



The Roles of Digital Libraries as Boundary Objects Within and Across Social and Information Worlds

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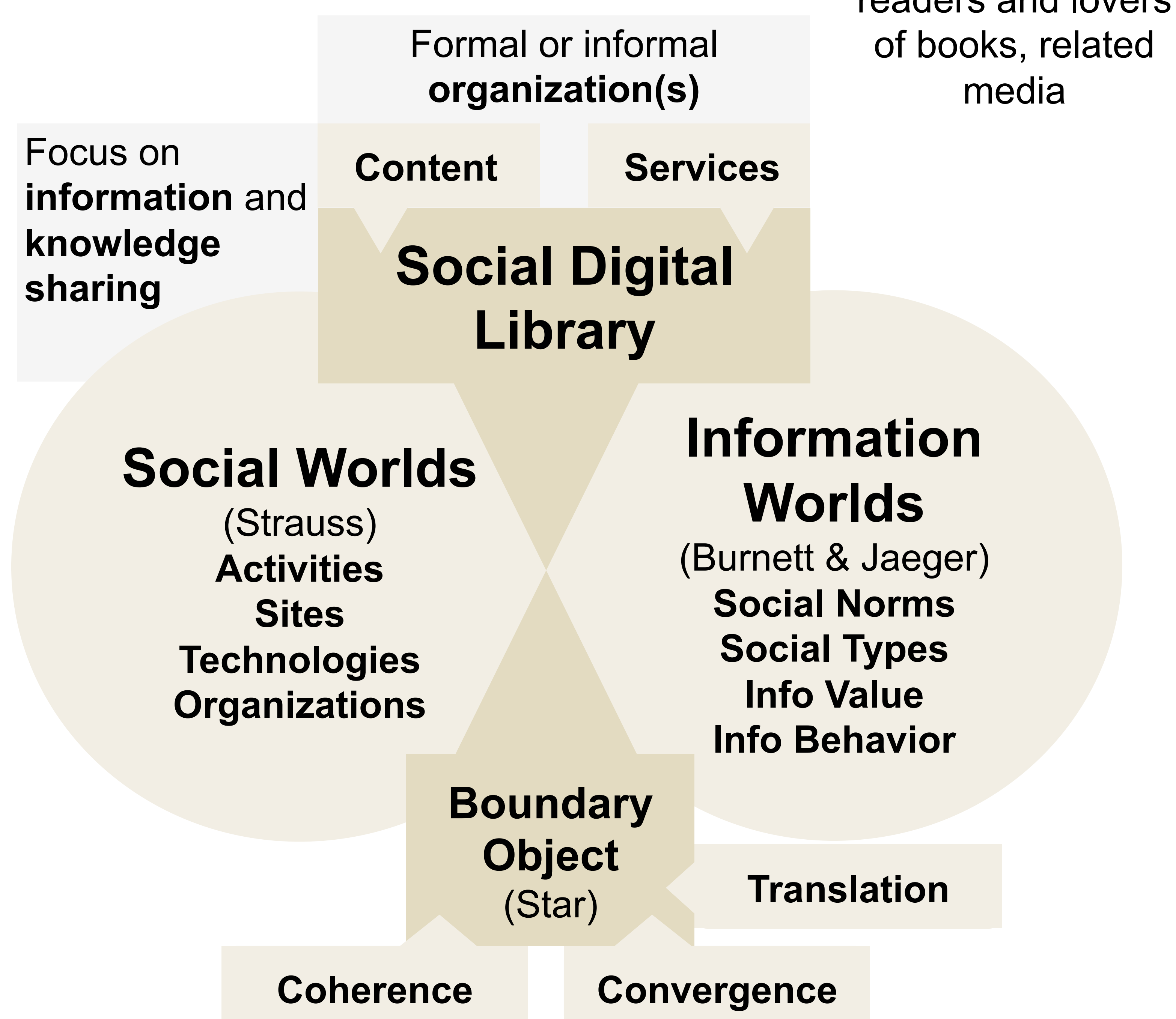
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Purpose

- Improve understanding of the **social contexts of digital libraries** and their roles in users' information behavior
- Digital libraries must **support and construct the communities** they serve, akin to physical library environments serving as **inherently social spaces**
- Many have contributed to this problem, but **further theoretical, practical research is necessary** to assess digital libraries' roles in, support for existing and emerging communities and collaborations

Framework



RQs

What role(s) do *LibraryThing* and *Goodreads* play, as *boundary objects*, in the *translation* and *coherence* between the *existing social and information worlds* they are used within, and the *coherence and convergence* of new social and information worlds around their use?

Methods

Sequential, **mixed methods** design

Two **case studies**

LibraryThing

Goodreads

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

1

Qualitative **content analysis**

519 messages
5 LT groups
4 GR groups

2

Online **survey**

163 users from the 9 groups

Likert scaled questions

3

Semi-structured qualitative **interviews**

At least 15 users

Critical incidents

Findings

1

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Three roles played in cohering and converging communities

Structure



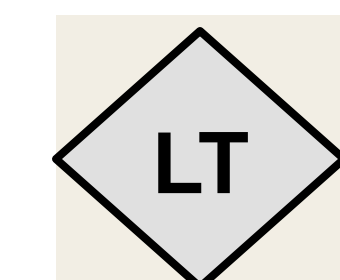
STRONG

Establish common **sites** for **information behavior**, **explicit norms**

Values

MODERATE

Values **cohere/converge**, but **occasional divergences** take place, are accepted



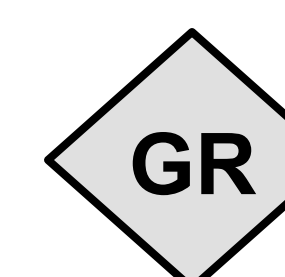
Social Ties

WEAK

Social typing, **off-topic** discussions common
Less tied to DL as venue for info behavior & activities

2

SURVEY



Info Value

Social Types

Age

DL use

Internet use

3

INTERVIEWS

...ongoing!

Implications

- Digital library designs, services should **support establishing structure, sharing common values, forming social ties**
 - Should help increase coherence / convergence of information value judgments, social typing
- Consider **other contextual factors** such as age, Internet use, and use of other sites and services
- The digital library **does not exist in a vacuum**, and must **consider the context** of users' social information behavior and the coherence and convergence of communities
- **Further analysis** of survey and **data from ongoing interviews** will **confirm and extend these implications** for digital library designs and services; users' information behavior; and research in digital libraries, social informatics, and online communities.

Phenomenon	Mean rating
Sites	3.939 ***
Translation	3.882 ***
Organizations	3.824 ***
Coherence / Convergence	3.773 ***
Social Norms	3.736 ***
Technologies	3.659 ***
Information Behavior & Activities	3.620 ***
Information Value	2.975 NS
Social Types	2.945 NS

(*** = $p < 0.001$; NS = non-significant)