READING REVIEW
(Grouping Friends for Access Control in Online Social Networks)

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Overview

- Ur and McGrath studied and analyzed the subject of grouping friends on social networking sites and also tried to improve the access control options on these networking sites.

- A graphical interface has been implemented that allows users to create groups and set privacy preferences for these groups. The users can also view their profile from the point of view of their friends who are in the group.

- The paper focuses on the grouping friends feature in Facebook for two major reasons:
  - firstly, the interfaces used to set the privacy options are more user friendly and trusted than some of the other networking websites;
  - secondly, the quantity and variety of the information shared by users on Facebook is unmatched.

Privacy Preferences on Facebook-

- Facebook users can choose what information is visible to others in their networks through the "Privacy" tab.

- Users can choose their own privacy settings based on what information do they want to be display on their profile.

- These fields can be restricted to certain group of friends, networks or individual users.

Two major issues in the current implementation of friendship on social networking websites are :

- Distant friends are seeing more information than the user desires, and that perhaps close friends are seeing less information than the user desires.
  - Solution: Allow users to create groups.

- Once groups are created, it will be difficult for users to identify which groups are seeing which information.
  - ➢ Solution: to let users see their own profile from the viewpoint of others, and that this would allow for the easy management of groups.

Hypothesis–

It is hypothesized that "the users ability to control the privacy preferences can be improved by grouping friends and choosing the access controls based on these groups." (B. Ur and R. McGrath, n.d.).

The Design:

- The design in the paper implemented the idea of grouping friends through a graphical user interface.

- Design consists of 2 main areas:
  - An interface which allow users to drag-and-drop their friends into groups they create
  - Another interface to set privacy preferences for these groups using the viewpoint of "what group members see."

(1) Interface to define groups

- To create a group, users must first enter a group name on the top left hand side of the create group window and then drag and drop their friends from the right side of the screen into the group list; they can also drag friends back to the friends list to remove them from a group.

The interface looks like in the following figure……
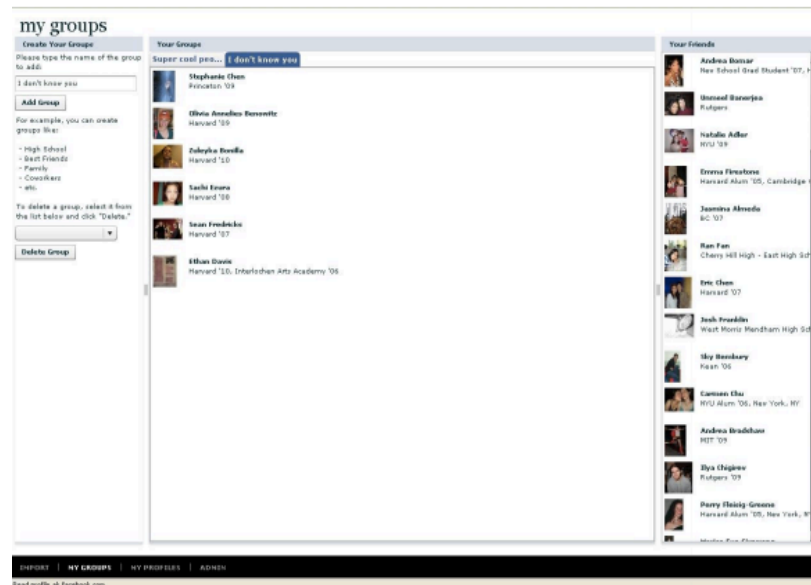
(2) Interface to select the privacy preferences for each group

- Using the tabs across the top of the screen the users can view the group that is being changed.

- Then users can view their own profile from the point of view of the users who are already in the group.

- An opt-in procedure exists to set the privacy preferences. The fields are selected by clicking on the plus sign next to the field name.

- Similarly, to remove a field from the profile the user must click on the minus sign next to the field.

The Interface looks like....

USABILITY STUDY-

- To test the accessibility of both the interfaces and also to analyze how important is it to have a feature like grouping friends on a networking website a usability study was performed.

- Users sign into their Facebook account and save their profile page as well as their "all friends" page to the researcher's local machine.

- Two Perl scripts were run which are designed for the experiment.
  - First script scrapes the data from a subject's profile and puts it into XML format.
  - The second script similarly scrapes the data from the subject's friends pages, randomly selects 75 friends, and then again outputs the results in XML format.

  - These two output XML files were used as input to a demo implementation of the designed graphical user interface

  - Implementation is done using : Adobe Flex 2 SDK
                                    Eclipse IDE

Conclusion–

- All 5 subjects similarly created a group for people they didn't know well, and chose more restrictive settings for the group.

- This group is best embodied by the name user chose for the group- "Who are these people?"

- The authors mentioned that creation of groups –
  - Adds excitement to the user
  - Increase both the privacy options for users as well as the time they spend on the site.

Overall, making slight modifications will make the interface more obvious and intuitive. The drag-and-drop interface showed itself to be very simple and effective.

The design and implementations demonstrated in the paper are relevant to the main topic of the study.

The user interface design and the backend design are simple and effective.

Reference:

McGrath.R, & Ur.B. (n.d.). Grouping Friends for Access Control in Online Social Network. Retrieved January 30, 2013, from http://www.eecs.harvard.edu/cs199r/fp/BlaseRob.pdf