.

The work done this summer will continue to be used in the lab. For future expansions on the project as well as all other projects that require the retrieval of information from the Internet.

Lab Website:  http://socialnetworks.bowdoin.edu/

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