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

Methods

- Case study approach
- Sequential, mixed methods

LibraryThing

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

Content analysis

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

Goodreads

- Content analysis
- Survey
- Interviews

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!

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