



# The Role of Digital Libraries as Boundary Objects Within and Across Communities

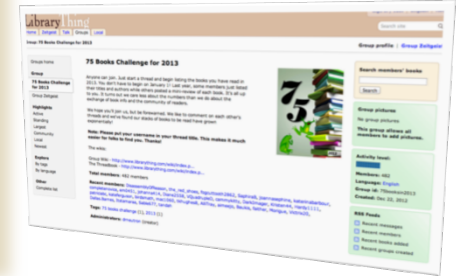
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## Research Questions

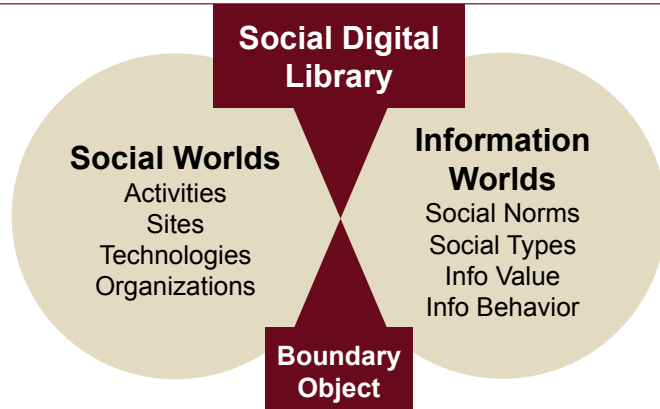
What role(s) do **LibraryThing** and **Goodreads** play, as **boundary objects**, in

1. the **translation** and **coherence** between the **existing social and information worlds** they are used within; and
2. the **coherence** and **convergence** of **new social and information worlds** around their use?



## Framework

- Collections of digital **content** collected on behalf of user community
- **Services**, relating to the content, offered by or through the digital library to the user community
- Formal or informal **organization(s)** managing the content and services



- **Socially constructed**, adapt to local needs of many communities
- **Coherent**, consistent interface / **translation** between worlds
- **Reconcile** meanings and understandings across worlds, allowing users to **work together, collaborate, and interact**

## Methods

- **Case study** approach
- **Sequential, mixed methods**

**LibraryThing**

**Goodreads**

Digital libraries and Web sites for readers and lovers of books, related media

1 **Content analysis**

- **500 messages** from **10 groups** (5 from each site)
- **Qualitative**, latent coding using framework
- Piloted with two groups

Content Analysis Pilot Findings

2 **Survey**

- ~ **300 users** who posted in or respond to invitation from the 10 groups
- **Likert scaled questions** on concepts in framework

3 **Interviews**

- **15+ users** from survey phase; **semi-structured**
- Themes drawn from framework
- **Critical incidents** of interaction between users
- **Qualitative**, latent coding

## Pilot Findings

**Content analysis**

**Two groups**

**In both groups**

- Use as **boundary object** and **common site**
- Emergent and convergent **activity, social norms, and information behaviors**

**In LibraryThing group**

- Only **basic use** of technology and site as a venue for playing a forum game
- **Stronger common values, convergence, and overall sense of community**
- **Weaker role as boundary object**

**In Goodreads group**

- **Strong use of technology, site** to recommend books
- More digressions, less common values
- **Stronger role as boundary object**
- **Role more in coherence than convergence**; community not as emergent

Findings from main sample may differ!