

CrisisNET Shapes the Future of Crisis Reporting with AlchemyAPI

Analyzing Big Data for Social Good

Information can be a powerful ally. But to be effective, it needs to be timely, accurate and on-point. The challenge for many news organizations is finding the “signals in the noise” by analyzing and interpreting all of the information flowing through the various channels of communication to identify what is relevant, reliable and actionable.

Jonathon Morgan, along with political scientist Dr. Chris Albon, are solving that challenge for data scientists, data journalists and makers everywhere. The mission of their project, CrisisNET, is to simplify tapping into the “firehose of global crisis data.” CrisisNET’s platform gives anyone researching and reporting on natural disasters, terrorism or pivotal moments in history a REST API that accelerates searching, refining and filtering massive amounts of information into a single stream of curated crisis data. “Our goal is to make crisis data available in hours as opposed to weeks,” says Morgan. “By removing barriers to accessing and analyzing images as well as other unstructured information, we are hoping to impassion people who otherwise might not get involved and help drive local and global changes.”

The Solution: Computer vision adds a new angle to intelligent data curation to derive real knowledge

Although co-founders Morgan and Albon have been planning CrisisNET for a few years, they only recently transformed their vision into a functional platform. Much like private enterprise, the question CrisisNET seeks to answer is: How do we derive real knowledge? They have just finished a public pilot, proving viability of their concept and demonstrating their ability to provide real-time, useful information.

The next phase is to build more functionality and value into CrisisNET, which has led Morgan and Albon to AlchemyAPI. Why? “AlchemyAPI has been working on the problems that are next steps for us,” says Morgan. “Piggy-backing on the strong work that AlchemyAPI has done enables us to make major leaps in development.”



BREAKING NEWS

The June 17, 2014 online edition of CNN included this headline:

Terrifying execution images in Iraq; U.S. Embassy in Baghdad relocates some staff

According to CNN staff reporters, the veracity of the images was in question, but the purpose was not: “...to set fear into the hearts of all Iraqis and drive sectarian division among its people.”

With the AlchemyVision API, CrisisNET will provide a tool to quickly review large volumes of images from articles such as these to distinguish facts from propaganda.

Integrating AlchemyVision, AlchemyAPI's computer vision API, will be the first enhancement. Images make up a large portion of news articles and communications, both to share information and as propaganda. With AlchemyVision, CrisisNET can confirm reports such as a person's injury or death, or identify weapons seen in images, increasing the ability to trace weapons flow through a region.

AlchemyAPI's Value: Faster time-to-market, cost-effective data analysis

"We extensively explored open source tools and developing our own NLP applications," says Albon. "But the out-of-the-box tools give us only approximately 70 percent of the solution. Trying to reach the level of sophistication that AlchemyAPI's services deliver would take us just as long if not longer than what was required to develop their APIs. Relying on the experts at AlchemyAPI has been very valuable for us. They've been working on this technology for years."

Morgan adds that, "The level of computational resources required for us to get to the required scale of natural language processing functionality would be cost-prohibitive." Furthermore, he estimates that using AlchemyAPI's services will reduce the next stage in development, cutting time-to-market by 25 to 50 percent. That also allows them to focus on what they do best – locating crisis information and developing relationships with the people reporting from the front lines.

Conclusion

Unstructured data analysis and natural language understanding are revolutionizing the way enterprises learn about their customers. And then there are instances in which these services can be used for a "higher" purpose. For example, exposing humanitarian conflicts or enabling people to prepare for natural disasters. AlchemyAPI is "democratizing breakthroughs in deep learning to power your unstructured data applications," whether those applications are aimed at bolstering your enterprise revenues or analyzing Big Data for social good. With AlchemyAPI's services and our team of cutting-edge developers, the source and truth in data, whether related to a crisis or your target audience, will be easier to find, understand and use to take action.

About AlchemyAPI

AlchemyAPI's mission is to power a new generation of smart applications that understand human language and vision by democratizing breakthroughs in deep learning-based artificial intelligence. Our easy-to-use, high-performance cloud services for real time text analysis and computer vision give companies the intelligence needed to transform vast amounts of unstructured data into actions

MAKERS: A CULTURAL RENAISSANCE OF INNOVATION

CrisisNET is a project supported by Ushahidi. CrisisNET's mission includes "building a platform that allows a thousand crisis apps to bloom." Many of those apps will be developed by humanitarian makers, one group of people that CrisisNET relies on to find threads of information in data. With AlchemyAPI easing the development process, makers will be able to fuel their passion for innovation and more accurately parse specific information from local and global crisis data.

that drive their business. AlchemyLanguage[™] is the world's most popular natural language processing service; AlchemyVision[™] is the world's first computer vision service for understanding complex scenes. AlchemyAPI is used by more than 40,000 developers across 36 countries and a wide variety of industries to process over 3 billion texts and images every month. For more information, visit our website at www.alchemyapi.com.

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