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Agenda Setting Online

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Coming up

1. motivation: blogs vs. mainstream media?
2. agenda setting
3. method
4. results *(preliminary)*
5. issues



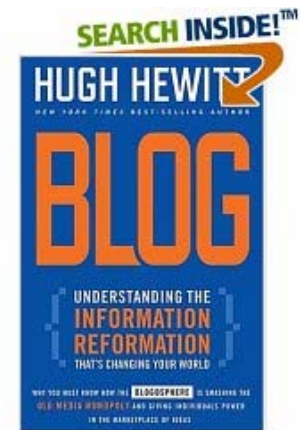
Media Critique

- mass media effects
- gatekeeping
- corruption
- quality
 - *“Overall, our research suggests that 60% of press articles and 34% of broadcast stories come wholly or mainly from one of these ‘pre-packaged’ sources.” Lewis et al (2008)*



Blogs as Counter Publics

- citizen-journalism
 - fact-checking
 - self-selection / become your own editor
 - empowerment of formerly passive audiences
 - ordinary citizens (Hindman)
- Hugh Hewitt, *Blog* (2005)
 - “the blogosphere is smashing the old media monopoly and giving individuals power in the marketplace of ideas.”
- high profile cases
 - Reutersgate
 - Rathersgate
 - Salman Pax
 - US senator Trent Lott



source: [Amazon](#)



Citizen Journalism?

- A-list bloggers = traditional elites
 - *“With only one exception, all of the bloggers in our census [75 A-list bloggers] were either educational elites, business elites, technical elites, or traditional journalists. (Hindman, forth.)*
- major part of content about „what I had for lunch“
 - *“76% of bloggers say a reason they blog is to document their personal experiences and share them with others” Lenhart, Pew (2006)*

Table 8: Blog content by bloggers' age

| N=4,108 | eta | < 20 yrs (%) | > 20 yrs (%) | Total (%) |
|---|---------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Episodes/stories from private life | .086 ** | 83.3 | 72.9 | 74.5 |
| Pictures/photographies | n.s. | 63.4 | 63.6 | 63.5 |
| Episodes/stories from professional life, school, university | .084 ** | 68.0 | 56.5 | 58.3 |
| Commented links to other online content | .088 ** | 47.9 | 60.0 | 58.2 |
| Comments on current political issues | .093 ** | 30.6 | 43.2 | 40.5 |
| Comments on professional, school or academic topics | n.s. | 42.2 | 40.2 | 40.5 |
| Poems, lyrics, short stories | .162 ** | 49.8 | 28.9 | 32.1 |
| Other content | .044 ** | 15.6 | 20.5 | 19.7 |
| Video clips | n.s. | 4.9 | 4.6 | 4.6 |
| Podcasts | .031 * | 1.8 | 3.2 | 3.0 |

Answer options given; multiple answers possible.

source: Schmidt et al, 2006

- tech heavy
 - *“In a week when the mainstream press was focused on Iraq and the debate over immigration, the three leading user-news sites—Reddit, Digg and Del.icio.us—were more focused on stories like the release of Apple’s new iphone and that Nintendo had surpassed Sony in net worth, according to the study.” (PEJ)*
- partisanship / innaccuracy



