Effects of Expertise Differences in Synchronous Social Q&A

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Takeaway: Domain expertise is useful, but has diminishing returns...

Synchronous Social Question Answering

- Synchronous social Q&A systems connect askers and answerers for real-time IM-based dialog
- IM-an-Expert running within Microsoft (4500 users)

Experiments

- Study effect of expertise differences on answer ratings and the Q&A dialog
- IM-an-Expert data (1725 questions, 937 users)
- Profiles comprise:
  - Self-reported knowledge
  - Email sent to distribution lists
  - Q&A history on IM-an-Expert
- Est. expertise w.r.t. question, not generally
  - Cosine similarity between query & profile
  - Diff. in cosine ≈ Diff. in expertise
- Study examines asker and answerer expertise

Findings

- Answerer more expert, higher answer quality
- Answerer less expert, lower answer quality
- Answer rating stable beyond difference of 0.4
  - > 0.4, dialog imbalanced (↑ asker clarifications)

Conclusions

- Diminishing returns from more domain expertise
- Ration most expert answerers for expert askers