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A Method for Analyzing the Structure of Postings in Online Forum Communities
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Abstract:
An online forum is a kind of informal knowledge management system, where members can ask questions and other members can give answers. We lack methods that make explicit the underlying structure of these questions and answers. I present such a method and use it to analyze a forum thread. The analysis shows that a forum advice giver is not merely retrieving past experience. Rather, the advice giver embeds and integrates elements, relationships, and actions from the topic posting into frames from personal experience, to yield novel solutions. I end by discussing the similarities between advice and schema, and argue that a forum is a kind of distributed schema-replicating system.