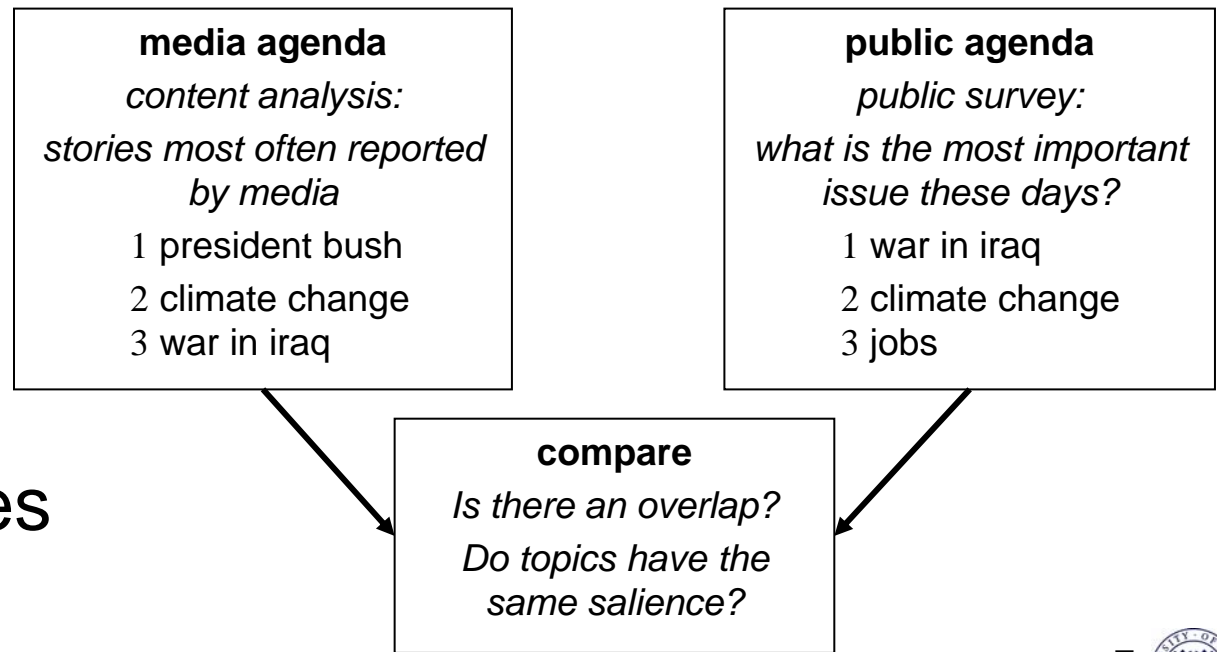
Mainstream Media ↔ Blogs

- What are the differences and similarities between mainstream media and blogs?
 - empowerment (see Hindman, Genner)
 - quality (see Reich)
 - influence on public opinion
 - who is influencing whom?
 - do they have different interests?



Agenda Setting

- Cohen (Cohen 1963: 13), mass media "*may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.*



- two main issues
 - lead vs lag
 - salience



Previous Findings

lead or lag

- media lead
 - Roberts et al (2002)
 - Halavais (2002)
 - Murley & Roberts (2006)
 - Thelwall (2007)
 - [Sifry \(2007\)](#)
 - *Adar (2004)*
 - *Lloyd (2006)*
- blog lead
 - *Drezner & Farell (2004)*
 - *Lloyd (2006)*
 - Hindman (forthcoming)

salience

- equal salience
 - Thelwall (2007)
 - *Lloyd (2006)*
- different salience
 - Delwiche (2005)
 - PEJ (2007)
 - *Lloyd (2006)*
 - *Schmidt (2007)*



Hypothesis

- H_1 : Mainstream media and blogs assign the same issues generally different salience.
- H_0 : Mainstream media and blogs assign the same issues equal salience.

