Colloquium

Date, time & venue: Monday, November 21st, 2016, 1:30-2:30 in BB209

Title: **Recommending for People**

Speaker: **Michael Ekstrand, Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Boise State University.**

Hosted by: Shaghayegh (Sherry) Sahebi

Abstract: Recommender systems help people find movies to watch, introduce new friends on social networks, increase sales for online retailers by connecting their customers with personally-relevant products, and direct readers to additional articles on news publishers' partner sites. Users interact with recommenders almost everywhere they turn on the modern Internet. However, there is a great deal we still do not yet know about how to best design these systems to support their users' needs and decision-making processes, and how the recommender and its sociotechnical context support and affect each other.

In this talk, I will present work on understanding the ways in which different recommender algorithms may be able to meet the needs of different users. This research applies several methodologies, including analysis of recommender algorithms on public data sets and studies of both the stated preferences and observable behaviors of the users of a recommender system. Our findings provide evidence, consistent across different experimental settings, that different recommendation algorithms meet the needs of different users and among currently-competitive recommendation approaches there is not a clear winner even within the single domain of movie recommendation. I will situate this work within the broader context of our research agenda – including

further work on reproducible research, studying the behavior of the user-recommender feedback loop, and tailoring recommenders for particular users – and our vision for designing recommender systems that are responsive to the needs and desires of the people they will affect.

Speaker's brief bio: Michael Ekstrand is an assistant professor in the Department of Computer Science at Boise State University where he studies human-computer interaction and recommender systems. He received his Ph.D in 2014 from the University of Minnesota, studying reproducible research and user-relevant differences in recommender systems with the GroupLens research group. He is one of the faculty leading the People and Information Research Team (PIReT) at Boise State; the founder and lead developer of LensKit, an open-source software project aimed at supporting reproducible research and education in recommender systems; and co-instructor (with Joseph A. Konstan at the University of Minnesota) the Recommender Systems specialization on Coursera. His research interests are primarily in the ways users and intelligent information systems interact, with the goal of improving the ability of these systems to help their users and produce social benefit, and in the reproducibility of such research.