

Preface

The Web has become a rich source of personal information in the recent years. People are twittering, blogging and chatting online. Current feelings, experiences or latest news are posted everywhere. Face-to-face communication seems to be replaced by the new communication tools. Since this new communication style provides insights into thoughts, behaviour and others, it offers the opportunity to make use of the data in other contexts as in critical situations. For instance, first hints to disease outbreaks or political changes could be identified from this data. Further, companies discover the possibilities of social Web communication. They collect knowledge for adapting marketing strategies from the Web chatter.

The author's goal in this book is to show the opportunities for real-world surveillance provided by the new communication means. The existing technological possibilities for online surveillance are the focus. The author provides a general guideline on how to choose technologies for developing a surveillance system depending on the user, the available content and the scenario of use. Furthermore, open research and development issues are presented.

This book is about surveillance systems, that is, about systems that monitor subjects or their behaviour. I concentrated on systems and approaches that exploit unstructured data for surveillance purposes. While this topic is prevalent in the field of biology and medicine, other domains only started to become aware of the necessity of monitoring tools. In particular, with the immense growth of the Web, this topic becomes extremely important for other domains. There are books available in the market dealing with biosurveillance. Then, there are books available on event detection in the business domain. With this book I aim to provide a comprehensive book that provides insights into the practical and technological opportunities of surveillance across domains to guide developers and decision makers to the existing tools and methods, but without focussing too much on specific technologies.

The present version of the book represents the results of about two years of work. The book reflects the research interest of the author, going into depth at some point while providing an overview only on other points. I 'however' think

this book provides a good balance and it provides a variety of readers with interesting and stimulating contents.

Many people contributed in various ways to the publication of this book. This book is inspired by the M-Eco project (<http://www.meco-project.eu>) that was funded by the European Commission. Parts of the book resulted from the author's project activities and discussions with colleagues in the context of the project. I give thanks for the interesting collaborations and discussions with all persons working together in the M-Eco consortium. Further, I thank Ralf Gerstner and the reviewers at Springer for their belief in the value of this book and the support in production.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends for encouraging me during the writing of this book.

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