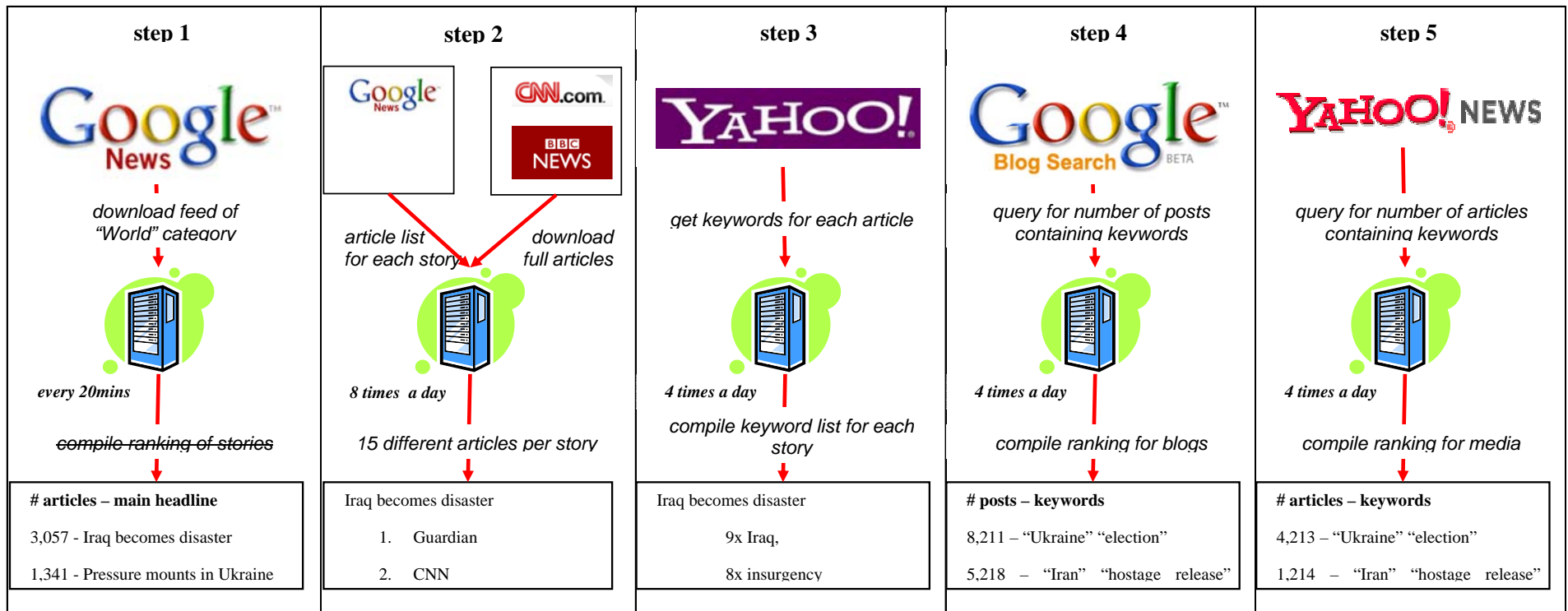


Methodology

- salience of story = frequency of articles or posts
- one blogosphere, one media sphere
- English-language content
- 9 days: 21st January – 29th January
- contributions
 - automated
 - simplified process
 - topic definition
 - usage of publicly available standard tools
 - focus on salience
 - assume media lead



