

AAAI 2003 Spring Symposium Series Report

Agent-Mediated Knowledge Management (AMKM-2003)

Has Knowledge Management research given enough attention and importance to Agent technology? Have agents researchers considered the potentialities and demands of the KM field as an application domain? Such questions are increasingly being asked and several projects have been started which attempt to provide an answer.

The aim of the Agent-Mediated Knowledge Management symposium was therefore to bring together researchers and practitioners of both fields to discuss benefits, possibilities and added-value of a cross-fertilization between KM and Agent technology.

Knowledge Management already is an important topic in business studies for more than a decade. From the starting days of KM, technology has been recognized as an enabling, and often even a leading, factor for connecting (e.g., people to other people or knowledge) and converting (e.g., data into knowledge). Comprehensive KM endeavors, however, have always realized that KM is primarily a *management* science, and not a *computer* science. This implies a different role for technology in KM, that of supporting and extending human interaction and learning, and therefore a need for intelligence-enhanced, integrated and personalized solutions.

Which, as any agent researcher will tell, are exactly the aims and characteristics of agents...

The link is therefore established and the starting point for AMKM participants to discuss and present their own research launched.

The symposium set off with a keynote talk by Charles J. Petrie from Stanford University who illuminated the relationship between AI and Web Service technology - assets and challenges as well as drawbacks. In the symposium, twenty-five talks were grouped into six presentation sessions:

- Collaboration and P2P support
- Agent-based community support
- Agent models for knowledge and organizations
- Context and personalization
- Ontologies and semantic web
- Agents and knowledge engineering

During these sessions ongoing research, finished projects and position papers from industry and academics were presented to a lively and inquisitive audience which provided nice interactions and debates within and outside the conference room. Furthermore, Stanford's outside campus facilities (together with the gorgeous Californian weather) provided an excellent surrounding for breakout sessions during which participants discussed comprehensive themes in small groups. Topics for these sessions were the semantic web, standardization questions, tools and methods for AMKM, and further research directions. Again here, lively discussions and interaction were prevalent, and some of the groups are considering the production of articles describing their discussion and conclusions.

As the workshop evolved it became increasingly clear that even though the main premises and objectives were shared by all, different participants held different views on the field and on the interaction between KM and agent technology. Of course, one could a priori expect to be able to classify some participants more as 'agent-people', that see agents as the ultimate solution for KM, and while others are more 'KM-people', for which agents may be an interesting possibility for KM. However, another - in AI well-known - polarity soon became apparent: that between the 'statistical-people' and the 'cognitive-people'. The symposium therefore ended with a hilarious panel discussion for which a member of each of these four fields was asked to adopt and defend the exactly opposite view to the one he usually would take.

In summary, the overall consensus was that cross-fertilization between KM and agent technology is a theme to be further developed as the possibilities for research and application ahead are countless. A follow-up workshop is certainly to be considered.

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