Social Digital Libraries as Boundary Objects Across Social and Information Worlds: A Preliminary Theoretical Framework

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Introduction

- Digital libraries should be well-integrated with the communities and worlds that use them within and across boundaries
- This poster presents a preliminary theoretical framework of social digital libraries as boundary objects
- Two lenses: social worlds and information worlds

Social Digital Libraries

- Collections of digital content collected on behalf of a user community
- Services, relating to the content, by or through the digital library to the user community
- Formal or informal organization(s) managing these content and services
- In light of various contexts, especially social contexts
- Well-integrated into activities of individuals, social groups, communities, societies
- Meeting places for joint, collaborative information behavior
- Part of a community’s ongoing conversation

Social Worlds

(Strauss)

- Primary activities
- Sites where activities occur
- Technologies for carrying out activities
- Organizations, in established social worlds, to further aspect(s) of activities

Information Worlds

(Burnett & Jaeger)

- Social norms: What is “right” and “wrong” for a given group or community in social context
- Social types: How people are seen and typed within a social setting
- Information value: What information is valued, and to what degree, within a community?
- Information behavior: The use, seeking of, happening upon, avoiding, etc. of information
- Boundaries: Where information worlds come into contact, across which communication, information exchange may (or may not) take place

Both theories hold that communities
- Differ in size, shape, visibility, abstractness, permeability, structure
- Intersect and overlap
- Can segment into smaller subworlds

Boundary Objects

(Star)

- Cross boundaries between multiple social worlds and communities
- Adapt to local needs, but also maintain common identity across communities
- Interface between communities; translate meanings, understandings

Social Digital Libraries as Boundary Objects

- Interface with and reconcile meanings and understandings of multiple communities
  - Support emergent, common social norms, social types, information values, and information behaviors
  - Act as common sites and technologies
- Encourage collaborative, social information behavior
- Mutually influence and are influenced by social worlds and information worlds
- Evolve and change throughout their lifecycle and lifecycle of communities and worlds
- Support building or emergence of a broader community over time

Continuing Work

- Further develop & test framework
- Potential research questions:
  - How do digital libraries act as boundary objects?
  - What role(s) do they play in interfacing and reconciling norms, types, values, and behaviors across communities?
  - How do they facilitate the emergence of new communities?