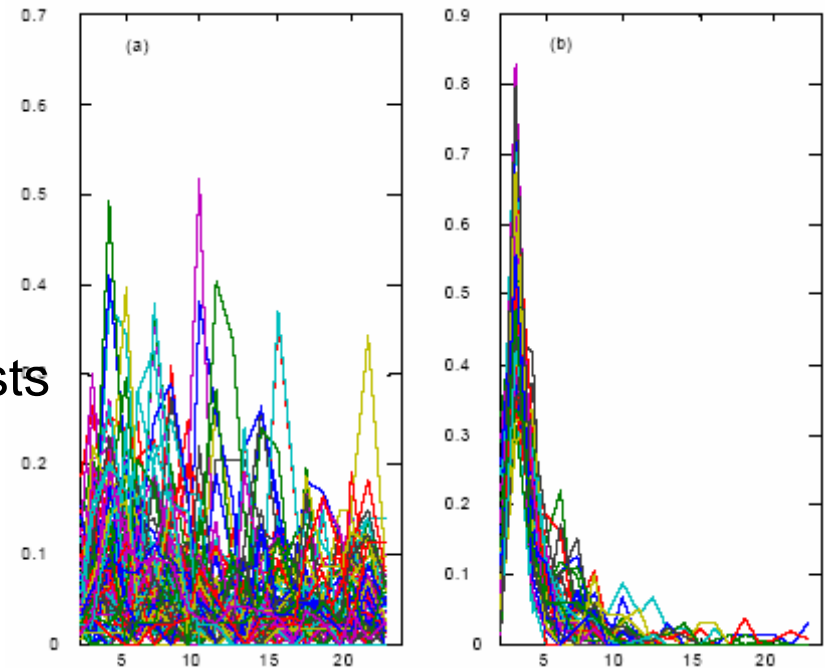
Methodology: Overview





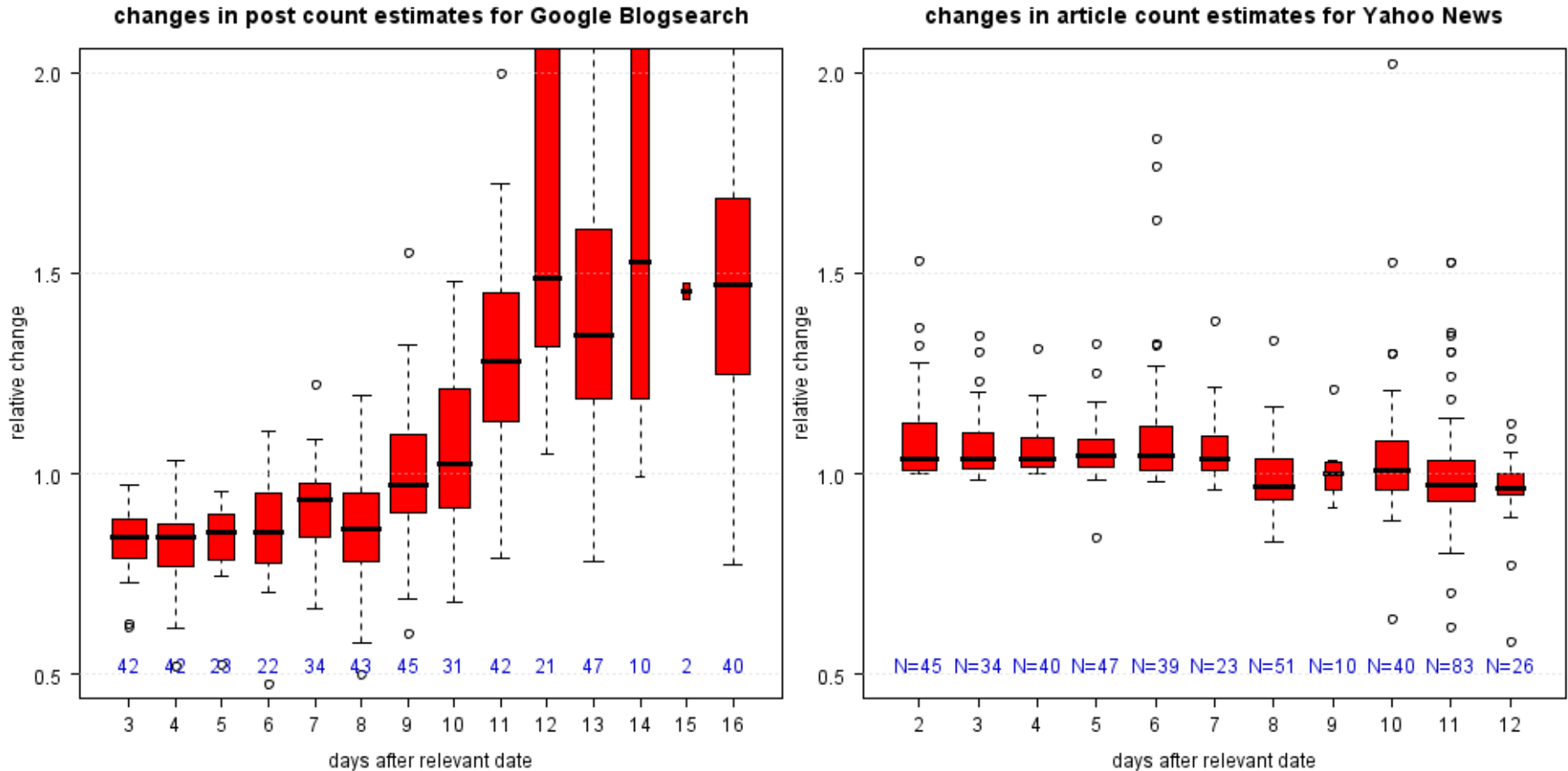
Issue: Lead or Lag

- assume media lead: What is time lag?
- Adar (2004)
 - 2 days for serious news stories
- Lloyd (2006)
 - +/- 3 days
- Wanta and Hu (1994)
 - 1 week for national network newscasts
 - 2 weeks for local news
 - 3 weeks for regional newspapers
 - 8 weeks for national news magazine
- method
 - identify important media topics for each day
 - 5 day time frame: [day-1,day+3]
 - search for occurrence of topics in media and blogs





