

Annorate: Free Range Rating and Annotation on the Web

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Introduction

The Web facilitates open access to a myriad of educational resources. Two challenges arise from this: unclear quality of resources and lack of retention of content. From blog posts to Wikipedia articles to OpenCourseWare materials to professional organization websites, the resources abound. Determining the quality of these resources can be a challenge. And mere passive consumption of these materials while browsing the Web or bouncing through a feed aggregator does little to help users create meaningful understandings of the materials they consume.

In fact, the overwhelming amounts of information generated and posted online daily encourage more rapid consumption and less reflection than ever before. There is a risk that without more active engagement with online resources, the user will simply “lose” what they read. Activities like annotation and rating of resources can help support cognitive engagement, thereby increasing the likelihood of retention.

Project Description

Annorate is a combination annotation and rating service. The goal of the service is to make it extremely easy to add annotations and ratings to any webpage, particularly webpages with educational content. The Annorate button can be embedded in webpages by site owners, or installed as a bookmarklet by users. Service features include five star ratings, note taking, and tagging. Ratings, annotations, and the location of the original webpage, together with the username, are stored in a relational database.

In the bookmarklet scenario, users are taken to a page where they can describe the way they have attempted to reuse a resource, any factual or other corrections they believe the resources needs, and then provide Likert-style ratings of the quality of the resource for their specific use scenario. Conceptually this tool is like a “poor man’s trackback.” Ratings and annotations will be associated with their target resource by relations expressed within RelStore. OCW and other OER collections managers will therefore be able to subscribe to RSS feeds of annotations and ratings made to resources in their collections using URI-based searches (e.g., <http://ocw.mit.edu/>) so that these can be passed directly to faculty authors.

Annorate has two primary components: the bookmarklet and the Annorate home page. As described above, the bookmarklet takes users to a page where they can make annotations and rate the page. Ratings are done using a five star system and users can rate the resource in half star increments. A thumbnail of the page being rated is provided for the user’s reference. Figure 1 is a screenshot of the page where users are taken to rate their Web resource.

Figure 1: Annorate ratings page

ANNORATE ★★☆☆☆

Title:

Address:

Comment:

Tags:

Rating: ★★☆☆☆



The second primary component to Annorate is the home page. From here, users can see all the pages that have been rated. They can also locate pages that interest them via a tag cloud. A screenshot of the home page can be seen in Figure 2.


Figure 2: Annorate home page

ANNORATE ★★☆☆☆ [Sign Up](#) or [Sign In](#)

search

[Home](#) [Users](#) [Newest Annotations](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Help](#)


★ rate and annotate web pages ★



Research, Writing and Oral Presentation Task — Western Governors University
first rated by [Krivet](#) 1 ratings

Tags:

[View All Annotations](#)



L120 1: 1.1 Sur la Côte d'Amour - OpenLearn LearningSpace - The Open University
first rated by [david](#) 1 ratings

This is the page with the video clip I've annotated in mmatrix (Jenny Gray, OU)

Tags: **video**

[View All Annotations](#)

2.0 annorate API blogs
bookmarking chat competeor
cooperation, cost CSS culture
developer development distance
ebay ed french groovy groups
higher incentives interaction
intro irc, javascript learning love
lovely mocs! moo mud, news
nintendo OCW opencontent
openeducation openid openID

Site Usage

Because Annorate is a prototype tool is Annorate had minimal uptake. There are 34 registered users who rated a total of 35 sites on average 1.25 ratings per site. Descriptive statistics of the sites and their ratings are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of all Annotations

Total sites rated	35
Mean rating for sites	7.3
Mode rating for sites	10
Standard rating deviation	2.5

Tag Analysis

Annorate encourages users to use tags to describe content. Tags come together to create a folksonomy, a collaboratively generated free-form categorization system that allows internet users to categorize online content. For this to happen, users “tag” content with freely chosen labels. Those tags are shared in a collaborative environment where users can find other resources that have been similarly tagged (Wikipedia Contributors, 2006). Vander Wal (2005) points out that tagging is done for the individual’s own retrieval purposes. In that way, they are not intentionally categorizing as much as connecting items in a way that makes sense to them.

In folksonomies, there is no controlled vocabulary and no required syntax. This can be seen in the tags generated around Annorate resources. There are a total of 58 tags describing the Annorate resources. Most of these tags were used only once, but many of them are related, particularly to ideas around the Web and programming. Figure 3 illustrates the tags used to describe Annorate resources. Tags were categorized and color-coded by similarity and then arranged according to numbers of tags in each category. As can be seen below, the two categories that were most often used to describe Annorate resources were related to either programming or Web 2.0.

Figure 3: Tags Categorized According to Similarity



Future Directions

Annorate is a tool that can be used as a widget in any website. Proposed work includes partnership with the Smithsonian Museum of American History and Facebook. The code is currently available for open access should any site wish to incorporate Annorate.

REFERENCES

Vander Wal, T. (2005). Off the top: folksonomy entries: Folksonomy definition and Wikipedia. Online article. Retrieved May 2, 2006 from <http://www.vanderwal.net/random/category.php?cat=153>

Wikipedia contributors (2006). Folksonomy. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 03:38, April 27, 2006 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Folksonomy&oldid=50096392>.