

Addressing Climo-Skepticism: Towards an Integrated Repository of Climate Change Research Findings

Herna L Viktor

School of IT and Engineering, University of Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5, Canada

Email: hlviktor@site.uottawa.ca

Increasingly, the findings of climate change research have come under attack by skeptics. Such attacks usually focus on inconsistencies between the findings of different studies and then aim to convince that the changes in climate have been overrated, or are non-existent. This is especially evident in the popular media, where discrepancies are often highlighted and opinions are being biased. It is therefore not surprising that a 2007 study of Ipsos Mori in the UK indicated that 56% of adults were not convinced that climate change is real. Furthermore, 2006 polls showed that about half of the populations of the USA (53%), France (51%) and Spain (44%) expressed little or no concern about climate change. In addition, 2009 polls in the USA and China concluded that the general public does not believe that the earth is getting warmer because of human activity, such as burning fossil fuels. This disbelief stands in stark contrast with the scientific findings, as the science academies of all major industrialized countries have now agreed that human activities are, indeed, a major cause of concern.

How, then, to address this climo-skepticism and, perhaps even more worrisome, the lack of public concern? Would the development of a condensed, readily available repository of validated climate change findings help to alleviate this problem? It follows that the creation of such a repository is not a trivial task. However, the data mining, information extraction and retrieval, data visualization and data warehousing communities have developed numerous techniques for addressing the collection, management and analysis of such very large-scale repositories. We aim to utilize this know-how to aid to convince the indifferent, or undecided, that climate change is, indeed, real. To this end, the development of an intelligent web-enabled software environment comes to mind. Especially, we are interested to apply techniques such as clustering, association analysis, information retrieval, web and text mining, and data visualization, in order to produce an integrated version of the finding of diverse climate change studies. Hopefully, the existence of such an environment may convince the climo-skeptics to change their views and, subsequently, their potentially harmful behaviors.