Issue: Index Updates

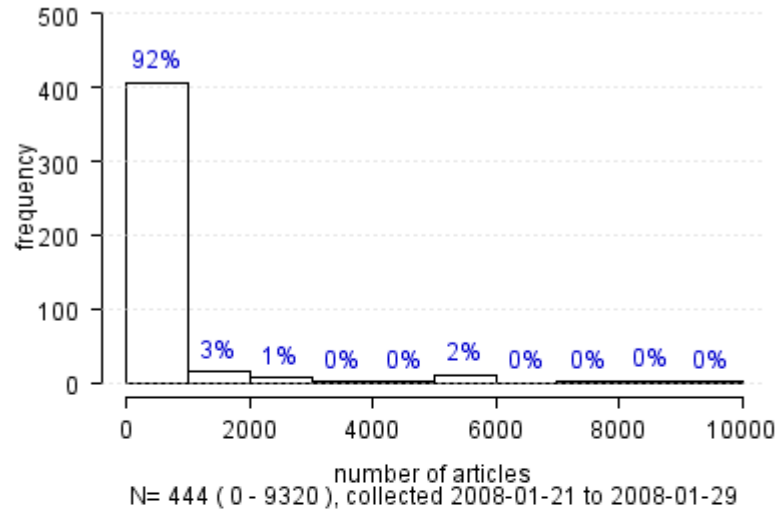


- hence blogsearch 14d delay, media 1d

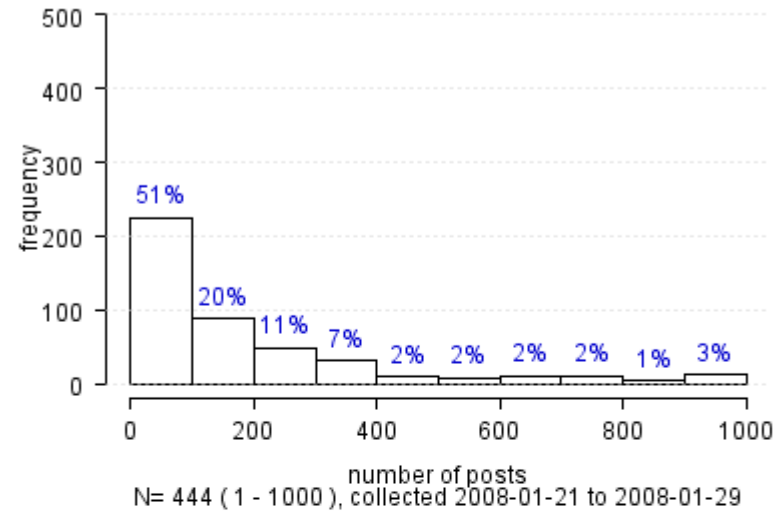


Distribution of Counts

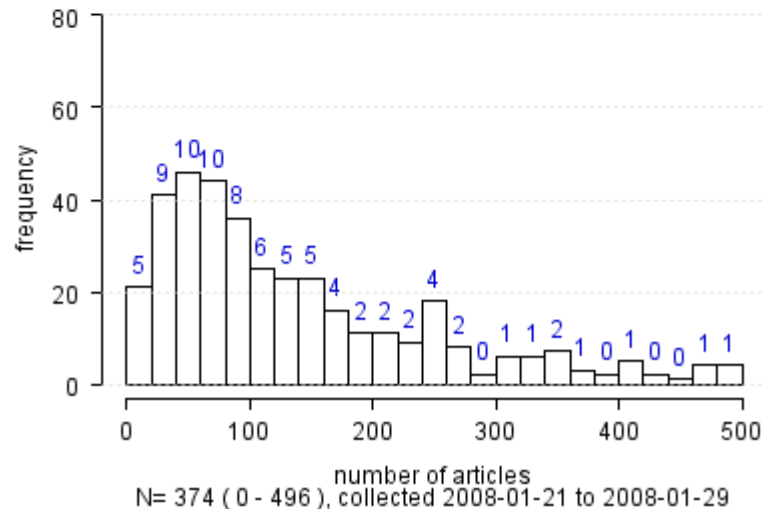
articlecount



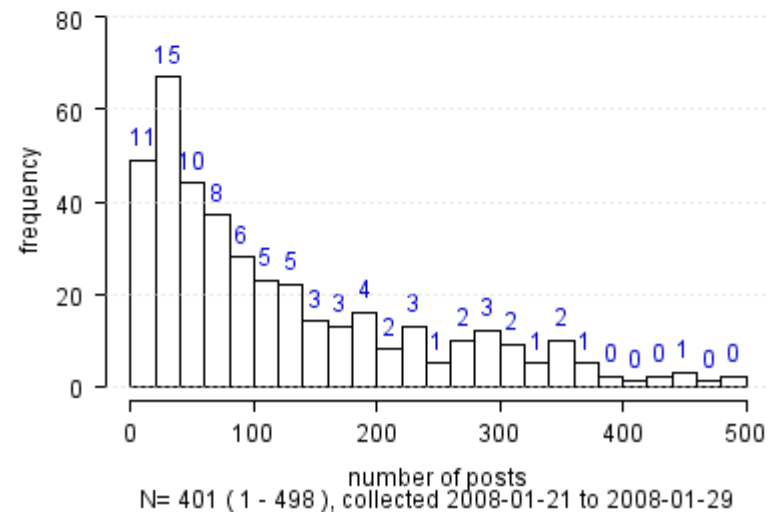
postcount



articlecount (<= 500)



postcount (<= 500)





ranking of agendas

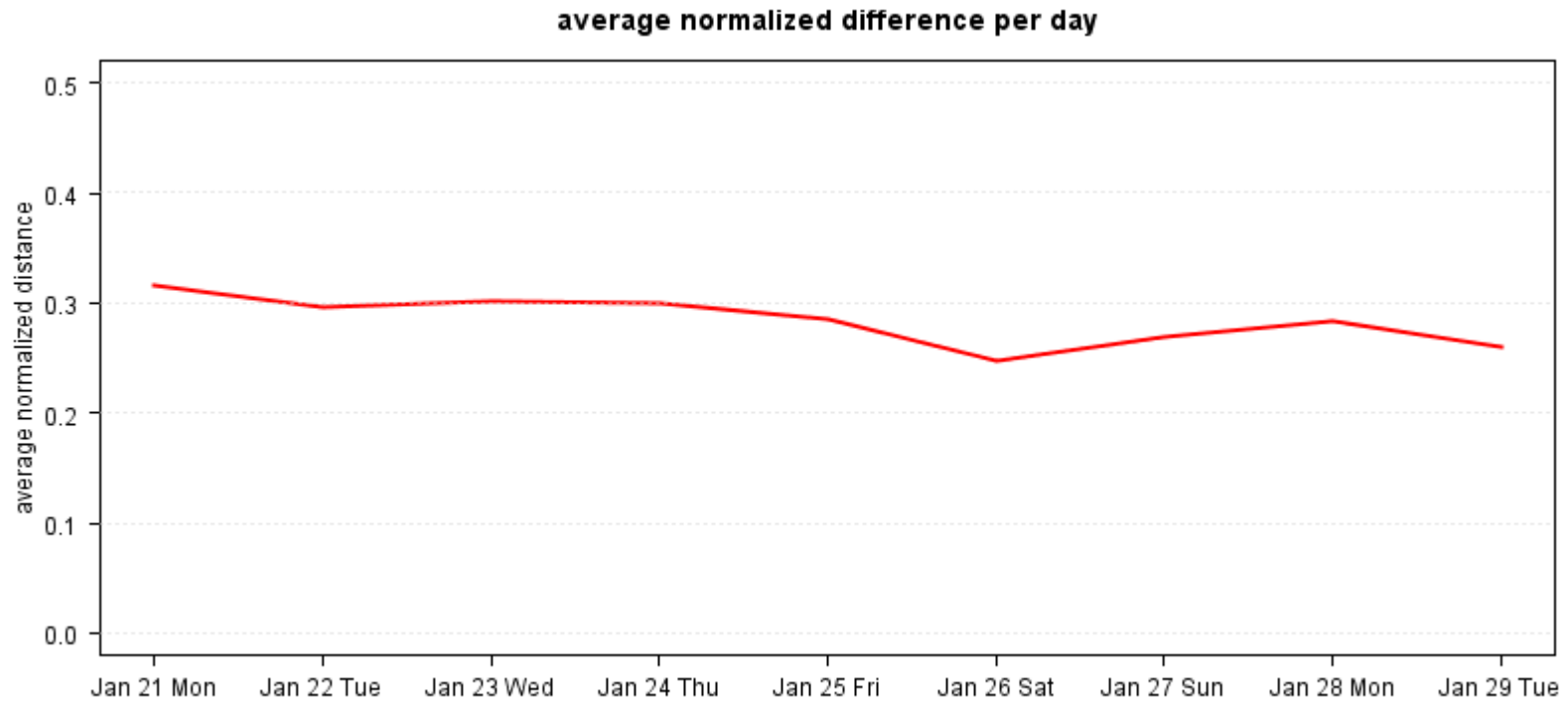
- categorization according to quintiles

- | category | rank | articles | posts |
|--------------|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| – dead | 1 | ≤ 50 | ≤ 35 |
| – lame | 2 | 51 - 90 | 36 - 70 |
| – heard of | 3 | 91 - 170 | 71 - 135 |
| – discussed | 4 | 171 - 370 | 136 - 290 |
| – HOT | 5 | > 370 | > 290 |

- calculate normalized differences per story
- root mean square of difference for day



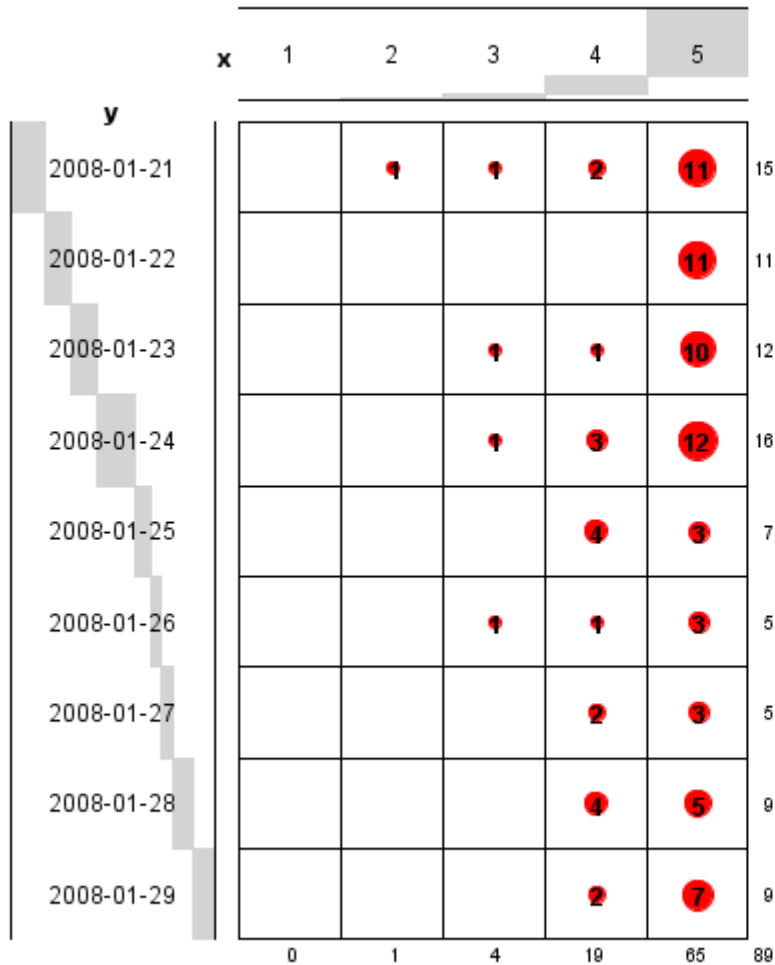
Average Difference



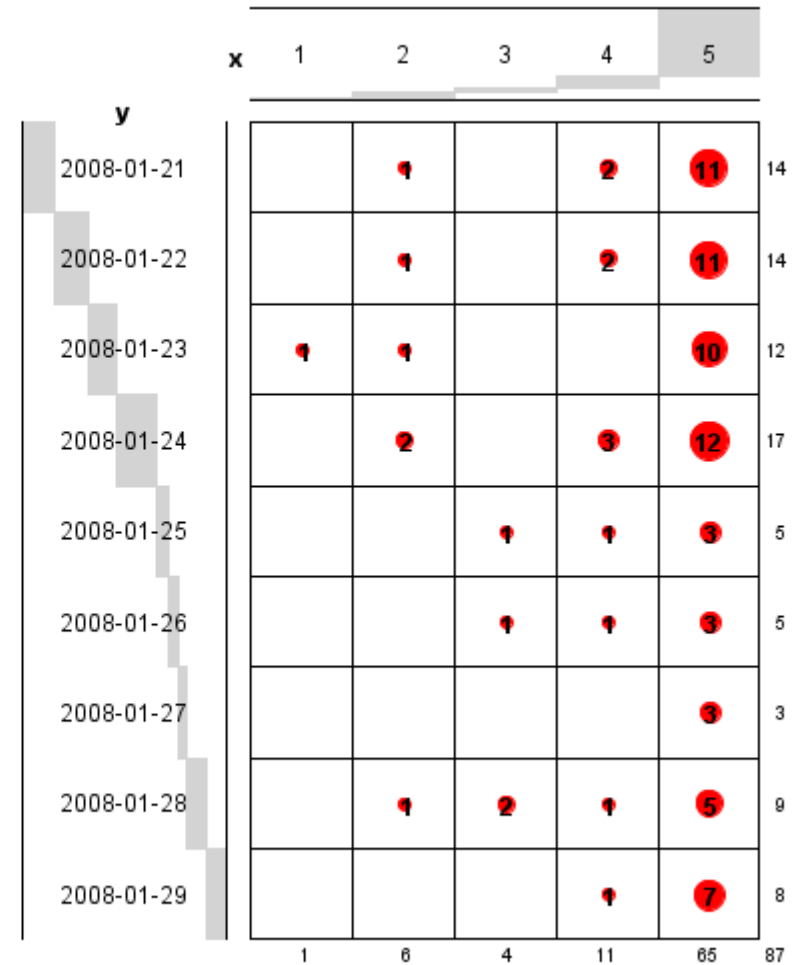


Top Stories

Most popular media stories on blogs



Most popular blog stories on media





Example: January 21

- bobby fischer boris spassky
 - 2 vs 4 (75 vs 222)
- kevin rudd budget surplus
 - 4 vs 2 (339 vs 44)
- japanese whalers steve irwin
 - 4 vs 1 (219 vs 33)



Example: January 23

- fidel castro cubans
 - 1 vs 5 (47 vs 386)
- skype psp
 - 2 vs 5 (52 vs 303)
- robert mugabe morgan tsvangirai
 - 4 vs 2 (182 vs 60)
- police federation jacqui smith
 - 3 vs 1 (91 vs 19)



Issues: Keywords

- keyword construction
 - 1. extract phrases via Yahoo
 - 2. filter out certain phrases (e.g. associated press)
 - 3. filter out stopwords
 - 4. exclude single characters (e.g. Christopher R Hill)
 - 5. take top 2 key phrases from all articles for story
- but still:
 - [Lotto rapist ruling clears way for claims](#)
 - keywords: [rapist house lords](#) (bad)
- level of abstraction
 - “suicide bombing baghdad” vs “iraq war” vs “politics”



Issues: Vocabulary

- differences in style, words, tone of voice between news article and blog post
- can affect ranking
- e.g. [new rules at US – Canadian border](#)
 - keywords: customs border protection michael chertoff
 - low on blogs but not because it would not be discussed ...
 - keywords: canada border
 - media article count doubles (700), but blog post count increases 20x (2,600)



Other Issues

- relevance
 - how relevant are the obtained articles/post
 - spam blogs
- measurement error introduced by
 - search engines
 - categorization
- significance tests



THANK YOU!

- for more information, check <http://people.oii.ox.ac.uk/escher/>
- Any questions?



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